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8 Things to do while developing an e-commerce site with Drupal by [Valuebound](#)

Drupal' powerful CMS can deliver really strong professional websites suitable for any sector. And if you have an ecommerce store, then Drupal can be the best choice to go for. There are several advantages to building your business' e-commerce store with Drupal. Drupal provides search engine visibility, a tested security framework, as well as a highly scalable CMS system to work with.

Letâ€™s now go through the suggested steps that would help you to understand and build an e-commerce site for a client:

Step 1: Planning the specific features

While developing e-commerce and shopping carts for your clients, specifying the overall process can get difficult.

When you discuss about the functionality of a proposed e-commerce website, you should consider which modules will best suit the desired tasks.

Here are some questions to help guide your process:

a) Who are selling on this website?

Is it one main brand that is selling multiple products? Or there are representatives from multiple stores that are selling in a "marketplace" manner?

b) What kind of detailing will be there on a product listing?

Usually, a product listing has a minimum of 3-5 product photos, the "category" of the item, the title and description, SKU and price. Additional features may include "attributes" such as various sizes, color, texture, materials, etc. Or you may be required to display keywords or additional categorization levels. Work with your clients closely to understand their specific requirements.

c) Do products come singly or in groups?

For instance, a retailer selling an "emergency preparedness kit" may want to pre-create a selection of individual products into a "group" of products that are sold as one unit.

d) Do different "classes" of products need to have different information on the data entry form?

Suppose, your client has warehouse products where they need to store additional information such as warehouse location and number in stock, and they also sell "dropship" products where they need to store information on a supplier contact or internal link.

e) Will there be a member rewards program on the site?

Inform your client that, in today's retail environment, it's needed that they reach out to their customers through programs like loyalty programs, points programs, social media, forums and other community-building aspects of their website. Drupal helps your client to include these kinds of

features.

Step 2: Understanding the desired look-and-feel of the site

The general look and feel of the site should be clean and uncluttered, and the design should be visually striking. Design of e-commerce websites centers around three chief displays. They are the homepage, the category landing page, and the product details page. You should work with the client to understand how they want these three to work out for the site.

You have to find out the desired functionality from the clients. By going through the exercise of putting the desired elements out on paper, you can decide and assign a specific Drupal module or custom functionality to the desired need.

As for our personal experience, we've found it helpful when we requested our clients to find 5-8 other websites that match the look-and-feel that they desire to achieve, and point out the specific things they like about each website. With that list, we have better information when creating design samples.

Guide your client towards established brands so that they get a sense of how they want their website. Help your client review existing websites and even go through the checkout process so they can get the idea in how they want their own website to function.

Step 3: Digital Assets - Product Photography or Video

E-commerce beginners don't have a conscious understanding of the time involved and the necessity of creating clean, appropriate photographs for their website.

This is vital as the end customers can neither touch, nor smell or feel the products while shopping. Thus, the sellers must offer an eye-catching, engaging, and attractive photographs as much as possible and videos where needed. Multiple angles of a specific product are recommended.

If the client needs to bootstrap, they can feasibly take their own product photographs, at least 3000 pixels across and 5000 pixels high in 300 dpi. However, recommend to your client that professional photography does make a big difference.

Step 4: Moving into the Initial Build

It's good to keep things simple and straightforward. We recommend Drupal 6 with Ubercart for new e-commerce websites. Out-of-the-box, the standard Ubercart installation should be able to handle most of your needs for a full-fledged shopping cart. If you want to install Drupal 7, we still recommend Ubercart.

The following is a list of additional modules that we use, depending on the project and desired client needs. You can pick and choose from them to fit your situation:

What We Typically Use: (Recommended)

addthis

AddThis button added to specific content types

backup_migrate

For easy backups to SQL, or full backups of your site.

better_formats

To help you with sorting "input formats" - for instance, so that admins can always use "Full HTML" in their page edits.

ckeditor

Our favorite WYSIWYG Editor of the moment.

flag

For things like user-specific "Save to Wishlist" or "Flag as inappropriate" functionality

logintoboggan

This module allows you to sequester new signups and make sure they have a real e-mail. Also allows users to sign in using their e-mail address

nodequeue

Helpful if you're assigning content to a specific section, like a "Featured Products" or a "Featured Designer" area

simplenews

An easy-to-use newsletter function, with subscribe & unsubscribe options

site_map

Create a site-wide, user friendly sitemap

xmlsitemap

Create a machine readable XML version sitemap for submission to search engines

For More Community-building Features

invite

For allowing visitors to invite others

privatemsg

Private messages through the website

user_badges

To offer a "badge" on completion of specific tasks

user_relationships

To allow "friend" or "follower" type relationships

userpoints

Allow users to earn points for actions on the sites

userpoints_ubercart

Allow users to earn points for purchases

Of course there are there are many more hundreds of community-oriented and membership-building modules. If you search for your desired function, then most likely an existing or an emerging module will come up.

Step 5: Setting up the Store

The Configuration requires a few things to think about:

1)   Overall Store Variables:

The important information, such as the name of the store, the mailing address and phone number, and the e-mail address, should be configured in advance in the Store Variables section.

2) Categorization:

There is a pre-built "Catalog" module that may be turned on within Ubercart that allows you to sort your products into specific "categories."

If you use the Catalog function, you can set new categories using "Taxonomy".

3) Payment procedures:

PayPal and/or Google Checkout are typically very easy for your clients to set up. Enable these in your Modules list.

4) Attributes:

You might have to pre-configure the different "attributes" related to each product. You may add an attribute such as size, prizing, color, etc, when creating a new product.

5) Stock Inventory:

It is possible for Drupal to auto-decrement your stock, so you know at any time how much of the product is still available. You can set up the system to send you a reminder e-mail when stock levels reach a particular level.

6) Shipping information:

Depending on the shipping arrangements and the type of items in the store, you will need to list out the different Shipping Quote options.

7) Tax:

If your clientâ€™s company is based in a state and shipping within that state, there's a high probability that sales tax will need to be collected. Work with your client to understand their reporting needs.

Step 6: Preparing your Product Details Page

The default product details page may work nicely for your client's needs, particularly if they are a startup. However, you can also rebuild the node-product.tpl.php file (and store it in your theme folder) if you need more fine-grained control over the display of the page. The "Contemplate" module is also useful for configuring the look-and-feel of that product details page.

Step 7: Accepting Payment

PayPal, Google Checkout, and Authorize.net are the most commonly used payment methods in Ubercart.

If your client has a PayPal account to start with, this generally works well as credit card information is not stored on the website. If you choose the Authorize.net option, then you will also want to add some additional securitization on the site, including the setup of a dedicated IP address, setting up a Certificate Signing Request (CSR), purchasing a secure sockets layer (SSL) certificate, and installing the "Secure Pages" module.

Step Eight: Testing

Now, having done everything else, itâ€™s time for testing. The only way to test the store is to make some sample purchases on the site to ensure that everything is fine tuned and works as they should. Debugging information appears whenever there is an error, and in the "orders" confirmation page, you'll be able to notice all relevant orders. For future use, we also recommend you to install Google Analytics and Google AdWords for more targeted marketing purposes.

Hope, that this article succeeds in providing some valuable information to help you.

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