GOING ONLINE:
A GUIDE TO LAUNCHING YOUR OWN E-COMMERCE SITE

SuperZoo

ONLINE RETAIL MEANS ADDED REVENUE

GONE ARE THE DAYS WHEN A TRIP TO THE STORE WAS THE ONLY WAY TO SHOP. Just ask the 79 percent of people who shop online, according to Pew Research. That's nearly eight in 10 people with purchasing power at their fingertips—on their computer keyboard or their mobile device. Reaching these people is the key to increasing revenue in a way your brick-and-mortar business simply can't accomplish.

But building your online presence isn't just about selling in a different way. There are additional benefits you may not have considered. Through an e-commerce site you can:

OFFER same-day delivery service to local customers.

PROVIDE in-store pickup options for customers who want in-person interaction along with the assurance that you have the product they're seeking.

TARGET nearby customers with localized ads.

CROSS PROMOTE your online store with your physical store through special offers, discount codes or coupons to increase traffic to both.

PROMOTE in-store events to engage online shoppers and encourage in-person shopping.
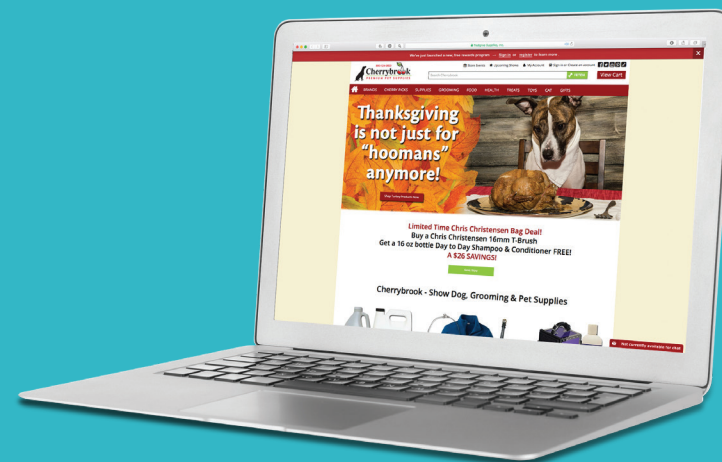
CASE STUDY:
Cherrybrook (cherrybrook.com)

This successful online retailer carries a full line of show dog, grooming and pet supplies. Its e-commerce success stems from:

✓ A pop-up introductory offer to hook new prospects

✓ Helpful product reviews and ratings

✓ An easy-to-use search tool

✓ Highlighted partners and associations, which improve search ratings

✓ Lead acquisition for first-time customers

ESTABLISHING YOUR E-COMMERCE STRATEGY

THE "WHY" PART IS EASY. IT'S THE "HOW" THAT GETS MORE COMPLICATED. Setting up an e-commerce site isn't as simple as, "If you build it, they will come." Successful e-commerce sites require strategic thinking—separate from your in-store merchandising strategy.

Do your research before your site gets up and running, considering the following questions:

WHO IS YOUR ONLINE CUSTOMER? What demographic are you trying to reach and what is the best way to reach them?

WHAT PRODUCTS SHOULD YOU SELL? Consider shipping costs for bigger or bulkier items, as well as product characteristics that may lend themselves better to in-person decision-making.

HOW WILL YOU HANDLE CUSTOMER SERVICE? Building customer loyalty is often easier in person. How can you extend the same extraordinary customer service you offer in-store to your online audience? Consider creating a help line or other method of online customer support that's available 24/7.

HOW WILL YOU MAKE SHIPPING SEAMLESS? With same- or next-day delivery so prevalent with successful online retailers, it has almost become the expectation that online purchases will arrive promptly. Consider offering in-store pickup for local customers and ensure you offer an affordable expedited shipping option.
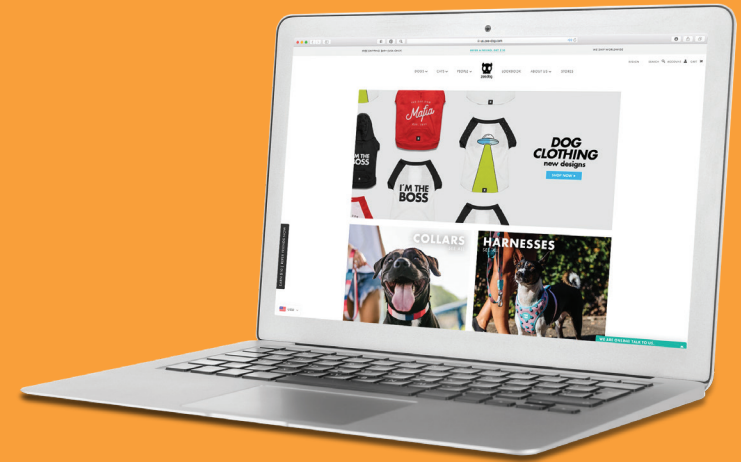
CASE STUDY:
Zee.dog (us.zee-dog.com)

