

Experts Reveal:

Their 10
Favourite
E-Commerce
Tips



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Experts Reveal: Their 10 Favourite E-Commerce Tips

E-commerce is hard. If only someone had given you a heads up about the nuances and hurdles along the way, just think where your business would be now, right?

We've been helping retailers and branded manufacturers for 15 years, and we understand the day-to-day struggles you face in managing your e-commerce operations. So we wanted to put our many years of experience to good use and help you avoid some of the common mistakes we see.

We asked a roundtable of ChannelAdvisor's seasoned experts what advice they'd give online sellers — here's what they said.



“Using the Insights tools in ChannelAdvisor, especially for eBay and Amazon, can help identify and highlight products where data improvements can be made.”

- Ryan, Campaign Manager, Marketplaces



Don't forget the specifics! Item specifics, that is.

Put yourself in a consumer's shoes for a second. What are you looking for when shopping for a product? Information. You want to know that you're making the best decision and that this product is exactly what you're looking for.

Extra product details, besides title, images and description can go a long way in helping provide visibility into your products. Marketplaces use these extra data points as "Item Specifics" for search refinements.

Maybe the item is gender specific? Or made of a specific material? Or an unusual size? Sellers that don't provide these extra details about their product can miss out on buyers who are using search refinements when looking to purchase items on marketplaces.

The screenshot shows a form for creating an eBay listing. The 'Item Information' section includes fields for Listing Type (Fixed Price Format selected), Sale Price, Item Subtitle, Store Category, and Second Store Category. Below this is the 'eBay Pre-filled Item Specifics (Catalog)' section with search and stock options. The 'eBay Item Specifics' section, which is circled in pink, contains detailed product attributes: Club Type (Drivers), Brand (Nike), Model (SuperMax), Condition (New), Shaft Material (Composite), Dexterity, Gender (Unisex), Loft, and Flex. Each attribute has a dropdown menu and a 'Template Tag' field.

“If you insist on fulfilling orders in house, consider your capabilities to receive and ship an order quickly. With its Prime memberships, Amazon has set a new delivery standard of one day. Buyers’ expectations are following across the board.”

- John, Team Lead, Marketplace Services



Ship like you mean it

You're growing and expanding your inventory. That's great. But maybe you don't want to make a huge investment in additional warehouse space to store the new products. Perhaps you don't think it's wise to hire a lot of new employees to manage your shipping and receiving.

You know who has the capacity to handle and ship your extra products? Amazon.

Many retailers and branded manufacturers find that partnering with the Fulfilment by Amazon (FBA) programme is hugely beneficial when scaling their business. Fulfilling your items through FBA gives you access to millions of Amazon Prime customers and the coveted Amazon Buy Box.

There was a 50% increase in FBA sellers in 2015 and a total of 1 billion items delivered.¹

Even if you don't sell on Amazon, Multi-Channel FBA will give you a trusted base of operations for any channel you sell on.

86% of shoppers want fast delivery and 83% say they now expect a guaranteed delivery date.²

¹ <http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=176060&p=irol-newsArticle&ID=2126161>

² <http://digitalmarketingmagazine.co.uk/e-commerce-digital-marketing/delivering-consumer-choice-how-delivery-can-impact-ecommerce-success/2869>

“Buyers are more inclined to purchase an item if it doesn’t have a shipping cost. Find a way to make your product have free shipping, even if that means baking it into the product cost.”

- Cathy, Team Lead, Marketplace Services



Don't underestimate the value of free shipping

Shipping fees are a cost that most of today's buyers aren't willing to accept. It's the top reason online shoppers abandon a shopping cart.³

Once again, Amazon Prime has quickly conditioned consumers to expect minimal, if not free, shipping costs. And Prime memberships are exploding in popularity. The number of memberships increased 51% in 2015.⁴

On many marketplaces — Amazon, eBay and Rakuten among them — shoppers can even narrow their search results to those listings that include free shipping. If you charge for shipping, your product won't even get to the playing field.

