



Janeson Keeley

Dan Smith

According to Forrester's Online Retail Forecast for 2010-2015, e-commerce sales grew 12.6 percent in 2011. The increase was from \$157 billion to \$176 billion, and the projection is \$279 billion by 2015. According to Customer Collective, "People are becoming familiar and friendly with the idea of buying online, saving time and money."

Five local e-commerce site owners offer the following tips on how to develop a successful and profitable on-line business.

Sell a unique product. "If you have a product that people want, you can be successful," says Shaun Stewart of Slingshot Cycles. Stewart operates www.slingshot-cycles.com, where he offers custom-made performance brake hoses for motorcycles.

Know and interact with your customers. "For many high-end products, where the market is specialized and distributed, you can approach your market at the grass roots level through social networking and online forums. There you can find out and tap into the buzz from key nodes in the social network. You can gain a reputation for quality information and authority and become one of those nodes in the social network," recommends Dan Dunlap, owner of Rocket Music (www.rocketmusic.net).

This approach helped make Rocket Music, which specializes in high-end guitar and bass gear made in the U.S., the number one John Suhr guitar dealer in the U.S. in 2010.

netFRONT

E-commerce: Open 24/7 >

Executive Summary:

Here are some suggestions from the expert class—the ones who own their own e-businesses.

By Janeson Keeley



Disaster Averted

Thanks to the IT experts at Entré.


Call us to learn the difference between networking and not working.

Become an expert. Based in Roanoke, ShopFoodEx is an online grocery service offering 11,000 items for sale through its Web site (www.shopfoodex.com), with nationwide delivery via UPS and USPS. In 2009 it was named one of the top 10 grocery delivery companies in the world. Greg Land, founder, has this advice for anyone starting a business: "Go into it with sheer passion. Study the business and become an expert in your field."

Test and refine your marketing efforts. Ron Knuppel, owner of Hazard Communications Specialists (www.hazardcorp.com), sells products that aid companies in meeting OSHA, EPA, and Department of Transportation regulatory requirements. He suggests that e-commerce business owners "closely monitor [their] advertising results compared to costs on a regular basis. E-commerce allows competition to affect your sales in a

matter of seconds, so on-going monitoring of ads/costs is extremely important."

Focus on customer service. Judy Mick, owner of JJM Marketing, sells American-made RADA cutlery and college jewelry and gift items through her eBay store (www.jjm-marketing.com). Her motto? "I want to treat my customers the way that I want to be treated as a customer." For her this means keeping inventory on hand and shipping within 24 hours of receiving an order. She explains, "I don't use drop shippers because I don't trust other people who may not have the work ethic that I have with my customers."

In other words, running a successful e-business is very similar to running any type of business. It's just that it's open 24/7 to anyone with an Internet connection. 

SPACE AVAILABLE



1,600 and 6,000 square feet available
3424 Orange Avenue • New façade • High traffic • Great location



40,000 square feet
3419 Orange Avenue • Will Subdivide • 4.82 acres • 300+ parking • Zoned for multiple use

For more information on these and other properties that we have available, please visit www.branchmgt.com today!



Contact Tom Branch or Mike Branch

4552 Franklin Road, S.W., Roanoke, Virginia 24014
Phone: 540-774-1208 | Fax: 540-774-1359
Email: bmc@branchmgt.com

Branch Management Corp. specializes in unique solutions to meet your needs.
Expanding | Downsizing | Ownership | Leasing | Selling | Purchase Lease Back