



THE PERFECT E-COMMERCE WEBSITE

CONTENTS

ABOUT INFO RHINO'S AND THEIR PARTNERS' ASPIRATION TO DELIVER THE PERFECT E-COMMERCE WEBSITE ..	3
ABOUT INFO RHINO AND THEIR PARTNERS	3
WHAT DO WE MEAN BY AN E-COMMERCE WEBSITE?	3
WHAT DOES A CLIENT WANT FROM AN E-COMMERCE WEBSITE?	3
THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING YOUR OWN E-COMMERCE WEBSITE COMPLETELY	3
TIME CONSUMING	3
SCALABILITY	3
REFUNDS AND RETURNS POLICY	4
CUSTOMER RETENTION AND CHURN	4
ATTRACTING CUSTOMERS THROUGH SEARCH ENGINES AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA	4
ANALYSING WEBSITE USAGE STATISTICS	4
SECURITY	4
LEGAL OBLIGATIONS	4
DECIDING UPON THE TECHNOLOGY FOR YOUR E-COMMERCE WEBSITE	4
TECHNOLOGY TO CONSIDER	4
WEBSITE TYPE	5
OFF-THE-SHELF SHOPPING CARTS	5
CUSTOMISED CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (CMS)	5
BESPOKE WEBSITE	5
HYBRID WEBSITE	5
PAYMENT HANDLING AND PAYMENT PROVIDERS	5
MERCHANT ACCOUNTS	5
PAYMENT GATEWAYS	5
CRYPTOCURRENCIES	6
PAYMENT PROVIDERS PROTECTION	6
WHO SHOULD CREATE YOUR E-COMMERCE PLATFORM?	6
IN-HOUSE	6
OFF-THE-SHELF - YOU	6
RESELLER	6





THE PERFECT E-COMMERCE WEBSITE

OUTSOURCING.....	6
THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF OUTSOURCING COMPANIES	7
HOW MUCH WILL YOU PAY FOR YOUR E-COMMERCE PLATFORM.....	7
SUPPLIERS	7
HOSTING	7
ON-SITE HOSTING	7
SUPPORT	7
SECURITY.....	7
PAYMENT PROVIDERS.....	8
PORTABILITY OF YOUR E-COMMERCE SOLUTION	8
SWITCHING HOSTING	8
REQUIREMENTS ANALYSIS.....	9
PLATFORM SELECTION.....	9
GAP ANALYSIS	9
ENHANCEMENT AND REMEDIATION OF PLATFORMS	9
SCALABILITY	9
COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT	9
SECURITY AND INTEROPERABILITY	9
CONCLUSION ON PRODUCT WEBSITES/E-COMMERCE SOLUTIONS.....	10





THE PERFECT E-COMMERCE WEBSITE

ABOUT INFO RHINO'S AND THEIR PARTNERS' ASPIRATION TO DELIVER THE PERFECT E-COMMERCE WEBSITE

Anybody wanting to sell goods online needs the right formula to make it a success. We want our clients to achieve great things and wrote this paper to give you a good oversight of what having a great E-commerce solution needs. We hope you engage us to help with delivering your platform - contact us here solutions@inforhino.co.uk.

ABOUT INFO RHINO AND THEIR PARTNERS

Info Rhino and API Rhino are two distinct companies but their respective owners; Zak Willis and Colin Galloway see the advantage of combining web technologies, API's, and data driven solutions.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY AN E-COMMERCE WEBSITE?

A product represents a specific item a customer may buy and has a fixed price, whereas a service represents deliverables provided by a supplier to a client. A product website sells items to clients. Many know of product websites by the term E-commerce.

WHAT DOES A CLIENT WANT FROM AN E-COMMERCE WEBSITE?

NEARLY ALWAYS, CLIENTS WANT TO;

- Add, edit and remove products.
- Apply discounts.
- Edit text in certain parts of the website to aid with branding and message.
- Add images, addresses and corporate information.
- Manage payments, subscriptions and refunds.
- Understand sales, stock levels, and customer preferences.

THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING YOUR OWN E-COMMERCE WEBSITE COMPLETELY

Clients must be able to maintain their own E-commerce website content but there are some important pitfalls to avoid.

TIME CONSUMING

Individually adding pictures, text, setting prices can prove time consuming. Some product websites have a high product turnaround without customers realising. A bespoke fashion retailer may still have four seasons of products to maintain.

SCALABILITY





THE PERFECT E-COMMERCE WEBSITE

We, at Info Rhino, understand most clients hope to increase profitability by increasing the volume of sales - it isn't the only way, but one important method. An example is an artist can comfortably manage their paintings on a simple product website, but could an art gallery manage multiple artists?

REFUNDS AND RETURNS POLICY

Refunds represent a highly underestimated cost to running an online product website and depending upon who your payment handler is costs can outweigh profits.

CUSTOMER RETENTION AND CHURN

E-commerce websites tend to rely upon new customers and repeat custom but without deciding who your customer is, opportunities can evaporate.

ATTRACTING CUSTOMERS THROUGH SEARCH ENGINES AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA

One of the biggest challenges in managing your own website is not realising editing your website can damage your search engine ranking. Similarly, using social media has to be for the right reasons rather than just doing it because everybody else is.

ANALYSING WEBSITE USAGE STATISTICS

To understand your customers, you need data. This data won't just be search result statistics but even down to customer contact, refund rates, churn rates. You need advanced understanding of your business - Info Rhino Limited help us out on that one.

SECURITY

Why is it, whenever we buy something, we must always register? Many of us won't feel completely comfortable registering our details with yet another company. This can prove a big challenge to having product websites as clients may not always trust your website.

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

We are not able to provide legal advice but there are obligations you must adhere to when operating an E-commerce platform.

DECIDING UPON THE TECHNOLOGY FOR YOUR E-COMMERCE WEBSITE

Before delving into how Info Rhino can get you the right product website, we have categorised the types of sites clients sell products through.

TECHNOLOGY TO CONSIDER

SECURE SOCKET LAYER/CERTIFICATES

You will need a certificate and avoid using shared or free ones if you value your client's security.

THE OPERATING SYSTEM

Although we are moving towards container technology and cloud-based hosting, we can't say it is quite there for most E-commerce sites. It is worth considering the operating system environment your website is hosted on.





THE PERFECT E-COMMERCE WEBSITE

THE PROGRAMMING LANGUAGE

We at Info Rhino and Info Rhino program in .Net, ASP.Net, MVC, jQuery, JavaScript, Knockout, Angular, T-SQL, PL-SQL and prefer to stick to these languages. Always consider whether the programming language is something either your company is comfortable with or you feel the market can service these languages.

THINK IN TERMS OF COMPONENTS RATHER THAN ONE TECHNOLOGY

Nobody would set out with the intention of writing a book with a different chapter in a different language, but this is exactly how applications can be more effective to clients. Many people aren't aware most motor cars are built from components sourced from all over the world - purely for effectiveness. This can be the opposite way in which most enterprise architecture is applied.

WEBSITE TYPE

OFF-THE-SHELF SHOPPING CARTS

These can be virtually free and hosting costs can be low. One challenge with off-the-shelf is ensuring it puts your brand across. What sets shopping carts apart is their ability to plugin to payment handlers and authentication providers.

CUSTOMISED CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (CMS)

Many CMS's offer shopping cart plugins which adds another level of flexibility. This can provide the best all round experience. Your company may sell products and provide services so just having a shopping cart may be too limiting for your company, and by using off-the-shelf CMS's developers can build specific content pages for you to attract interest in your website. Think Amazon - they have a product review feature or perhaps you could host a competition for customers.

BESPOKE WEBSITE

As software developers we perfectly understand the balance between building software that does something new versus adapting existing technology for new needs. A bespoke website will probably feature around 80% of the time spent on developing the website specific to customer's requirements.

HYBRID WEBSITE

Whatever you decide you need, most websites end up being a combination of a CMS, bespoke and off-the-shelf shopping carts.

