5 Things
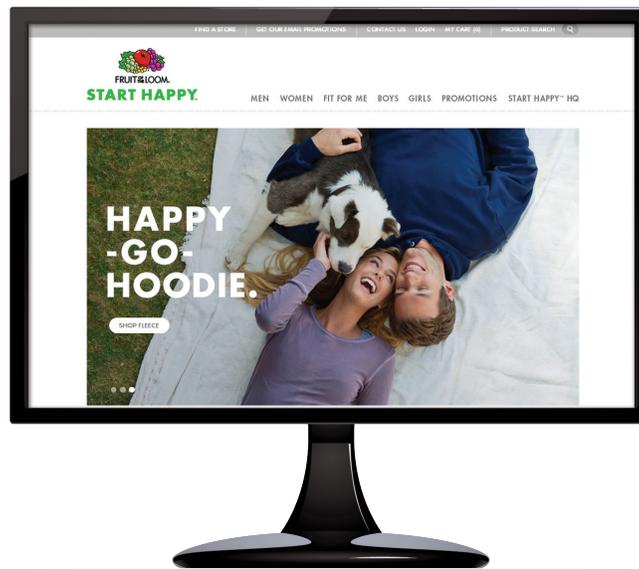## Your Commerce Platform Should Do For You

amazonwebstore

Selecting an eCommerce platform is a tricky proposition, as the platform can either restrict or facilitate the growth of the business. In addition to needing to meet basic business requirements, a platform must often pass the muster of top management, meaning that an eCommerce professional must not only select a platform, but be able to sell it to the decision makers within an organization.

One mistake many eCommerce professionals make is selecting an eCommerce platform based on its most commoditized front-end features—such as flashy site design feature set or social media plugins. The reality is that these features are often easily replicated on other platforms, meaning that those looking for a platform solution need to look deeper in finding a platform that meets their business needs.

In selecting an eCommerce platform, then, the key is to not be distracted by small-scale features, but instead to look at what the platform does for you. In particular, you'll do well to focus on finding a platform that:

1. **Includes everything you need out of the box**, so you're not left needing additional payment gateways, fulfillment integrations, and a host of other services

2. **Takes care of the details for you** in terms of fraud protection, tax collection, and other necessary details

3. **Gives you options**, through API's and extensibility

4. **Provides an infrastructure you can grow on**, that's scalable and reliable, on both the front-end and back-end of the business

5. **Lets you sleep at night**, knowing that the provider can handle your site and is going to be around for the long term.

1. INCLUDES EVERYTHING YOU NEED OUT OF THE BOX

When Two Cool, Inc. hit a rough patch because of the declining economy in 2008, CEO Rob Goodwin took a good, hard look at the company's eCommerce site—and why it wasn't profitable. The culprit? Trying to get too many different solutions to all work together.

"There were four entities we had to interface with at least monthly, either by collecting data from them or paying a fee for services rendered," said Goodwin. "And if there was a difficulty anywhere along the way, we'd have to work through the technical staff of any one of those four to get things resolved."

Goodwin eventually moved the company's eCommerce site to the Amazon Webstore platform, noting that using a turnkey platform eased this load. With payment processing built in, as well as site hosting, security, and easy integration with other services, the site became much easier to manage and ultimately more profitable. Goodwin also chose to take advantage of built-in

integrations that allowed his company to also easily sell their products on Amazon.com itself, and use Fulfillment by Amazon to pick, pack, and ship their orders.

"Now the sales are coming back and we're growing," Goodwin says. "We're growing at a better pace, and it's controlled and managed growth. Amazon has significantly reduced the amount of accounting we have to do in regard to all of these back-end expenses that kept showing up. These were the significant expenses and the trailing dollars that the credit card companies, the authorizing companies, and my previous shopping cart were all charging on every part of a every transaction."

In your next eCommerce platform: Look for a solution that includes all the commoditized eCommerce functionality out of the box—hosting, payment processing, security, and everything else that your business does not get value from spending time on.

