

Assignment2Report FINAL

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by Henry Cobbold

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“Build a Prototype E-Commerce Website”

E-Commerce: M5X01030

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I. INTRODUCTION

There can be little doubt electronic commerce technologies and infrastructure are here to stay [1]. The development of e-trade opens the door to the possibilities of faster, and less restricted global trading, in some industries this must be real-time [1]. The potential to increase revenue by launching new trading platforms can enable firms to reduce overheads across the business [1]. This key attribute discussed throughout the paper, means far more than providing customers with the products and a virtual checkout.

Whilst there have been calls for new appropriate legislation to govern e-trading and help reduce its associated risks [2], e-commerce can be considered the next expected step for companies such as the plumbing store discussed here [3].

II. ORGANISATIONAL SCENARIO

To suitably discuss, evaluate and review different e-commerce practices and applications available the use of case study is advised.

Emrys runs a small local plumbing service, *Plumrite*. Alongside operating on a local scale, the small business, consisting of just several employees, is looking at incorporating Business-to-Business work to further both their advertising reach and the work opportunities open to them. The growth of the company up to this point could be considered a current issue with disorganized work practices having a detrimental effect on the work administration aspects of a daily schedule.

From a customer’s standpoint a digital platform to view is desirable. Prospective clients often like browsing products, even if they are actually looking to purchase them online [4]. Mixed-mode buying is one big draw of implementing a digital system as it gives the customer more time and space to explore what is being offered [4].

The current paper-based administration practices are having negative effects on the ability to provide core services for B2C customers and is also making it much harder for the business to successfully break into the new area of B2B trade. By providing a web presence the company can extend its current client base and provide an extensive platform to discuss trade

offers with other plumbing wholesalers, installers and prospective component procurement firms.

However, before building a system the need should have been clearly identified, mainly understanding what it is the site offers the business and how its presence extends the business model(s).

The big decision to adopt e-business affects the whole organization. Embracing e-business enables companies to reduce costs and both improve customer interaction speed and mediums. A company that can successfully transform the entirety of its business procedures can benefit vastly from numerous new possibilities brought about by both the technology and a fresh new strategy [1].

The benefits of an e-commerce platform for an enterprise is not always suitable. Some high-valued, high-demand goods do not easily fit in the e-commerce design [5]. A contributing factor to this is the hesitance to purchase due to the risk to personal information and breach of their personal data [6],[7], more of which is outlined in *section IV*.

E-Commerce development and growth can be categorised into three core areas [8], with the aim of providing a dynamic and responsive e-commerce platform [8], and although applied in this source on a national scale, has similar significance on a corporate level.

Readiness considers the company-specific factors influencing the implementation of a system [8]. As identified in *section I*, the need for e-sales and e-marketing has been clearly justified, but what about the transition period from the existing practises to an online format?

Intensity attempts to forecast the use of an e-business platform, its scope, volume and nature of the transactions that it would be required to process [8].

Impact. This looks at how e-commerce sites can provide further sales or advertising opportunities alongside simply migrating existing services across to a new platform. To provide a comprehensive view “*statistics are needed to evaluate whether and to what extent e-commerce makes some kind of difference in terms of efficiency and/or the creation of new sources of wealth*” [8].

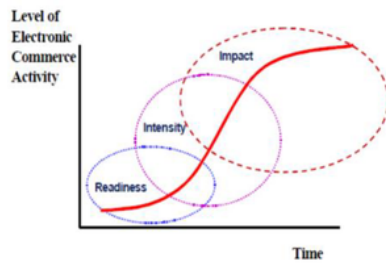


Fig 1: stages of e-commerce development on time and electronic effort [8]

Other tools can be used to directly evaluate the suitability of the product or service itself. *Kare-Silver's* 'electronic shopping test' compares the consumers tendency to purchase a retail product across the medium of e-commerce [9]. The framework suggests factors key in this decision process:

- 1) *Product Characteristics* "Does the product need to be physically tried or touched before it is bought?" [9].
- 2) *Familiarity and Confidence*. Provides an insight into the level with which the consumer recognizes and trusts the product or brand in question. [9]
- 3) *Consumer Attributes*. This measure is designed to identify if a customer is able to suitably use the technology to purchase or acquire the item. Does the site on which the products are being sold need special treatment is it similar to the most basic, yet effective platforms? It considers if customers "wish to shop for a product in a traditional retail environment?" [4]. A score out of 50 can be applied to each item, however it is stressed, likely due to the changing requirements of the buyer and the nature of the product, this is performed systematically. Items that surpass a score of 20 could be seen as possessing "good potential" [9] for the businesses e-commerce platform [4].

