

Shopping Mall Portal helps SME to go online

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Why SME need to consider Internet as part of their business strategies?

You, as a SME entrepreneur, are often faced with limited resources when developing your marketing channel. Unlike bigger MNCs, you do not have the financial strength to spend on promoting your products and services (I will refer collectively as products in the later part of this report). Traditional method of selling and promoting products is very expensive, for example with the rising rental and mass media advertisement cost often put you in a disadvantage position while competing with your bigger competitors. ***Do you want to win?***

If you are prepared to take on the challenge head on, then you need to look for more innovative and lower cost marketing channels. The good news is that while you are smaller, you are agile in making decision and very focus on producing niche products. You are very clear as to who are your target customers and market segments. You want to focus on developing closer customers' relations to retain customers' loyalty and repeat purchases. Your intimate knowledge of your products and your customers put you in good stead to grow your businesses. ***You need a marketing tool.***

You can use Internet as a low cost media comparing with mass media and printed media to communicate with your customers. Internet can also expand your reach to acquire new customers. Your customers can refer to their friends when you have an Internet presence.

Products changes at such a rapid pace rendered print media a less effective media of communication. Mass media is very expensive so that make Internet website become the most effective alternative for you.

To build any business, including online business you need to invest some money in building the storefront. ***However building online business is comparatively much cheaper than running a brick and mortar business.***

In order to exploit the capability of Internet you need to understand online models and how they are structured. Let's start by doing a case analysis. For example you want to sell some products on the Internet. In the physical world you need to have a store front. In Internet

terms, you need to have a URL and simply a website. You also need a means to collect payment.

In order for people to buy your product or services, you must be able to bring your products or services to the market. In Internet terms, your product or services needs traffic. Just sending people to your website is part of the equation; you need to get the visitors to buy your products or services. The challenge is that there are so many websites selling similar products or services so how to attract these visitors and make them buy? ***Do you know the rate of conversion for visitors to customers?*** On the average, a visitor visits the same site seven times before placing an order. The first time experience is very important which will decide if this customer is ever to buy from you again.

SME problems when going online, how to overcome them?

You will face many problems due to lack of manpower having the knowledge of promoting online business. You could not go out and hire the best Internet marketing manager so you are left alone and often ***did not achieve significant results. Many just put the blame on Internet and conclude that Internet is not for their businesses.*** Think again? There are many reports indicating that there are tremendous potential to go online. There are many people also claimed that it is very easy to make money on the Internet; the truth is it is not easy. Like any business you need time to develop your sales channels. You do not want to make too many mistakes and waste all your precious resources and get demoralised. Focus on your existing channel while developing a new channel – seek help externally!

We can help you in your online business by providing a portal aims at attracting visitors to your sites. We develop web contents and conduct marketing campaign to bring value to your customers. You are not alone doing your online marketing but part of our team.

Your store can be listed under one of the many categories in our portal. Customer visiting our portal will be able to reach your store by clicking on any one of the category. You can also have your own independent store and have your own look and feel.

The portal serves as starting point for all new visitors. Furthermore, the collective contributions of marketing funds via monthly subscription to our services enable us to put paid advertisement on leading search engines and developing valuable content to give visitors the reason to come back.

Knowing how to build a store, marketing, researching on customers' needs and how to attract them are critical success factors.

How the portal helps?



Figure 1: Main portal

We have invested in developing a portal, for this case study, we call it Click2Shop. It can be any name or URL. You join this portal as a merchant member and pay a monthly subscription. We provide your own shopping cart solution (refer to figure 2). Depending on your products, you can select to be listed on any one of the categories listed on the main portal page (refer to figure 1).

Valuable information for visitors

When the visitors select any of the categories, they will be transfer to the next page where you will be listed. Products reviews, articles will be listed after the merchants' listing. This content is important to the visitors. It provides useful information and subject matter related to the product category. We will seek content experts to contribute articles and reports to provide value to the portal.