2. TAKES CARE OF THE DETAILS FOR YOU

The state of Georgia has an interesting holiday every year—in the fall, just in time for back to school, the state holds a "tax free weekend." All transactions on certain categories of products that take place in the state during that weekend are free from

sales tax, a move that spurs increased retail spending every year.

For some retailers, this holiday can be a curse as well as a blessing. While they

certainly welcome an increase in orders, depending on the platform, adjustments to the tax collection sometimes have to be implemented manually. The "holiday" requires enough extra effort that the incremental sales aren't profitable for the company. They have to take care of all the details themselves.

A sophisticated eCommerce platform, however, will ease that load—and Amazon Webstore handles the tax holiday for these retailers without missing a beat. When it comes to some of the more complex and difficult parts of running an online business— fraud protection, regulatory compliance, and others—it can be costly in terms of both money and resources to handle them in-house; and, certainly, they are things that your eCommerce platform can (and should!) be doing for you.

In your next eCommerce platform: Look for a platform that does the detail-oriented work for you—so you can focus on selling rather than spinning your wheels on efforts that don't grow your business.

3. GIVES YOU OPTIONS

The presence of an extensibility layer— including comprehensive customer- and backend-facing APIs—is of primary importance to many eCommerce companies. It's the data provided by these services that allows business to create any of the custom features and integrations it needs, as opposed to relying strictly on a platform's out-of-the-box features.

As an example, take a look at Stash Tea and the "Tea Finder" that they've added to their site, using the Amazon Webstore platform's search API. It allows customers to the site to quickly find what they're looking for—black or green, caffeinated or not, loose or bagged, and any combination of the above. Looking around for a platform that offers a stock "tea finder" as a built-in feature is likely a losing cause, but Stash took advantage of the options afforded them by a robust set of APIs, and built the feature that exactly met their business need.

Further, many companies find significant efficiencies in linking their eCommerce platform to an existing ERP or inventory system. Some platforms lack access to the right data for such an integration, sending businesses looking elsewhere for a platform that gives them the options they need.

In your next eCommerce platform: *Look for a set of APIs that will allow you to build the features that you really need, and hook into the backend systems that your business is already using.*

4. PROVIDES AN INFRASTRUCTURE YOU CAN GROW ON

One mistake many businesses make in calculating the ROI of their eCommerce presence is failing to realize what happens when they grow: being online can get more expensive.

Businesses who have custom-built, in-house eCommerce solutions—or those who host a platform in-house—know that the technical infrastructure of an eCommerce is costly to acquire and maintain. Increased traffic on the site means the need for additional servers and load balancers, and many businesses are unable to hold significant sales or promotions because their infrastructure would not be able to handle the traffic spike without jeopardizing the customer experience.

Many SaaS-based eCommerce platforms put caps on storage and bandwidth and charge more as traffic and sales go up—and if they go up too much, then many platforms will collapse under the load. When a retailer of women's handbags decided to hold an online flash sale, their site crashed when 96,000 people converged on the site at the same time, resulting in downtime and the loss of perhaps millions of dollars in possible sales. When they moved to the Amazon Webstore platform, built on Amazon's cloud hosting, they handled hundreds of thousands concurrent users without any latency or downtime—and without losing any sales.