III. E-COMMERCE INFRASTRUCTURE

Any company deliberating over an e-commerce platform is faced with a highly varied choice. Settling on a site is partly down to the fact e-commerce sites today are more than products and a shopping cart [3], yet despite some high setup costs they are commonly far more financially reasonable than physical stores [10]. E-commerce solutions have had to advance as the user has become more demanding [4],[11]. Builders now include primary functionality for vast quantities of products, shopping cart, store checkout, site navigation, shipping and handling and some premium systems some level of integration to an 'Order Management System' (OMS), of which there are many [12], or an 'Enterprise Resource Planning System' (ERP) [13]. Couple these extensive sales and planning tools with the latest, dynamic Web 2.0. Crisp audio, integrated customer reviews, social media plugins and feeds and a comprehensive sales and marketing site can be developed. 'Standard' options such as roll-over and drag and drop carts (whereby users can simply drag the item to the shopping cart without leaving the current

page), and one-page checkout [3]. Amazon have taken this concept one further with the option to checkout in just 'One-Click' [14].

One way to get online and mitigate punchy up-front investment costs is to use pre-configured e-commerce stores such as Amazon or eBay. Such platforms have a larger internet following, which reduces the need for extensive (and expensive) up-front marketing campaigns in quite the same way as potential customers, especially B2C for a plumbing business, could already be waiting [15].

Whilst sites such as those outlined above are highly suited to SME's, their nature limits the options for customisability. The options available to perform something as simple as the ability to change promotions is integral to such sites, or to completely redesign core website elements such as the navigation structure [3]. "How flexible does the solution really need to be?" [3] is key question.

One such benefit of providing images, videos and interactive content is to gain customer trust. From the customers perspective, if presented with little information, there can be little guarantee that the retailer will uphold ethical behaviour and distance themselves from practises such as discriminative pricing, promoting erroneous information or arguably the biggest fear – illegally, or purely unethically, distributing personal data [16].

IV. EVALUATING MONETARY TRANSACTION

The exponential growth of internet has assisted the popularity of e-payment methods, an integral aspect e-commerce. This has however created the need for new digital payment systems [16]. Some studies still suggest found that cash and cheques remain as popular payment modes because consumers are not convinced of the benefits of using e-payment [7]. The perceived failure of some e-commerce systems convincingly convey system design and deployment in relation to users expectations [16]. In 2014, global online retail sales reached "\$1.3 trillion annually", "representing over 5% of total global retail sales" [17]. Although record levels of activity underscore sales opportunities, 96% of all visits to a website do not end with product purchases [18]. This figure is even worse when consumers switch to mobile devices (1.2%) [7],[18].

Söderlund et al. during a study in 2014 suggested 54% of visitors left a retail outlet without making a purchase. While this of a concern to physical stores, the conversion rate of ecommerce websites was incomparable. At (2–4%) it was significantly lower when conducted by *Sohrabi et al.* during 2012 [15].

Numerous research findings have showed that perceived risk has a detrimental effect on willingness to undertake a transaction on an e-commerce platform. Research compiled by *Gupta and Kim* also reported that perceived risk has an adverse impact to purchase aims as a result of wariness

regarding value provided by that potential business [10],[12]. On the contrary, marketing researchers have suggested that the attributes of a service have significant impacts on its perceived risk levels [10],[12].

Payment schemes can be categorized as 'transaction method' in which single payment does not require previous arrangement between purchaser and vendor. The '*Account method*' [19] authenticates in with the purchaser and vendor's bank to ascertain the legitimacy of the transaction agreement between both before carrying out the real payment transaction [19]. There are four major components of e-commerce, the "*Merchant Account*", "*Security System*", the "*Shopping System*" and the "*Payment Gateway*" (the latter essential for real-time processing of receipts [20], all of which should be fundamental aspects of the *Plumrite* system.

On the organizational level, a large proportion of financial institutions and companies use the World Wide Web to exchange financial data to "*facilitate domestic and international business*" [20]. the use of e-commerce and e-payment does not just apply to the customer, *Plumrite* themselves must be aware when undertaking financial to other external sites.

