

1. **Product Line**

A niche product line is a very good thing. If what you are selling is available on Amazon, then you should ask yourself what you can offer as a value-add, such as service, information, guarantees, or possibly even some entertainment. Successful ecommerce niches can include pet supplies, hobbies, industry-specific tools/supplies, and specialized business-to-business markets. If your product line naturally generates repeat orders or if you can creatively build your business to encourage repeat orders, you will be doing yourself a big favor.

2. **Mindset**

If your business is small, then you want to use your size to your advantage. You are going to have a tough time going head-to-head against the big players in the industry. Instead, develop your personalized message and emphasize the human touch that you provide. Build relationships with your customers after your initial product sale with follow-up emails, requests for reviews, and email marketing with specials. The successful owner is pulling out all the stops. Sell yourself with your photo and your story on your website. People want to do business with someone they can trust. If you are a sincere, helpful, and trustworthy person, don't be shy about sharing that with the world, or at least with your customers.

3. **Abilities**

You can build a successful web business, even if you don't possess a wealth of technical knowledge. Be realistic about where your skills and abilities are. Don't get bogged down in the technical minutiae of running a web server. Go with an ecommerce platform that provides the tools and resources you need to be successful. Unless you have some computer expertise, going the bare bones route is probably not going to serve your business for very long. Make sure your site is built on top of a solid content management system that allows you to focus on your marketing and customer service and not the mechanics of having a website.

4. **Website Presentation**

Your website is at the center of your success. You will want to put a priority on nurturing and improving your site over time. The simplest step you can take is to update your home page regularly so the information is accurate and timely. The site owners we see who are successful are pretty obsessive about their sites. The most successful sites are not necessarily the most beautiful. But they have well-developed category and product presentation. The home page is always displaying a timely message.

5. **Relationship Building**

Over the past year, the social aspect of the web has flourished. As a small business owner, you need to pick your spots carefully and develop a social media plan. If you have time to devote to a blog, Facebook, or Twitter, that is fabulous. It will benefit you to explore all available channels. But if your time is limited, focus on taking small steps to develop your website as a social hub. Build strong bonds with your customers by asking for their feedback, giving them incentives to refer others, and genuinely listening to what they say.

The successful site owner responds to customers immediately, has the ability to communicate via online formats, and is a phenomenal resource for customers. If you have a knack for writing then take advantage of that at every turn, whether it is via a blog or some featured relevant articles on your site. Always be asking yourself how you can connect and build trust with your customers.

6. **Use of New Technology**

You don't need to be a tech "whiz" to make your business work. But you do need to

embrace technology. In a rapidly changed online world, it is hard to flourish by standing still. Whether it is your site's search engine optimization, comparison shopping feeds, or on-site merchandising features, you want to identify ways to keep moving forward. Many elements like social bookmarking widgets are free and easy to add to your website.

Video is a prime example where we have seen some small business owners do great things. With an inexpensive setup, you can be posting your own videos to YouTube and develop a whole new channel of potential customers. Be willing to try new technologies and see if you can align yourself with vendors who responsibly role out new functionality.

Summary

The successful small ecommerce business owner is competing on her own terms. With a focused product line, a commitment to connect closely with customers, and intelligent use of available technologies. You can stay ahead of the curve and build a strong, sustainable e-business.