

6 Proven Steps to Making Your First E-commerce Sale Without Using Paid Ads

Starting an ecommerce business is an ideal way to earn income, and it offers many different opportunities. However, there is often a misconception that if you build a business online. Like a brick-and-mortar store, you must place yourself in front of the customer and provide value to sell your product.

The internet offers over a thousand ways to market your ecommerce business, most people want to jump straight to running ads and sending emails, but you will find that you can get the same results with a simple approach, particularly in the beginning. Start by creating a plan using the following six steps, and you are sure to make your first sale in 30 days without using paid advertisement.

Step 1: Find Your Tribe Online

This step will help you to understand your audience's needs by learning their desires. Login into your social media account (Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook), search your keywords and hashtags, and observe the engagement. If there aren't many people talking about the topic on a specific platform, then it's best to assume your tribe does not hang out there, and you should apply your energy elsewhere.

Join groups and like/follow pages with membership demographics similar to your target market. Don't make it formal and awkward. You may feel forced when initiating the first introductions but relax and be yourself. Casually comment on posts and provide answers and advice in areas of expertise.

It is best practice not to pitch your product during these interactions at the risk of turning people off and appearing too "salesy." Plus, these folks don't know you; yet. You want to build trust and a relationship that will make buying from you in the future the obvious choice.

Your primary objective is to observe and take note of the discussions, the recurring pain points, and themes. Ensure to reference this information when creating the copy for your ads and emails.

Reddit, Quora, and YouTube are great places to find like-minded people. Quora allows you to become a subject matter expert on your topic, and you may come across the occasional where it's appropriate to offer your product as a solution to a question. Reddit is an old-school forum; think of Facebook as a forum. And you can use YouTube to research potential influencers, which we'll discuss further in step 5. For now, subscribe to their channels and watch what they post and who comments.

Consider Pinterest if your business mainly targets women or is closely related to fashion, food, home décor, or other visually appealing products. Pinterest's niche demographic and setup is a marketer's dream, but it will not serve all e-commerce businesses.

Step 2: Start to Build Your List

Now that you know where your people are and what they need, it's time to build a list. In this stage, you will capture your first potential leads. Your process will likely evolve as your business grows, but this is an excellent place to start.

Once you have an idea of the market's top problems and wishes, develop content that provides resources and information. If you discover while selling cookware and appliances that a substantial amount of the public space hates cooking and cleaning during the holiday, publish an article on self-cleaning stoves or catering services. When people access the material, they will submit their email in exchange.

Don't limit emails to sales promotions. Continue to send more of the same content that initially piqued their interest. Once you've established a bond, position your products as solutions to their problems and discount rates.

Step 3: Target Your Personal Network

Many marketers recommend that business owners start with their network, as you're guaranteed to find at least one family member or friend who wants to support you. Still, you must be careful not to rely on your network, especially if they aren't your target audience. It will be hard to sustain a long-term relationship because they have no real connection to your product.

Make those first sales, but see your network as ambassadors rather than customers. With a growing mailing list and community, having a solid group of bragging, soft-selling, and promoting your product on your behalf will create social proof early on. Take photos and videos, and capture testimonials, whichever is the best fit for your business and product.

Step 4: Make Some Noise

It is the perfect time to corral the masses. You've done the research; you have a process for collecting emails and engaging your customers, social proof, and a personal street team in your family and friends. Now you need to find customers that didn't know you as a child. Research blogs and podcasts using your keyword(s) plus the word "blog" or "podcast." Then send emails to inquire about guest posting or product reviews when appropriate.

Be sure to reiterate how your product will help their audience. It's best to pitch an accompanying story to help new audiences and the host tie their need to your product. Podcasters are regularly looking for people to interview, so in place of pitching a story idea, indicate why they should consider talking to you.

Press releases are also a low-cost and effective method of announcing your store, the product, and the experience. Send press releases to both online and local publications. Search for publications in your market, look for the editor's email, and shoot over the press releases. They will often respond within a few days to let you know to confirm receipt or to gather more information.

Step 5: Get Influencers on Your Side

Who's favorite Instagram personality? Which influencers do you follow absent-mindedly or intentionally, and how do they align with your brand and product? Reach out to see if they are interested in providing a post/video review in exchange for the product at no cost. Don't worry; if you target the right influencer, you will make money.

Some influencers may require payment; if you find this to be the case for your market. In that case, concentrate your efforts on the other steps until you have a steady stream of revenue to invest in marketing and promotional efforts.

Step 6: Email Lives

Email communication has come back in recent years, with marketers learning to deliver value instead of telemarketing their products through their mailing lists. Your mailing list offers limitless opportunities to speak directly to your customer and their problems, not bully your subscribers into purchasing your product.

At this stage, the mailing list you've been working on in the earlier steps should be booming or doing a light river dance.

To balance being remembered vs. being annoying, create email funnels (a fancy way of saying email sequence) using the Rule of Seven. The Rule of Seven says your customer must hear from you at least seven times before they are willing to make a buying decision. For example, when communicating with new subscribers, your email sequence may include the following:

- Email 1: Confirmation and welcome
- Email 2: Content that addresses frequently asked questions.
- Email 3: A time-sensitive offer to purchase your product at a discount or access to presale options.
- Email 4: A reminder about the time-sensitive offer
- Email 5: Last call to buy at the discounted price
- Email 6 Provide high-value content or resource as it relates to your business.
- Email 7: Full-ticket product offer

Collect subscriber's birthdays and observe holidays and other times during the year when you can show your appreciation for your customer with cards or special discounts. Continue to tweak your funnel to grow your business. You will likely need additional sequences over time to segment customers' interests, as well as customer retargeting.