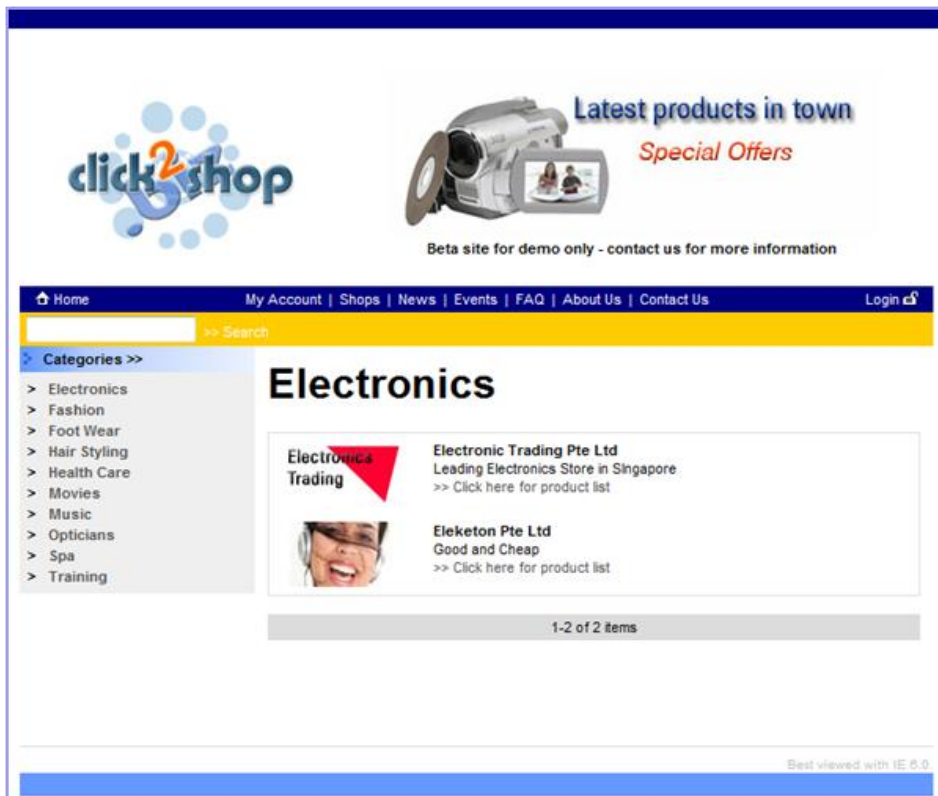


Figure 2: Merchant listing

When the visitors clicked on the merchant's link, it will be transferred to your storefront. Visitors can click on the product pictures to view the detail of the product. Each product page will have two higher resolution pictures and description about the products.

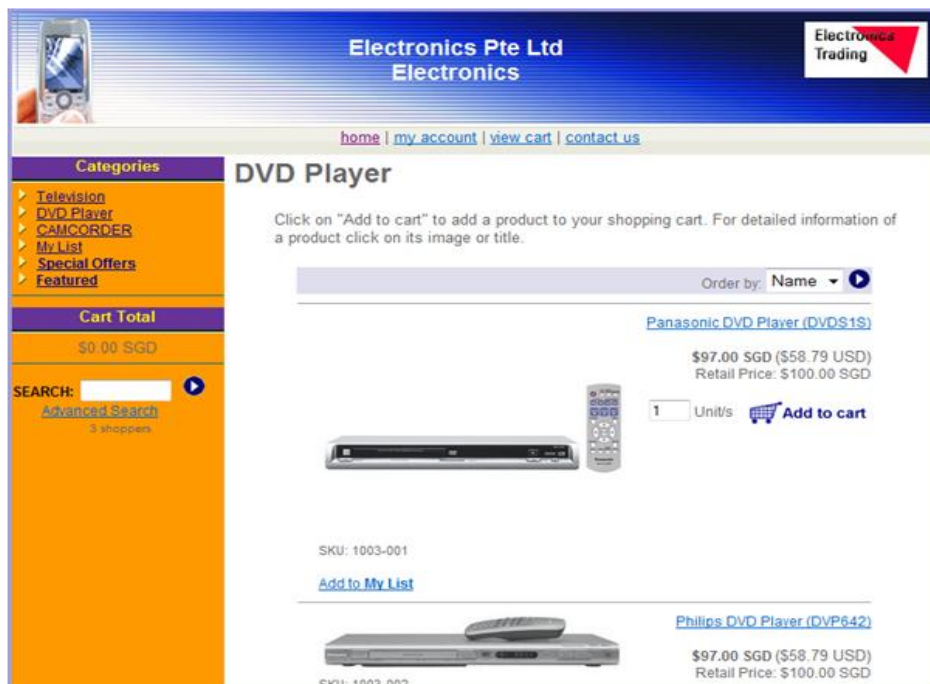


Figure 3: Product catalogue

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The store front features a shopping cart which supports online payment via payment gateway such as Paypal, Worldpay and others. Once the customer is ready to check out, the shopping cart will transfer to a secured payment gateway to complete the online payment. The portal will not store the customers' credit card information.