In your next eCommerce platform: *Look for an infrastructure that will be able to grow with your company—handling the day-to-day traffic but also providing the flexibility to hold holiday sales, flash sales, or other promotions that boost your traffic and sales.*
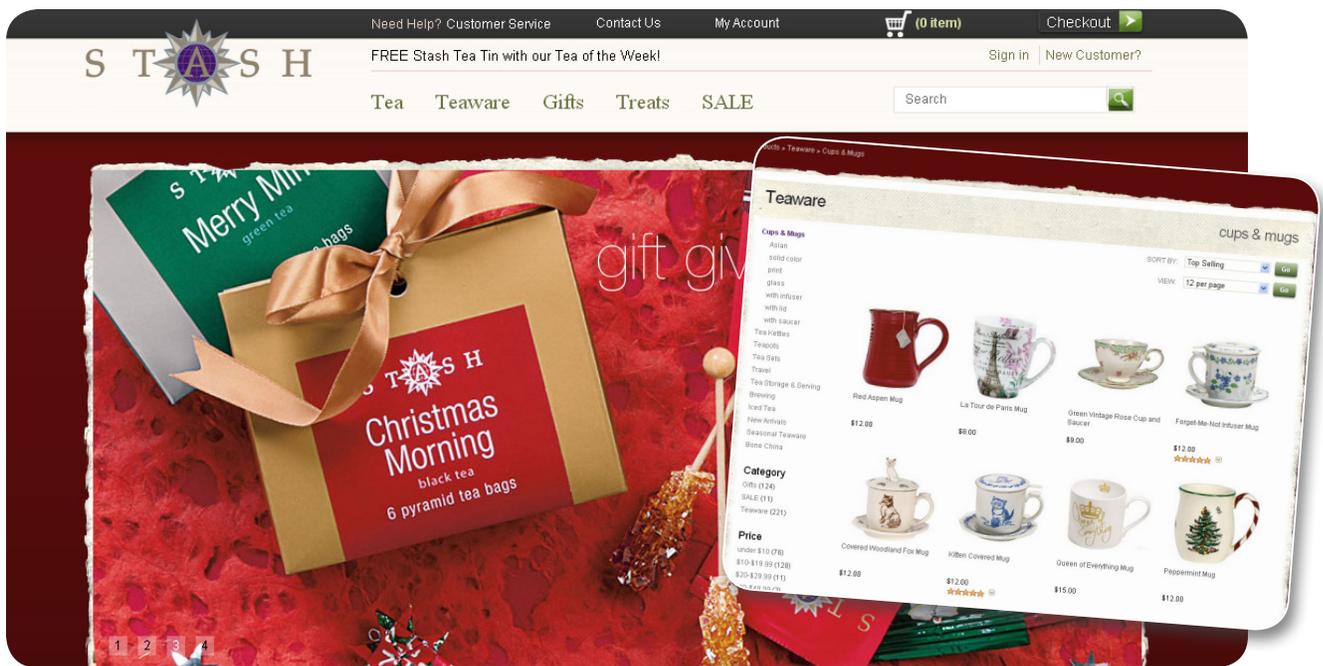
5. LETS YOU SLEEP AT NIGHT

eCommerce site failures mean that your online business grinds to a screeching halt. If you can't trust that your platform is going to be stable and secure, then your platform isn't doing its job. Many businesses look for a trusted name on the platform they choose— and as many small platforms don't have that, businesses can't even be sure that the platform will be around for years to come.

Fortunately, one of the biggest names in eCommerce has a platform that fits that bill. The Amazon Webstore platform is backed by the technology and expertise that has made Amazon a leader in eCommerce. Built on Amazon's scalable cloud hosting and using the same technology used on Amazon.com itself, companies can build their site on the platform with confidence.

Building on the Amazon Webstore platform also allows a business to easily list their products for sale on Amazon.com, and even use Fulfillment by Amazon to pick, pack and ship their orders—trusting the key customer-facing parts of their business to the company that does more business online than any other company in the world.

In your next eCommerce platform: Look for a company that you trust to keep your business running at full steam, no matter the challenges— and that gives you the confidence to sleep soundly at night.

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Amazon Webstore is a complete commerce platform that enables companies to leverage Amazon technology and expertise in building and managing their direct-to-consumer business.

Commerce sites built on the Amazon Webstore platform utilize Amazon's powerful cloud infrastructure and payment processing technology to deliver a scalable, secure online shopping experience to customers. Amazon Webstore also integrates seamlessly with selling on the Amazon Marketplace and using Fulfillment by Amazon, Amazon Prime, and other Amazon Services.

To get started with Amazon Webstore, visit the website at webstore.amazon.com or contact the Amazon Webstore team directly.