Aside from periodically troubleshooting the internal and external system networks, undertaking daily operational maintenance can reduce the possibility of many types of system breach. thus, the risks to the system are reduced and the efficiency of e-commerce is improved. [2]

V. DEFINING E-COMMERCE METRICS

Due to the highly varying complexion of digital e-commerce the process of defining suitable evaluation metrics is widely disputed [21]. One of the biggest metrics used to gauge the success of a business, both for online and 'brick-and-mortar', is that of *market share* [22]. This metric shouldn't be used as a singular aim as it includes a range of metrics that provide suitable gauges with which to review the condition in the scope of its market. Neither should it be considered a 'Return on Investment' (ROI) figure [22] for comparable explanations.

The position of a business in its market can be guided by the state of its competitors. The relative success of a business can determine the trade opportunities open. By growing as a business *Plumrite* could look at commercial supply to small, businesses in the Swansea area. The strength of the market could influence the decision to develop an e-commerce store in the first place, thus making competitors an aspect of *Intensity* considerations [22].

It is advised businesses explore whether market share is even a key driver in the target industry. This is key to realise as companies in some industries are not driven by the goal of a sizeable market share [22], partially a result of no correlation between market share and profit. For a business such as plumbing market share should be a significant importance, as outlined in the business scenario small-to-medium B2C jobs

comprise their daily work. By developing an e-commerce system for plumbing in Swansea the business could be considered dominant, with the aim to secure footholds in other areas of UK.

Due to the user's perception of internet ordering some customer-focused metrics can be applied. Online customers demand a fast service throughout their time on a site. If online businesses do not delivery swiftly it can leave customers dissatisfied with their service [4]. Separate research from Microsoft and Google shows that is only takes a quarter of a second delay in page loading time for customer frustration to build. Microsoft found that a delay of 2 seconds resulted in a "*4% loss of revenue*" [11]. Any delays is likely to proceed a drop in usage with the abandoning web sites and conversion figures. [4].

Alongside softer, less direct success metrics discussed above, which are often poorly selected as a single guide, are smaller, precise measurements. If correctly gathered and processed, these are far more effective and can provide the answer to the larger, subjective questions outlined above. By considering the niche e-commerce metrics to evaluate site success, there are also far more generic guidelines that ensure, beyond just that of the e-commerce aspect, the platform constructed and functions desirably from a customer and industry standpoint [23].

Source [21] highlights a combination of highly generic website metrics, as well as some more relevant to e-commerce stores, albeit defined at a generic degree. Although advantageous they do not consider how they are measured, and equally important, when they are applicable [21]. Given the level of the metrics they are equally appropriate for B2C and B2B clients.

Alongside factors discussed above more detailed frameworks, such as the 6 stages of B2B e-commerce, can help this business understand both how commercial clients shop and appropriate techniques on how to tailor aspects of the website for their more specific needs.

By considering the 6 stages of B2B E-Commerce for the *Plumrite Commercial* aspect of the site its relative success can be gauged. It is one such framework that can be used to truly quantify the wider areas of '*Website Design*', '*Website Content*', '*Transaction Process and Volume*' and '*Shopping Process*' discussed above.

As clearly outlined in this business scenario B2C work currently takes up most of the business time. Being the largest aspect of operations, it is crucial a new site provides the same resilient base for this work that the current, albeit overwhelmed, paper-based system offers.

VI. E-COMMERCE DEVELOPMENT AND SITE VIEWS

Fig. 3. to Fig. 7. Show how elements of the site design above are integral to the site design, the most critical of which is providing appropriate reassurance

- Including direct quotes from existing or previous customers clients share their experiences, if the service they receive is good this is great to encourage favourable 'word of mouth'.
- Product guides, key for informing the user before they perform any product-based browsing on the site. Key for helping educate the user and increase the chances of users then purchasing products from your site.
- Studies relating to typical e-commerce activities (online shopping, banking and e-payment systems) found that before customers used them there convenience and financial benefits were the foremost thoughts [16]. However in the SME sector where often resources and expertise are limited, this activity must be accomplished with considerable efficiency and cost effectiveness [15], as highlighted above.
- As items can only be delivered in the UK when ordered, the use of the e-commerce system has extended the reach of the business beyond that of the Swansea region of South Wales and has revolutionised the trading hours. Full order, payment and delivery information is available on the websites 'Delivery and Returns' page. Considerable thought has gone into the development of the sites terms and conditions, as this is a big consideration for users when buying online.

IF YOU NOT TOTALLY SATISFIED...

