



The Express Route to Multi-Channel eCommerce



About SellerExpress

SellerExpress helps retailers of all sizes sell across multiple eCommerce marketplaces including eBay, Amazon and Play.com as well as powering own store sales via the Magento eCommerce platform.

Unlike other multi-channel service providers we charge retailers a flat fee per month with **NO COMMISSIONS ON SALES** – meaning you keep more of your profits.

For a free 15-day trial of our software visit:

<http://www.sellerexpress.com>

or to speak with one of our advisors send us an email at:

sales@sellerexpress.com and we'll call you straight back.

Where Do You Want To Sell Today?

For the ambitious retailer there is only one answer to this question. You want to sell wherever your potential customers want to buy. In short you want to go where the people go.

Developing a multi-channel eCommerce strategy is all about extending your reach and widening your opportunity to win new business.

At SellerExpress we have more than 10-years' experience in helping retailers drive sales across a range of international eCommerce sites including Amazon, eBay and Play.com as well as helping power own store eCommerce sites on the Magento platform.

This guide is designed to highlight the opportunities available to retailers today, focus their minds on the challenges ahead and help them take their first steps to multi-channel eCommerce success.

For more information about SellerExpress
or to sign-up to our free 15-day trial visit:
<http://www.sellerexpress.com>

The More You Tell, The More You Sell

The opportunities for retailers to extend their reach, find new customers and maximise their profits through multi-channel selling have never been greater. But with these new opportunities come many challenges.

When retailers find themselves planning a multi-channel eCommerce strategy they often fall into one of the following three groups:

- **The Online Marketplace Trader:** Typically an independent retailer selling exclusively via online marketplaces such as eBay or Amazon. These smaller business might have found success on one or more eCommerce channel but perhaps feel frustrated by low barriers to entry, excess competition, high final-value sales fees, restrictive listing policies, limited functionality or lack of opportunity to take ownership of their customers.
- **The Pure Play Online Retailer:** A retailer who trades exclusively from their own website but wants to extend their reach across online marketplaces to acquire new customers, sell end of line stock, handle returns or perhaps experiment with new lines with limited risk. Pure Play Online Retailers often have complex systems in place to manage their own sales but might not have the technology or resource in place to handle sales and customer service-related issue across the various online marketplaces - which despite being considered a less sophisticated method of selling, conversely requires greater management.
- **The Bricks and Mortar Retailer:** The traditional high street shop, with high costs and low footfall, has fallen on hard times recently. It's little wonder these guys want to sell online. With a little forethought, a bit of strategy and some clever software the high street seller can turn the Internet to their advantage with services like click and collect and in-store returns, as well as more traditional Internet-based mail order services.

Although these three groups look very different, the challenges they face when adopting a multi-channel eCommerce strategy are often very similar.

These challenges might include:

- Listing products to multiple eCommerce channels both quickly and efficiently while ensuring each listing has been optimised to suit both the channel and product type
- Maintaining stock levels across multiple eCommerce channels, preventing over-selling, protecting reputation and avoid unnecessary costs
- Automatically re-pricing goods across multiple eCommerce channels to ensure competitiveness while maintaining margin
- Selling across multiple countries while monitoring fluctuating currency rates
- Syncing sales activity across multiple eCommerce channels with warehousing and fulfilment centres to ensure a smooth picking, packing and despatch process
- Delivering concise reporting across multiple eCommerce channels giving a detailed breakdown of individual channels as well as providing a global picture of their multi-channel activities
- Ensuring a single point of contact for expert help and support across all of your eCommerce channels
- Finding a solution that is both powerful and cost effective, helping them to maintain margins and maximise profits.

The Multi-Channel Opportunity

There is no clearly defined entry point for developing a multi-channel eCommerce strategy. Some retailers will have started experimenting with sales on a marketplace like eBay or Amazon, while others will have jumped head first into managing their own eCommerce sites. Others may be juggling multiple marketplaces and managing their own store sales (possibly dropping balls everywhere) and looking for guidance to build a more robust strategy.

This guide has been designed to introduce the key channels available to online retailers, highlight some of the more pressing challenges and dispel some myths and misconceptions.

For regularly updated analysis and advice on building a multi-channel eCommerce strategy visit the SellerExpress Blog:
<http://www.sellerexpress.com/category/blog/>
or follow us on Twitter: @SellerExpress



Why Should I Consider Selling on eBay?

FACT

eBay is the most visited eCommerce site in the UK. Can you afford not to be listing your products there?

eBay has evolved in recent years from an online auction site primarily targeting private sellers to a highly respected sales venue for retailers of all shapes and sizes, selling both fixed priced and auction goods. If you are in any doubt of the value eBay could offer your business take a look at some of the names of the companies currently trading on eBay. If you would like the opportunity to position your brand alongside the likes of Argos, House of Fraser, eBuyer or La Redoute, eBay now offers a very respectable place to do business.

Historically eBay has always provided an incredibly popular channel for retailers to maximise revenues from end-of-line, returns and other distressed inventory. However, thanks to changes in their listing fees (significantly reducing risk by reducing upfront listing costs) and the promotion of eBay Outlet stores, eBay have persuaded more large-scale retailers to list their entire inventory on the site.

Sellers on eBay also have the luxury of a multi-million pound advertising budget, helping to reposition the eBay brand as a premium shopping venue via a number of channels including paid search and the major comparison shopping engines, alongside television, press and other highly visibility advertising mediums.

The barriers to entry to selling on eBay are extremely low, meaning you can start listing and selling in a very short period of time.