PAYMENT HANDLING AND PAYMENT PROVIDERS

This is a big one to consider and there is a new method to try.

MERCHANT ACCOUNTS

If your company has been in business for a while and has the trust of a retail bank your business can use your business bank account to handle payments through their API/Payment gateway. We feel this is a good option as they will support you better in the event of fraud and refunds, but it comes at a cost.

PAYMENT GATEWAYS





THE PERFECT E-COMMERCE WEBSITE

Businesses that are new won't be able to get authorisation from banks to have a merchant account. Payment providers who aggregate different merchant accounts offer a good alternative to merchant accounts especially if you want to get up and running quickly. Naturally, payment gateways have higher charges and you can suffer some higher penalties through claims etc.

CRYPTOCURRENCIES

What seemed a pipe-dream for a long time are now in active use with many companies electing to accept payments in cryptocurrencies. We feel accepting payments in cryptocurrency makes sense and will reduce barriers to international trade in the longer term. Just one very important example for those of you who are retailers to consider. Cryptocurrency avoids inflation, just as gold has over the last two thousand years.

PAYMENT PROVIDERS PROTECTION

An important consideration is protection for both the consumer and supplier in a fair way. When comparing payment providers, you should always ensure you are comfortable with the costs and benefits they are supplying undertaking a risk assessment. A key consideration is to plan for change. "It may not be possible to get the best deal now but in one year perhaps a new payment provider will take my E-commerce platform to the next level."

WHO SHOULD CREATE YOUR E-COMMERCE PLATFORM?

Remember, Info Rhino can offer to implement your platform partially in-house and as an outsourced implementation.

IN-HOUSE

Permanent or contract staff building out your platform can be a very effective way to have control over your platform's direction and it is a great way to ensure your company can mould its business operations into the platform. Enterprise reporting can absorb this new E-commerce platform easier.

We recommend guarding against this approach unless there is full commitment to the process within the organisation, and we find many organisations don't have the skills to fully own the process.

OFF-THE-SHELF - YOU

This may seem the same as in-house but would typically entail buying a webhosting package, running an installer, manually uploading logos, and manually adding or importing products. Many companies starting-out take this root. You will need professional help, even if just paying for some advice and doing this yourself.

RESELLER

eBay and Amazon are the masters at this and for many companies it brings more awareness to their products and services but this doesn't always provide the right environment for a supplier to operate within.

OUTSOURCING

This is the most effective way to get an effective e-commerce solution implemented, but it is essential you have regular contact with your provider and that provider has the capability or connections to absorb the e-commerce platform into your organisation. This is why we partner with Info Rhino Limited - they understand enterprise level reporting. It is unfortunate that individuals quickly run out of capacity to help you.





THE PERFECT E-COMMERCE WEBSITE

THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF OUTSOURCING COMPANIES

Oscar Wilde's statement - "Nowadays people know the price of everything and the value of nothing" should always be at the core of any decision as to who you get to outsource your work to.

Cheap/Fair/Expensive = Poor/Concise/Average = Fail/Success/Adequate.

Once you have a provider whose staff don't know each other clients are paying for process management. If you are outsourcing to companies overseas because they are cheap the chances that without regular contact and oversight of their code and ability you will get a raw deal. A major drawback with overseas providers is there is rarely a legal recourse to recover money for bad workmanship.

This does not mean that a supplier in your country is always the best approach as many suppliers can travel and price should not be the best guide.

HOW MUCH WILL YOU PAY FOR YOUR E-COMMERCE PLATFORM

SUPPLIERS

At the time of writing this document, we can summarise the following charges:-

Who and where	£ Low per hour	£ High per hour	Success chance
Cheap overseas	5	20	Nil-Low
National and international	20	60	Mid-High
Large consultancy	50	150	Low-Mid

HOSTING

Cloud hosting - highly complicated pricing models which need proper analysis and estimation.

Web hosting - simpler pricing model but how to guarantee uptime, can also become expensive.

ON-SITE HOSTING

We have never seen companies host their own E-commerce websites but it can make sense if you have a large amount of resources in-house.