Product Delivery Policy

All orders are subject to product availability. If an item is not in stock at the time you can place your order, using the 'Customer Service' quoted telephone number and email address. Items offered on our website are only available for delivery to addresses in the United Kingdom (excluding Northern Ireland). Any deliveries outside of the United Kingdom are not available at this time.

Delivery times are estimates and commence from the date of shipping, rather than the date of order. Delivery times are to be used as a guide only and are subject to the acceptance and approval of your order. Please note we do not dispatch orders on Sundays. Where possible, and appropriate, products will be delivered in the same package.

Shipping costs are based on the weight of your order and the delivery method. To find out how much your order will cost, simply add the items you would like to purchase to your cart, and proceed to the checkout page. Once at the checkout screen, shipping charges will be displayed. Additional shipping charges may apply to remote areas or for large or heavy items. You will be advised of any charges on the checkout page.

Damaged Items in Transit: If there is any damage to the packaging on delivery, contact us immediately at the 'Customer Service' telephone number of email address. See opposite

Questions: If you have any questions about the delivery and shipment or your order, please contact our 'Customer Service' department.

Product Return & Exchange Policy

Returns

We accept returns. You can return **re-saleable** items in the original packaging within 30 days of your purchase with receipt or proof of purchase. If 30 days or more have passed since your purchase, we cannot offer you a refund or an exchange.

Upon receipt of the returned item, we will fully examine it and notify you via email, within a reasonable period of time, whether you are entitled to any exchange (dependent on re-sale state of returned item). If you are entitled to a return, we will refund your purchase price and a credit will automatically be applied to your original method of payment. Sale items will be refunded at their purchased price and not the prior-sale cost of the item.

45, Vernon Way,
Llansamlet,
Swansea,
SA7 9QR.

Refunds do not include any shipping and handling charges shown on the order invoice. Shipping charges for all returns must be prepaid and insured, as desired, by the customer. The customer is responsible for any loss or damage to equipment during shipment. We do not guarantee that we will receive your returned item, this is the courier's duty.

To follow-up on the status of any returns, please contact 'Customer Services'.

Return Exceptions

Bespoke Commercial services are non-refundable and non-exchangeable. The full terms and conditions of the contract will be clearly outlined in the contractual agreement.

Fig 2: Outlining returns information

PLUMRITE POLICIES

Customer Care

Users must use this website for legitimate purposes and not for any illegal or unauthorized purpose, including - but not limited to violation of any intellectual property or privacy law. You agree to not use our website to conduct any activity that would constitute a criminal offence or violate laws. You agree not to attempt to interfere with our website's network or security features or to gain unauthorized access to our systems, in any form. You agree to provide us with accurate personal information, such as your email address, mailing address and other contact details in order to complete your order or contact you as appropriate. You authorize us to collect and use this information to contact you in accordance with our Privacy Policy.

General Conditions

We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone, at any time, for any reason. We reserve the right to make any modifications to the website, including terminating, changing, suspending or discontinuing any aspect of the website at any time, without notice. We may impose additional rules or limits on the use of our website at any time. You agree to review the Terms regularly and your continued access or use of our website will mean that you agree to any changes imposed. You agree that we will not be liable to you or any third party for any modification, suspension or discontinuance of our website or for any service, content, feature or product offered through our website.

Products or Services

All purchases through our website are subject to product availability. We may, in our discretion, limit or cancel the quantities offered on our website or limit the sales of our products or services to any person, household or region. Prices for our products are subject to change, without notice. If we believe that you have made a false or fraudulent order, we will be entitled to cancel the order and inform the relevant authorities. We do not guarantee the accuracy of the colour or design of

Privacy & Safety

We are committed to maintaining the accuracy, confidentiality, and security of your personally identifiable information ("Personal Information"). As part of this commitment, our privacy policy governs our actions as they relate to the collection, use and disclosure of Personal Information.

Our privacy policy is based upon the regulations defined by the 'General Data Protection Act' (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 1988

1. Introduction

We are responsible for maintaining and protecting the Personal Information under our control. We have designated an individual or individuals who are responsible for compliance with our privacy policy.

2. Identifying Purposes

We collect, use and disclose Personal Information to provide you with the product or service you have requested and to offer you additional products and services we believe you might be interested in. The purposes for which we collect Personal Information will be identified before or at the time we collect the information.

3. Consent

Knowledge and consent are required for the collection, use or disclosure of Personal Information except where required or permitted by law. Providing us with your Personal Information is always your choice. However, your decision not to provide certain information may limit our ability to provide you with our products or services. We will not require you to consent to the collection, use, or disclosure of information as a condition to the supply of a product or service, except as required to be able to supply the product or service.