Additional opportunities retailers should consider on eBay include:

- The ability to trade using multiple IDs: This is particularly useful if you want to separate your premium lines from discounted or distressed stock, or sell a diverse range of products which do not fit well under the same brand (i.e. ladies lingerie and fishing tackle).
- The ability to test new product lines: No need to invest in a branded store, just list and sell with minimum risk. Data analytic services like Terapeak can also be extremely useful when researching new eBay product lines.
- Easy expansion into international markets: eBay is a truly global business and as such opens up opportunities to trade internationally across multiple currencies

Challenges

eBay customers can be extremely high-maintenance. Thanks to the fact that virtually anyone can sell on eBay, trust is a major concern and eBay shoppers are likely to place considerable strain on your customer services team by asking lots of questions. You can minimise this by ensuring your listings are as detailed as possible and feature everything a prospective customer would want to know about the product, delivery options and your returns policy. You should be prepared to tackle all manner of questions, comments and complaints quickly and efficiently. Great customer service on eBay will help you build solid feedback which will in turn improve the visibility of your listings on the site, helping you to sell more.



Why should I consider selling on Amazon?

Amazon has an unrivalled reputation for service and choice. Their third-party marketplace represents a huge opportunity for retailers to sell new, re-furbished and used products alongside Amazon's own offerings.

Unlike eBay, Amazon has no history of being a cut-price sales venue and therefore has the potential to drive premium prices. For products already featured in the Amazon catalogue, listing is less time-consuming than eBay and due to their reputation selling via the Amazon platform should be less of a drain on your customer services resource (although you should be aware that Amazon expects all customer service issues to be resolved within 24-hours – and that includes weekends). Amazon does not charge to list products in their marketplace meaning retailers can list numerous items at zero cost until sold.

Additional opportunities retailers should consider on Amazon include:

- **International Expansion:** Like eBay, Amazon operates across multiple geographies and offers the opportunity to enter international markets both quickly and efficiently.
- **Warehousing and Fulfilment:** Fulfilment By Amazon (FBA) offers retailers the opportunity to place their stock and fulfil orders directly from Amazon's warehouses. This allows retailers to scale up and down quickly without the need to locate suitable warehousing or worry about staffing levels. FBA can also be used to ship goods ordered from other channels such as eBay or your own website. Goods shipped by FBA are marked as Shipped by Amazon, are eligible for free shipping and are often prioritised to receive the blue buy box on the Amazon product page.
- **Own Brand Products:** It is possible to add new products to the Amazon catalogue. If this product is exclusive to your range you will have almost complete ownership of the sale page and therefore face little competition (bar any second hand sellers). Full details of how to add new products to Amazon can be found here: <http://amzn.to/MOcYug>

Challenges

Multiple sellers share product listing pages with both Amazon and other third-party sellers, meaning retailers have very limited control over the images and text used to promote their products. Retailers who add new products to the Amazon catalogue do so in the understanding that other sellers can sell via their newly created product pages, potentially undercutting them and taking control of the blue buy box (where most of the sales action takes place).

Unlike eBay, Amazon gates certain categories (for example: Jewellery and Watches) to ensure a positive experience for their customers and protect their reputation. A non-brand retailer may have to jump through significant hoops with the Amazon seller team to gain access to these gated categories. Other categories, like toys, are gated in the run up to Christmas to ensure quality of service.

Amazon maintains ownership of the sale and therefore does not allow the retailer to re-market to the customer.

Warning: Amazon can also be extremely ruthless in suspending or removing retailers it feels do not maintain significantly high standards of customer care. Once removed, it can be incredibly hard to reinstate your account – so play carefully.



Why should I consider selling on Play.com?

Play.com offers retailers of CDs, DVDs, Books, Games and Consumer Electronics a significant supplementary channel to Amazon and eBay. Play.com has a very loyal customer base who appreciate their low prices and focus on entertainment and leisure.

Play.com's selling fees are very competitive with a standard 10% commission across all categories. Just like Amazon, Play.com manage all credit card transactions and include the fees in their commission. Like Amazon and eBay, Play.com offers extremely low barriers to entry and therefore represents an extremely viable additional channel to market.

Additional opportunities retailers should consider on Amazon include:

- **Be a Big Fish in a Small(er) Pond:** Play.com offers retailers a less crowded marketplace than eBay or Amazon which will counterbalance the lower traffic volumes the site receives and ensure good retailers achieve a wider share of sales than they might on other channels.



Why should I consider selling on my own store website?

This is where most multi-channel retailers should ultimately aim for the bulk of sales activity to take place. This is because it should be much cheaper (with no final value fees) to sell from your own site and you can also take ownership of the sale. This means you can then re-market to your customer and build customer loyalty and lifetime value.

Unlike the restricted environments of the various eCommerce marketplaces, the retailer is in full control of page design, product descriptions, related product offerings and checkout flow (where they can position added value items such as insurance and warranties).

Additional opportunities retailers should consider on own store websites include:

- **Email Marketing:** A low cost, high return marketing tool designed to help you retain customers and generate additional sales. Email works best when the message is relevant to a previous transaction or request so you should try and segment your contact details (collected at check out) by category or product type.
- **Blogging:** Adding a regularly updated blog to your site will ensure it remains fresh and current. It will also help with your SEO efforts (Google loves fresh content) and help build community around your site as people seek out information about your products.

- **Social Media:** Facebook and Twitter both provide a great tool for engaging with your customers and their wider group of friends and social media followers. Social Media does not however provide a great sales venue. It is best used in conjunction with your email and blogging activity.

Challenges

Driving traffic to your site can be difficult and expensive. Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising on sites like Google can be particularly draining on your marketing budget if you don't have the margin to cover the costs of multiple clicks. Before you spend any money on PPC advertising (acquisition marketing) you should first ensure your site is optimised to maximise conversions (i.e. both sales and the collection of contact details) and that any conversions or leads are followed up by a strategic campaign of retention marketing via email and social media.

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