This international retailer offers an attractive e-commerce site that boasts:

✓ Easy navigation

✓ High-resolution product images

✓ Contact information for physical store locations

✓ Customer service/chat function

✓ Easy checkout

✓ Free shipping

✓ Responsive design

SETTING UP YOUR SITE

ONCE YOUR STRATEGY IS IN PLACE, IT'S TIME TO GET DOWN TO BRASS TACKS. The first step is to reduce the intimidation factor that may come with information technology. Thankfully, there are many tools available to help even the most novice online retailers get your e-commerce sites off the ground.

Following a few-step process can simplify your site setup and get your online business up and running in no time.

1. **Sign up for an e-commerce platform:** Choose from a commercial out-of-the-box e-commerce website builder—like Shopify, Bigcommerce, Volusion or Big Cartel—or a self-hosted website created with WordPress or WooCommerce.

2. **Register with a merchant account to accept online payments:** Commercial e-commerce sites come with payment processors built in, while self-hosted setups require the creation of another account with a trusted payment processor like PayPal or Authorize.net. Customer security is integral to the success of this step.

3. **Optimize your site:** Ensure whatever program you select offers search engine optimization (SEO), as well as options to automate emails to allow for increased visibility and seamless customer interaction.
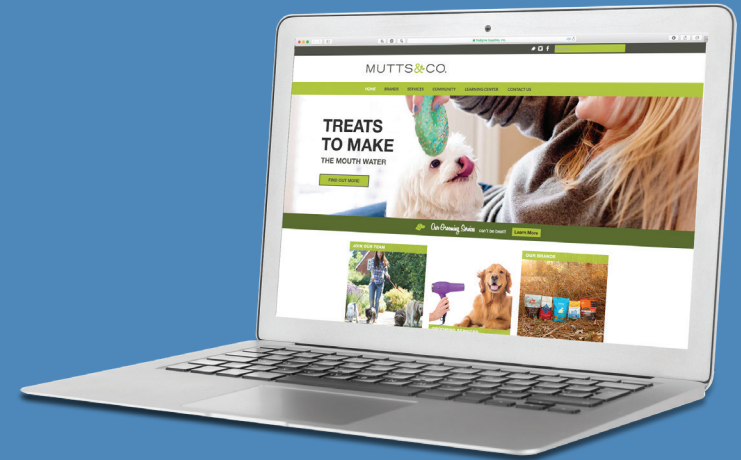
CASE STUDY:
Mutts & Co. (muttsandco.com)

Through its clean, engaging design, customer rewards program, and use of testimonials and social media, this brick-and-mortar business is seeing online success in the grooming, boarding and specialty services space, and will soon offer a menu of products for purchase.

MAKING ONLINE SHOPPING SIMPLE

THE WHOLE IDEA BEHIND ONLINE SHOPPING IS THAT IT SHOULD BE AS EASY AS POSSIBLE FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FIND WHAT THEY'RE LOOKING FOR QUICKLY. Navigating through pages and pages of products is antithetical to the ease of online shopping.

Ensure you appeal to your customers' desires for a quick, seamless shopping experience by:

MAKING products easy to search and pages easy to navigate.

OFFERING transparency on shipping costs and options right up front—before customers fill their carts.

ALLOWING customers to check out as a guest, rather than creating an account. Making their first shopping experience as pleasant as possible increases the likelihood they'll return and set up this account anyway.

FOCUSING on one big promotion at a time, so as not to overwhelm your customers with too many options.

USING a "recommendation engine" to introduce shoppers to other items they may be interested in based on their initial search.

Following this simple guide to going online will give you an edge over brick-and-mortar-only businesses and put you in a class that's ready to compete with big-box e-commerce sites.