The Online Merchant's Guide to Choosing a Shopping Cart Platform

3dcart

The Online Merchant's Guide to Choosing a Shopping Cart Platform

Choosing a software platform might be one of the most important choices you make as an online business owner. It's a home for your store and your toolbox for success. The wrong shopping cart software platform can cripple a store's ability to grow beyond anything you'd ever hoped for.

The right shopping cart, on the other hand, can help ensure a strong foundation for steady growth, arming your business with the features you need to succeed.

If you're unhappy with your software, it isn't too late. Sometimes, business owners have to reevaluate important decisions. Long-term success can be at stake.

With 15 years of experience under its belt, 3dcart has grown with the ecommerce market. Over time, we've heard about your challenges and seen your successes firsthand. We've asked our customers to share these stories with us. As a result, we think we have a pretty good idea of what makes a shopping cart software platform successful.

Whether you're considering 3dcart or just starting to put feelers out, we think you'll appreciate this checklist of essential features to look for in your shopping cart software platform.

1. PCI Compliance, Fraud Alerts and Other Security Features.

On some level, the web is still the Wild West. Shoppers have become much more comfortable with using the Internet to make purchases. But fraud still happens. It's your job to protect your customers from it.

Actually, it's probably more accurate to say that security is the responsibility of your software provider. Security features are necessary to protect against cybercrime—and they should come standard with your software suite.

The Online Merchant's Guide to Choosing a Shopping Cart Platform

PCI Compliance

A PCI-compliant shopping cart is software that has been recognized by payment card industry regulators as meeting rigorous standards for payment processing.

Fraud Alerts

When you process orders, protecting yourself from fraud is a must. Otherwise, you may incur major penalties later. A fraud alert system typically uses community insights and artificial intelligence to detect fraud before it occurs.

Vulnerability Scanning

Your typical security software comes into play here, scanning your website for hacker vulnerabilities and making sure your website stays running at all times. A program like this should come standard with your ecommerce software.

Regular Data Backups

As a human, you aren't infallible. If you accidentally delete or move something that you need, it's important to have software that offers daily data backups. Think of it as an 'undo' button.

Password-Protected Accounts

Even if you start out on your own, you'll eventually need to take on employees. Your software should make it simple to create new password-protected accounts when you bring someone onboard. It should also be simple for customers to create their own protected accounts that save personal data like credit card numbers.

Make sure you can place badges and other reminders of your store's safety so you can establish immediate trust with your shoppers.

3dcart

2. Analytics & Reporting

Ease of use, from website design to backend management.

We don't all have time to become website development and design experts. Your ecommerce software should be easy to use, saving you time on learning how to use it.

It's just that simple: Storeowners should spend time building their businesses, not learning how to use their software. Below are a few features that make running a website easy.

WYSIWYG Editing

WYSIWYG stands for "what you see is what you get." When you sit down to create, delete, edit or move content, it should show you exactly how that content will display to your customers.

Quick Setup

You might think that it'll take days to set up an online storefront. But in reality, it should only take a few hours to get up and running. Make sure you choose a software platform that makes it possible.

Simple Design

Like we said earlier, you're not a designer, nor should you have to be. Therefore, your ecommerce software platform should come with templates for getting your website's layout and design set up, no programming knowledge necessary.

Cloud Access

Software doesn't just live on your desktop anymore. Instead, your shopping cart should live in the cloud, making it simpler for you to store data and access your website from anywhere in the world.

Scalability

Finally, it's important to start with a software platform that will grow with your business. A scalable platform makes it easy for you to upgrade your package as your store grows.

Remember: The easier it is to use, the more time you have to spend on nurturing your business.

3dcart

3. A Built-In Suite of Marketing Tools.

In the age of social media, marketing has taken on a whole new face. Even if you're unfamiliar with how to market, you'll have to do it.

Luckily, the right shopping cart software platform will come equipped with a suite of marketing tools. Marketing functionality is an absolute must if you want to stand out from the competition.

Your software should include features like:

- Social media plug-ins for Facebook Store and Twitter management
- Email list management and monitoring
- Customer relationship management and marketing automation features
- Daily/group deal discounts, coupons and loyalty programs
- Search engine optimization (SEO) that doesn't require programming expertise
- Options for managing affiliate marketing programs
- Simple ways to manage shopping comparison engine feeds
- Upselling and incentive-based features

With the right mix of marketing features, even an inexperienced marketer can get the word out about his or her store.

4. Unflinching Support, Whenever You Need It.

Even if you're an experienced online merchant, you can't know everything. But everything you need to know should be at your fingertips at a moment's notice.

Support resources are essential to running a business online. They ensure that you're never without a helping hand, especially when your business needs it most. Your software vendor's support resources should include things like:

- Phone & email support with quick response times
- Forums where you can connect with other customers
- Live chat for support in real-time
- Knowledge libraries full of useful tips and information
- Videos and other demos of features

High accessibility is the key to a strong support line. Your vendor should have someone standing by 24/7 to answer questions and deal with issues as they come up.

5. Lots of Partnerships With Specialized Vendors.

Even the most complete ecommerce software suite on the market doesn't have time to perfect every single feature available to website owners. But an open approach to partnering with other software vendors is how the right ecommerce suite overcomes this.

A dedication to ecommerce partnerships means building integrations that work closely with your platform. They should give you seamless communication between programs, ensuring that absolutely nothing is lost in translation.

Some areas where partnerships come in handy include:

3dcart

Shipping

A strong integration with shipping platforms like UPS, as well as applications that help you streamline the shipping process, represent great opportunities for partnerships.

Fulfillment

Typically, your ecommerce vendor won't offer fulfillment or dropshipping as a service. You'll need to partner with outside vendors for these services. The right software platform has tight integrations with these partners so orders flow through the system seamlessly.

Accounting

Accounting platforms like QuickBooks have spent decades in development. They're specifically created to ease how businesses like yours operate, and they should connect easily to your system.

Marketing

Every day, marketers are coming up with new ways to spread the word on the web. As these tactics are developed, your ecommerce platform can offer them more quickly to customers by partnering up, instead of developing them from scratch.

Security

There are always more ways to secure your store, and a lot of times, they require a trusted brand like Google or Symantec to jump into the mix.

By focusing on partnerships, your ecommerce platform has a much greater foundation for rapid innovation.

6. Regular Feature Updates To Keep Up With The Web

Is your shopping cart on top of its game? Regular feature updates are good indicators that the people behind your software are staying on top of the industry, keeping their eyes open for ways they can improve.

Besides staying focused on innovation, partner with a company that actually listens to what you have to say. Feature updates should take into account the voice of the customer community. A vendor that splits time between its own innovations and the needs of its customers produces a much more robust feature set.

Want More?

Learn more about 3dcart and our network of 16,000+ online merchants. Check out our full feature list right here. Searching for more online tips? Visit 3dcart's Ecommerce University for more great content.

3dcart