4. Limiting Collection

The Personal Information collected will be limited to those details necessary for the purposes identified by us. With your consent, we may collect Personal Information from you in person, over the telephone or by corresponding with you via physical mail or the internet.

Fig 3: Privacy information is essential

the products on our website. We have made efforts to ensure the colour and design of our products are displayed as accurately as possible on our website. Usability guidelines have been considered throughout, the suitability of which cannot be guaranteed, especially through times of intense content update or structure review.

Payment Methods

The E-Commerce store accepts the following payment methods:

- Credit / Debit Cards
- PAYPAL

'Offline payments' may only be conducted at the physical 'Plumrite' premises, as noted in delivery and order

information any customers using offline payments will be refunded in the same format, resulting in the requirement of an 'in person' cash refund.

See 'Privacy and Safety' for more information regarding the collection, storage and use of the fore-mentioned digital and offline payment methods.

5. Limiting Use, Disclosure and Retention

Personal Information may only be used or disclosed for the purpose for which it was collected unless you have otherwise consented, or when it is required or permitted by law. Personal Information will only be retained for the period of time required to fulfill the purpose for which we collected it or as may be required by law.

6. Accuracy

Personal Information will be maintained in as accurate, complete and up-to-date form as is necessary to fulfill the purposes for which it is to be used.

7. Safeguarding Customer Information

Personal Information will be protected by security safeguards that are appropriate to the sensitivity level of the information. We take all reasonable precautions to protect your Personal Information from any loss or unauthorized use, access or disclosure.

8. Openness

We will make information available to you about our policies and practices with respect to the suitable management of your Personal Information.

Upon request, you will be informed of the existence, use and disclosure of your Personal Information, and will be given access to it. You may verify the accuracy and completeness of your Personal Information, and may request that it be amended, if appropriate. However, in certain circumstances permitted by law, we will not disclose certain information to you. For example, we may not disclose information relating to you if other individuals are referenced or if there are legal, security or commercial proprietary restrictions.

You may direct any questions or enquiries with respect to our privacy policy or our practices by contacting 'Customer Services'.

Fig. 4: Privacy information (cont.) and payment



Fig. 5: promoting the reputation

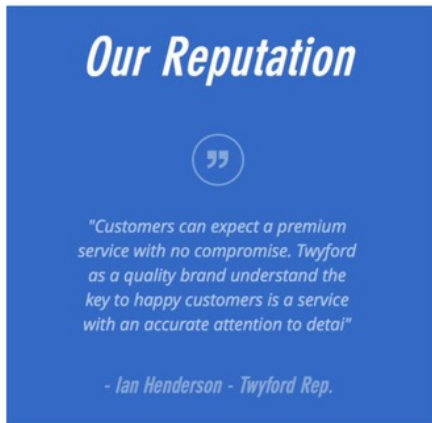


Fig. 6: gaining high quality and profile B2B contacts

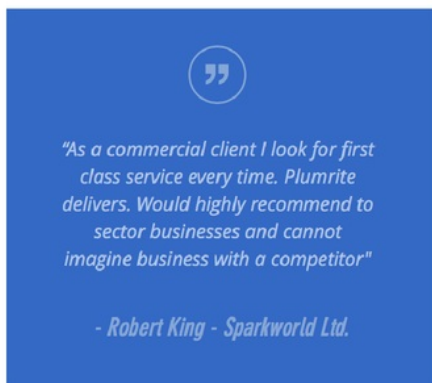


Fig. 7. B2B clients act as useful customer guides

The name 'Plumrite' and its affiliates, its logo, products (and product information) are fictitious and designed solely for educational purposes relating to the scope of the assignment. Elements of the products listed have come from the site developer and are noted on the site as appropriate.

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FINAL GRADE

78/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

Scenario
Excellent research and academic writing demonstrated in your discussion. Whilst this is a great section overall a simle list of benefits for the organisation would have improved it.

Infrastructure
Again excellent research which is applied at the end of the assignment to give practical implementation points.

Monetary Transactions
Very good research and academic writing - a summary of the key points for the business would be helpful.

Metrics
Great discussion of your research findings taking a critical approach and making practical suggestions for the scenario.

Overall
A very good assignment. Hard to make recommendations for improvements but how about a table with key recommendations. Well done!

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