SUPPORT

If anything goes wrong with a platform, it will need fixing. It may not always be obvious what the problem, and/or the solution is. Ensure you have adequate support as a website that doesn't work can lead customers elsewhere.

SECURITY

We mentioned secure certification earlier but we didn't mention the types of problems sites can encounter from attempted hacking, successful hacking, denial of service attacks, cross site scripting, viruses, man in the middle attacks are serious concerns to address. It is highly likely you should consult an independent security firm to help liaise with your supplier to consider the appropriate security for your platform.





THE PERFECT E-COMMERCE WEBSITE

PAYMENT PROVIDERS

The initial shock will have been the cost of building and hosting the site but the pain will be most felt when using a payment provider. This is the ongoing cost in terms per unit purchase, refunds and fees. As part of any E-commerce solution, you are trying to minimise losses and maximise gains.

PORTABILITY OF YOUR E-COMMERCE SOLUTION

Portability means being able to move one system to another and depending upon your company's needs this may or may not be an issue.

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE - DO YOU NEED IT?

Sales Volume	Product Turnover	Product Range	Business Intelligence for decision making needed?
High	High	Large	Yes
High	Medium	Small	Yes
Medium	Low	Medium	Yes
Low	High	Low	Maybe
Low	Medium	Low	Maybe
Low	Low	Low	No

We haven't listed every combination, but you can see we recommend Business Intelligence in nearly every type of E-commerce solution.

SYSTEM UPGRADES OR CHANGING E-COMMERCE PLATFORM

Some companies undergo expensive data migration exercises to ensure all records and data is available on the new system. Info Rhino Limited are experts at data migrations and you may want to ensure you get in touch with them before undertaking this.

SWITCHING HOSTING

How easy would it be to move your solution to a different host, what would the cost be, what would the downtime be, how would you manage customer expectations?





THE PERFECT E-COMMERCE WEBSITE

WHY INFO RHINO IS WELL PLACED STRATEGICALLY TO BE YOUR E-COMMERCE SOLUTIONS PROVIDER

REQUIREMENTS ANALYSIS

Understanding what you want is essential and we seek to identify opportunities to streamline the solution if appropriate, a simple example is to remove the burden of significant manual maintenance of the site, we may create simple tools to help automate the process if you desire it.

PLATFORM SELECTION

We have spent time selecting the right platforms for clients based upon our criteria. We assess these platforms based upon a clients' current and future needs.

GAP ANALYSIS

As part of our platform selection process, we review features we feel are deficient and determine what the significance those deficiencies could represent to a client (not all clients are the same).

ENHANCEMENT AND REMEDIATION OF PLATFORMS

Based upon previous and potential future clients' requirements, it is essential we can adapt platforms to a client's needs. Cost in terms of our time, client's their time is always a consideration.

SCALABILITY

There are many ways to make a platform more scalable and avoid significant rewrites and we assess platforms based upon their potential for scalability. Remember, any system may require significant work to upscale, but we try to understand where benefits lie.

COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT

Are we buying an off-the-shelf product by a vendor looking to charge for all changes and modification or is there an active community involved in advancing the product?

SECURITY AND INTEROPERABILITY

Customers are more likely to buy things if it is easy. Marketing terms this as friction versus flow and we can easily imagine our own experiences as a customer and the points at which we just gave up and went somewhere else. We, at Info Rhino, firmly believe a lot of this has to do with the ease at which customers can avoid filling in the same details repeatedly.





THE PERFECT E-COMMERCE WEBSITE

CONCLUSION ON PRODUCT WEBSITES/E-COMMERCE SOLUTIONS

We at Info Rhino wanted to take you on the journey of thinking about your E-commerce solution. We can help you by;

- Providing consultancy advice to help you reach the right decision and understand your business model.
- Upgrading or upscaling your existing platform.
- Add extra functionality to your solution.
- Implement a full solution for you to begin your E-commerce journey.
- Add Business Intelligence and reporting to better understand your operations through our partner company - Info Rhino Limited.

