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A six-step guide to selecting your 'eCommerce' supplier

1. The single most important measurement that defines the effectiveness of any eCommerce webshop is the website Conversion Ratio – i.e. the number of people who have visited your site compared to the number that end up buying. The industry average is around 2% (<http://index.fireclick.com>). Ask any supplier about what site conversion ratios they can achieve and ask them to prove it. 4% is brilliant and anything above 10% is truly stratospheric.

2. A second thing to ask any supplier is how they deal with cart abandonment rates. With a high-street shop, you are not that keen with those who pop things into the basket then leave without making a purchase. The same is true online and minimising abandonment rates is an important component to increasing sales and winning market share. Ask any supplier

about their case study abandonment rates and compare these against an industry average of around 80%.

3. No matter how good a website is, you can only sell things if you have lots of visits from people who intend to buy from you.

On the web, this is usually all about how you appear on search engines such as Google. Ask a potential supplier for case study examples of how they have optimised this for real clients. This is easy to check because

you can have a web browser open when you speak with any supplier to check what you are being told. Look at Google visibility for both general terms as well as for very specific products.

4. In any aspect of business, authority and reputation are hard earned and result from having lots of experience and practical success in doing what they say they do. If a supplier has only

been trading for a year or two they are much less likely to deliver success than a supplier that has been around a long time and has been responsible for a wide range of eCommerce webshops. Check and find out what others say about a supplier

– especially customers like yourself. Did they deliver what they said they would, did it work and would their existing customers recommend them to another business?

5. Try not to be seduced by wonderful graphical eye candy. Every commercial study shows that web users simply want to quickly and easily find the product they want at the best price from a reputable supplier. Remember, whilst eBay may not be pretty to look at but it does have a larger turnover than many countries. If you want to judge the effectiveness of a website, simply imagine yourself as

somebody who wants to buy a particular product and then go to buy it. Ask yourself, "Could you easily find the product?", "Did you get all the information about the product that you needed?", and "Did the site give you confidence that the supplier came

across as the high-reputation, high-authority market leader?"

6. Finally, be skeptical. Just because a supplier says something, be prepared to check out what you are being told. The importance of choosing the right supplier cannot be underestimated so diligence and checking should always occur to make sure you find the supplier that is right for you. Speak to client customers of the proposed supplier. Remember that although there are many thousands of web design

companies that sell eCommerce solutions, in practice, there are very few who have a strong track record in being able to step repeat producing webshops that quickly create multi-million Pound sales. In the final analysis, the ultimate measure of any good eCommerce webshop is simply the amount of money and profit that it makes for its owner.

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