58% of customers have added extra items to their shopping basket in order to qualify for free delivery.⁵

³ <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Why-Shoppers-Ditch-Their-Digital-Carts/1012273>

⁴ <http://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-earnings-q4-2015-2016-1>

⁵ <https://econsultancy.com/blog/65011-how-far-will-customers-go-to-qualify-for-free-shipping/>

“Sometimes understanding the value of good quality data doesn’t come until you make the move to grow and find that you don’t have everything you need to be successful. Detailed and accurate inventory data is immensely important when taking your products to market. It ensures that the right product — your product — shows up in front of the right people.”

- Courtney, Campaign Manager, Digital Marketing



Keep your product data organised

As your business grows, keeping track of tens of thousands of products can become a nightmare, even if you have a large team of people keeping track of them. It’s important to stay organized.

To begin with, keep a consistent structure for naming your SKUs and description fields. Centralised inventory is always valuable and essential for growth.

Without properly structured and centralized data in your ERP software, or directly in ChannelAdvisor, things can get messy quickly. It makes expanding to new channels difficult or almost impossible. You’re setting yourself up for success by properly managing your product data from day one.

“Stick with one data structure and keep it consistent. Either create your own file headers, or use the **ChannelAdvisor bulk upload spreadsheet.**”
- Sean, Team Lead, Marketplace Services

“Pair similar keywords, ad groups and campaigns with impactful ad copy and relevant product landing pages. This structure should make up the foundation of each digital marketing campaign. The more succinct the campaign structure is, the better the click-through and conversion rates will be.”

- Ian, Campaign Manager, Digital Marketing



Structure your digital marketing campaigns logically

Well-organised product data is essential for any seller on any channel. But when creating digital marketing campaigns, it's important that these campaigns are also structured logically and efficiently.

If you're having trouble organising your campaign structure, try mirroring it to the structure on your website. How are the products grouped on your site? What search terms do visitors use? If they're arranged by category, then brand, and then SKU, start with that order.

To the right is an example of a digital marketing campaign with a poorly structured ad group. It uses a mix of dress types, generic dress terms and skirt terms.

The retailer should separate these terms — tea length, knit, black, v-neck and skirt — into their own ad groups with ad copy that reflects that specific theme/product type. Ideally there would also be a unique landing page for each of these product types.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	[elegant tea length dresses]	Eligible	\$1.35	\$3.03	0.00	0.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	[t length dress]	Eligible	\$1.54	\$2.71	0.00	0.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	[dresses knit]	Eligible	\$4.55	\$2.58	0.00	0.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	[women black dress]	Eligible	\$4.20	\$2.32	0.00	0.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	[dress skirt]	Eligible	\$3.35	\$1.77	0.00	0.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	[women s dresses]	Eligible	\$4.13	\$1.76	0.00	0.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	[tea length dresses]	Eligible	\$1.18	\$1.72	0.00	0.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	[dresses black]	Eligible	\$3.50	\$1.63	0.00	0.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	[t length dresses]	Eligible	\$1.35	\$1.60	0.00	0.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	[v neck dress]	Eligible	\$3.08	\$1.58	0.00	0.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	[tea length dresses for women]	Eligible	\$1.54	\$1.52	0.00	0.00

“Offer items often purchased together as one SKU, with a discounted price, to encourage larger purchases. ChannelAdvisor Bundles takes the hassle out of managing quantity across individual SKUs and their bundled counterparts.”

- Cathy, Team Lead, Marketplace Services



Develop a bundling strategy

Buyers love to be rewarded for buying complementary items.

Bundling several items together as one SKU is a great strategy on crowded marketplaces like Amazon, eBay and Rakuten. Competition is fierce, and offering something that your competitor isn't might help you stand out from the pack.

Maybe it's a pair of shoes with two free pairs of shoelaces, an air pump to go with that football they just purchased, or gloves with ski boots.

Begin your bundling strategy by analyzing your orders to identify which items are frequently purchased together. You might be surprised at some items that make good bundles.