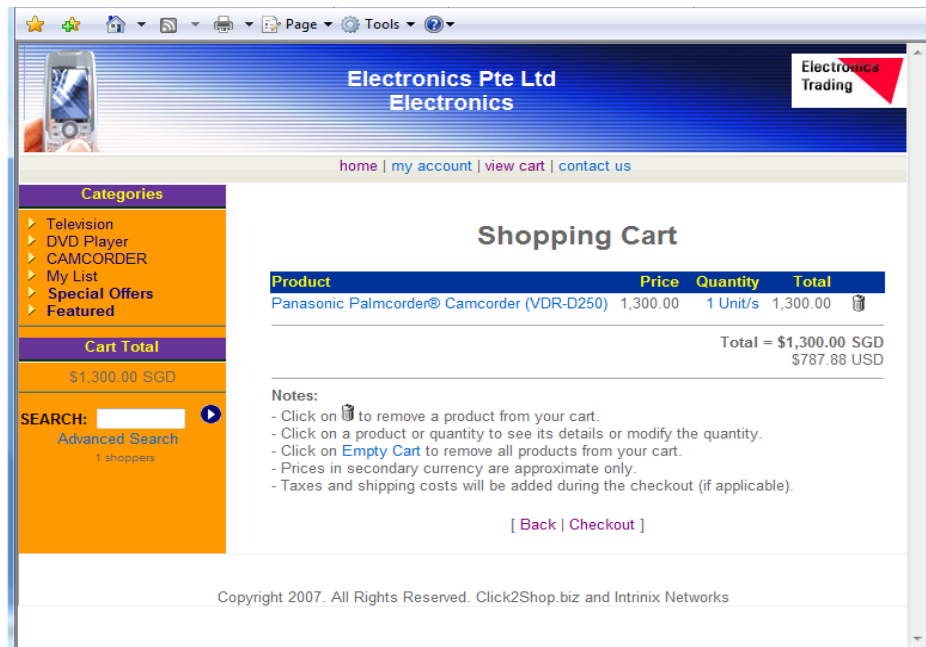


Figure 4: Shopping cart

Customer's relationships

The customers need to sign-up as member before they can start to purchase the items listed on the store front. The portal provides a central storage for all customers' purchasing records so that it is easy for the customers to track their purchases. Customers can login to the portal to check the status of their orders anytime.

Date	Merchant	Order No	Cart Ref	Total Amt	Payment By	Status	Billing Status	Detail
05-01-2008	electronics	807	T4292RINAA	\$255.20	PayPalCreditCard	Completed	PAYPALCreditCard Paid	Detail
04-01-2008	TheBazaar	800	H105MLSIL	\$203.25	Cheque	Shipped	Cheque Cleared	Detail
04-01-2008	electronics	799	G6739FOGTQ	\$255.20	ATM	Ordered	Unpaid	Detail

Figure 5: Purchase history

Customers can also select the information they want to receive regularly. Newsletter can be sent to the customers requesting for information of their interest. Customers can also track their discount coupons issued by the respective merchants.

Merchant's tools

The portal also provides functions to help the merchants to manage their sales easily. For example, email templates are created for each states of the order processing to inform the

customers on the progress of their orders. The merchants can manage the fulfilments of the orders. Alternatively they can also outsource the fulfilment to a third party logistic partner. Merchants can also generate reports on their Inventory level or received email alert when their inventories has reached a critical level for them to reorder new stocks.

Constant and never ending improvement

Internet technology is ever progressing. We are constantly investing into improving the portal and content as well as marketing to draw visitors to the portal.

Enhancement to portal and new business software to help merchants to integrated to the portal software to improve their operations which translated to lower the cost of operations. You just focus on your businesses. You do not need to worry about the Internet, for example you do not have to worry if your promotional emails will not reach the customers or your web servers software have to be upgrade to overcome some security holes etc.

Conclusion

SME cannot afford to ignore Internet and relied solely on brick and mortar approach to businesses. Internet helps SME to lower the cost of operations and marketing. SME faces many obstacles when planning to go online due to lack of Internet knowledge and the scale needed to do effective marketing. SME needs to exploit the use of Internet to compete with bigger companies to stay in market.

Instead on doing all alone, SME can collaborate with one another to leverage the strength of each other to grow the business. **We can help you.**



Andy Tan
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Standard Shopping Mall Features

S/N	Description	Standard
Customer – Storefront and portal		
1	Categories list	√
2	Featured products	√
3	My List	√
4	Special Offers	√
5	Product – summary list with thumbnail product pictures	√
6	Product detail page of up to two pictures	√
7	Central Purchase history – provide order and payment status	√
8	Central Discount coupons history	√
Store Administrator		
1	Discount price setting with start and end date	√
2	Up-selling for each products with start and end date	√
3	Cross-selling of other complementary products	√
4	Products options – 2 options provided	√
5	Order records – can be exported to excel spreadsheet	√
6	Discount coupon award based on min purchase with start and end date.	√
7	Discount coupon redemption can be qualified by products purchased	√
8	Email Campaign setup	√
9	Comprehensive shipping based on region for overseas shipment	√
10	Local shipment can be based on CBD or outside CBD (applicable for Singapore)	√

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11	Integrate with PAY PAL payment gateway	√
12	Multiple payment mode – Credit Card, Cheque, ATM transfer	√
13	Configured featured products	√
14	Products manufacturers or supplier records	√
15	Inventory control	√
16	Change site colour scheme and theme	√
17	Support 2 currencies – primary and secondary	√
18	Email template for different order status	√
