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The ecommerce website guide

How to brief, budget and judge a new online store

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Your customers have been trained by the biggest retailers on earth, and they bring those expectations to every store they visit, including yours. Nobody consciously compares your checkout to the giants, but everybody notices the extra form field, the delivery cost that appeared at the last step, and the product photo that would not zoom. This guide is about commissioning a store that survives those comparisons.

THE CLICKINGMAD TEST

If anything between wanting and owning makes a customer hesitate, it is costing you countable money.

What the website has to do

Three jobs, in order. It has to answer the product question fast, with photography, sizing, stock and delivery answers on the page, because uncertainty is the biggest basket-killer there is. It has to make paying effortless, with guest checkout, saved details where wanted, and the total cost visible before the final step rather than sprung at it. And it has to rank, because product and category pages that answer real searches are the cheapest customer acquisition an online store will ever own.

What to put in the brief

Your catalogue's true shape: how many products, how many variants, how often prices and stock change, and where that data lives today, because catalogue complexity drives ecommerce cost more than design ever does. The systems the store must talk to, from EPOS and stock control to couriers and accounting. Your delivery promise, written down, since fulfilment is part of the product. And what happens after the order, because the confirmation email, the despatch update and the returns route are all part of the experience people review you on.

What to measure

Checkout completion rate above everything, then average order value, repeat purchase rate, and the revenue from organic search landings on product and category pages. Traffic without checkout completion is a window-shopping crowd, and a store that measures the right four numbers can be improved every single month.

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