Tips for Bundling

- Give your bundle its own UPC
- Use an image that contains all the bundle components together, as well as individual images of each item in the bundle
- Include the word "Bundle" in your title, along with the product types and names of the other items
 - » Example of a good title: "iPhone 400 Bundle: iPhone 400, Wall Charger, Car Charger, Earbuds, Steve Jobs Biography"
 - » Example of a bad title: "iPhone 400 Kit"
- Supply attribute data for all products in the bundle
- Consider bundling multiples of the same item

“Even though Google has the lion’s share of search traffic, other engines like Bing and Yahoo can deliver great reach for specific audiences and demographics, sometimes at less cost. So while total revenue might not approach that of Google, savvy advertisers can achieve a greater ROI on these engines.”

- David, Campaign Manager, Digital Marketing



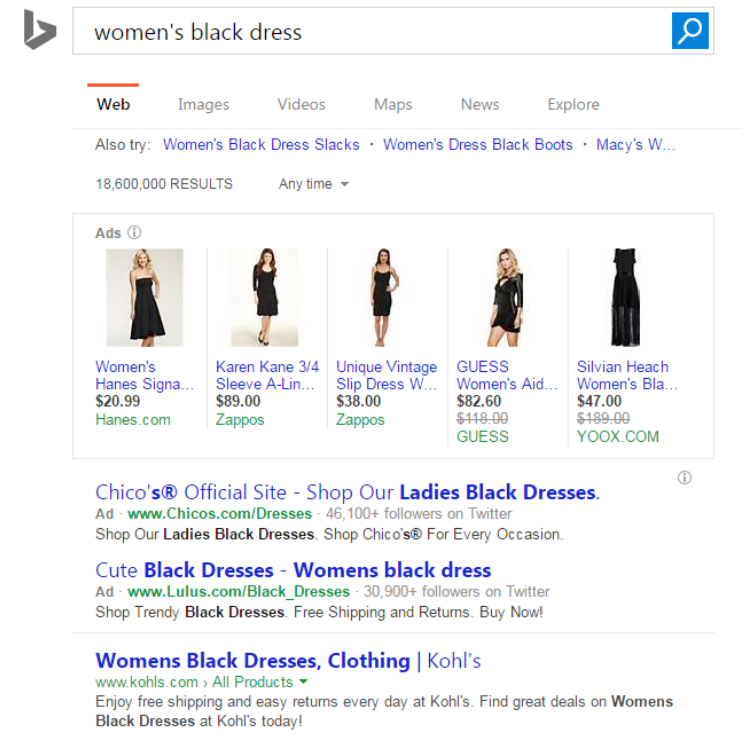
Don't ignore the “other” engines

Advertisers scramble to get on Google, but it’s not the only search engine in town. Engines like Bing and Yahoo are great alternatives to the highly competitive Google and provide ways to showcase your inventory to a wider customer base.

Bing makes up over 20% of the search-engine market, and Yahoo makes up 12%.⁶

Sprinkle your search budget there and adjust based on performance. The high volume of traffic to Google makes it the perfect strategic testing ground to find out what works best. Test on Google, syndicate your findings and replicate to Bing or Yahoo.

As a general rule, where Google goes with its algorithm, policies and adjustments, other engines follow. Take advantage of the foresight and duplicate your Google search engine strategy to other search engines.



6 <https://www.comscore.com/Insights/Rankings/comScore-Releases-December-2015-US-Desktop-Search-Engine-Rankings>

“With no ad text or sitelink extensions available on PLAs, Google Merchant Promotions are one of the only features you have at your disposal to make your listings stand out from your competitors’. The special offer link immediately draws the shopper’s attention. We’ve noticed that retailers that add Merchant Promotions experience a significant uptick in click-through rates, leading to higher traffic volume and increased brand awareness.”

- Andrew, Campaign Manager, Digital Marketing



Promotions never go out of style

Since the first print newspapers, promotions have been driving interest, sales and customer acquisition.

When selling online, promotions help sellers burst through competitive clutter, especially on crowded marketplaces like Amazon and eBay. Whether your goal is to get new products off the ground, rid warehouses of excess inventory or capitalise on seasonal traffic, there’s likely to be a promotional opportunity to amplify your efforts.

