Marketing your e-Commerce business internationally

Overview

If you are running an e-commerce business, selling your products or services online, your website is your platform for overseas sales success.

You will need to consider whether your local website will support international sales or whether 3rd party platforms such as Amazon and e-bay, for example, would be appropriate for your product.

Whilst online platforms such as Amazon have a global reach, China, for example, has completely different platforms and so it is important to make sure you pick the right ones for the markets you are getting into. You will need specialist help with this so research it thoroughly and work with credible partners to get your products listed on the most appropriate sites.

Here are some points to think about to maximise the impact of your digital presence:

Website planning

Your website will be your gateway to your e-commerce success and it is important to map out the basics to begin with, like:

- How will your website work?
- How many products will you have on the site and how often will these change?
- What domain name will you have?

- How will you brand the site?
- Who will create and provide the content and images?
- Will your site be translated into other languages and if so, who will do this?
- How will any ordering process work?
- Which merchant services will you use to take payments?

Domain names

Here are some points to consider:

- Think about the domain name for your website carefully. It should tie in with your overall branding strategy and can become a valuable intellectual property asset in its own right.
- Consider putting a budget aside early on to seek help from marketing professionals to formulate a clear branding strategy.
- Check the domains and trademarks that are already in use so you secure the right ones at the beginning and before you do a lot of work on the site. As a starting point:
    - Check the domain name registers, trade mark registers and companies' house registers.
    - Check social media platforms to make sure you can have a consistent identity.
    - Keep look out for any other businesses already using the same or similar trademarks or domain names to those you are hoping to use.
- Remember to extend your searches to the relevant jurisdictions.
- From a commercial point of view, you may be wise to register all the domain names that you might wish to use in the future even if you are not actively trading on them initially.

Trade marks

Here are points to consider for your trade mark:

- Your trade mark is a valuable piece of intellectual property that will add value to your business.
- You will have far greater protection when trading and exporting online if you register your marks and logos

as trademarks because trademark infringement is far easier to pursue where you have registered your mark.
- There are a number of options from UK to EU to International Trade Marks depending on where you are going to trade.
- Trade mark registrations are not simple to do and so it is worth investing the fees in getting professional advice for your registrations.

Contract with your website developer

- Before you commission any website development ensure you agree the scope of the project and sign a development contract.
- Make sure you build analytics into the site from the start.
- Think about the customer journey through the site so you can maximise the opportunities to purchase.
- Work with a web developer who is experienced in e-commerce sites so you avoid the common pitfalls that reduce customer engagement.

Copyright considerations

Copyright is a type of intellectual property that doesn't need to be registered. It automatically exists and will subsist in all the content that appears on any website including, for example, the text itself, the images and any videos or other content.

Things to think about:

- Write your own content and don't copy from anywhere else on or offline as you could open yourself up to a claim for copyright infringement.
- If you are commissioning third parties to produce content such as photographs or text for your website, ensure that they assign the copyright to you.
- Where you are purchasing images from stock libraries check the license terms carefully to ensure your use of them is permitted. Keep the requisite documentation.

Always include a copyright notice on your website.

Online legal policies

- Your e-commerce website will need more sophisticated terms and conditions and policies than a less sophisticated site. In particular, you will need to comply with the various consumer and distance selling regulations in force in the market you are trading in.
- You should check your Terms and Conditions for Use of Your Website, Privacy and Cookies Policies and Data Protection Policies all of which should be available on your site.
- You must comply with the financial and tax regulations in place in your overseas markets. Make sure your payments partner can deal with these issues for you.

Localising your website

You will need to decide if you will have a Jersey website only or a local one for every country you sell.

Things to think about:

Translations

- Using translation apps on your website will provide a literal translation of your English content.
- Translation apps are relatively easy to install and are cheaper options than localisation.
- You might have different localisation strategies for different countries depending on their propensity to buy your product/service. So the bigger the market the more effort you put into localising it.
- Make it easy for a new user to see that there are different languages available. You can achieve this by placing the language selection in either the header of the website or in the footer.
- Think about using professional language services experts as they will translate culturally rather than literally and can give you advice on content and structure that will work for that market. Make sure you use translators who have worked on website localisation projects before.

Structure

- You could think about localising or translating specific parts of the site as a starting point.
- You might have a micro site in a local language that leads into your main site at a particular stage of the purchasing process.
- Think if you want to have multiple websites under a single domain or whether each website will have its own top level domain. There are benefits and considerations to both:
- One website with multiple sites underneath will be easier to manage and can reduce operational costs as you'll only need one domain name.
- On the other hand, single language websites can be built to respond to specific language requirements and online behaviour and can have more visibility and relevancy for search results.
- Localisation will make it easier to incorporate the requirements of that country's laws and regulations.

Culture

- Most consumers want to purchase from a website in their language and country.
- Think about how different cultures see imagery and colour, for example, green can mean jealously in the West but in the East it can be a sign of fertility. Responding to the nuances different cultures have can make a big difference on how those audiences will engage with your website.
- Digital platforms in China are completely different from those we are used to in the UK so get specialist advice when looking to enter or expand this market.

Analytics

- Having a local site will enable you to respond to the specific cultural and behavioural preferences of the market.
- Think about the keywords you will use to help with your search engine optimisation. You can tailor this to each country if you have local language sites.
- Using analytics on local websites will enable you to respond differently to the behaviour in each market.
- Testing your strategies and responding quickly to

changes in behaviour will help you optimise your website.

Marketing

Just because you have a website doesn't mean people will see it. You need a marketing strategy to get your site at the top of the search rankings in your overseas markets, so:

- Allocate a budget for marketing your website.
- Analytics are essential for ensuring your online marketing spend is getting results, so make sure you set up appropriate analytics from the beginning.
- Think about using social channels to push traffic to your site, but remember to use the channels that are appropriate for the country you are working in.
- Consider offline marketing and PR which is important when entering and building a new market.

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