Marketplaces like Rakuten and others occasionally dangle unique promotional opportunities as carrots to attract new sellers and grow product categories.

But don’t forget about digital marketing channels. Google Merchant Promotions are free additions to PLAs that let you advertise offers like a percent or dollar amount off your item price, helping your ad stand out from the competition.

Shop for new balance men's 574 red pique... Sponsored ⓘ
on Google

<p>New Balance Boys Pique P... \$32.99 Greg's Shoes</p>	<p>574 Pique Polo Pack Men's \$79.99 CA Outlet</p>	<p>New Balance Men's 574 Pique... \$79.99 Greg's Shoes</p>	<p>New Balance 574 Pique Pol... \$80.00 E.C. Brands</p>
<p>New Balance Men's 574 Pique... \$79.99 E.C. Brands</p>	<p>New Balance 574 Sneaker... \$59.95 Susie G's</p>	<p>New Balance 574 Pique Pol... \$79.95 RM Shoes Special offer</p>	<p>New Balance Men's 574 Su... \$74.99 Greg's Shoes</p>

RM Shoes

Save 10% off your purchase

Expires in 21 days • Enter code at checkout

PLA10 Shop

“ERS [effective revenue share] and ROA [return on acquisition] metrics are great for understanding the value of specific campaigns, but they don’t necessarily show what percentage of customers driven by that campaign are new or repeat customers. Other metrics like CPA [cost per acquisition] or CPO [cost per order] should be considered when looking at the health and return of digital marketing efforts.”

- Nick, Campaign Manager, Digital Marketing



Connect with Your Customers for the Long Haul

New sales are great. And new customers are great. But when analysing your bottom line, a loyal, repeat customer can be worth their weight in advertising gold. It’s important not to overlook the lifetime value of your customers.

First of all, one loyal customer will continue to buy your products for years to come. Second, that customer might share his or her experience through reviews, social channels and more. Recommendations and positive reviews are proven to have an impact on your bottom line.⁷

New to file (NTF) customer rates can potentially show value to an expensive campaign on a paid search or comparison shopping engine (CSE) channel.

⁷ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jaysondemers/2015/12/28/how-important-are-customer-reviews-for-online-marketing/#10c40239788c>

“Sending the best data increases visibility and also prevents account suspensions. If a channel changes what data it requires, merchants need to make the necessary feed changes to ensure their listings remain approved and live.”

- Katja, Team Lead, Digital Marketing Services



Keep Up with Channel Changes

As you list your products across a broader spectrum of channels, it's important to pay close attention to the changing requirements of each. Feed specifications are constantly updated, and changes to listing policies can lead to errors for retailers that aren't aware.

One recent example is [Google's requirement](#) that retailers provide Global Trade Item Numbers (GTINs) for all new products. Another example is the required changes to retailers' product identifiers by eBay in 2015.

More often than not, these changes are the result of a channel attempting to improve the user experience. Sometimes a channel will overhaul the taxonomy of its site layout to improve product visibility. Or perhaps they're re-evaluating what they consider to be a dangerous or forbidden item.

Other ways to prep for channel changes:

- Adopt new strategies as the changes roll out, carefully following the channel's lead (sellers that do are often rewarded with better visibility)
- Stay up to date with industry trends through [blogs](#), news articles and ongoing training
- Allocate budget and resources for unexpected changes such as algorithm updates

Never Stop Learning!

The hallmark of a successful e-commerce business is a constant drive to learn something new.

Our most successful retailers and brands follow popular industry [blogs](#), network with other e-commerce pros, attend conferences and meet-ups, test, optimise and test again — and most important, remain eager to learn.

Use these e-commerce lessons to power you forward as you think strategically about next steps for your retail business.

To find out how ChannelAdvisor's e-commerce software and services can help you execute on what you've learned and move on to even more advanced selling across marketplaces, digital marketing channels and more, contact ukteam@channeladvisor.com.

Trust us. **Be Seen.**

To learn more:

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