A BUSINESS OWNER'S GUIDE TO:
VIRTUAL STOREFRONTS

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Introduction

What Customers Want from Online Shopping

As online shopping becomes more popular, businesses must look for ways to improve their customer's experience. It's no secret that consumers want convenience when they shop. They expect an easy-to-use website where orders are fulfilled quickly, but many shoppers now crave a personalized "in-store" experience.
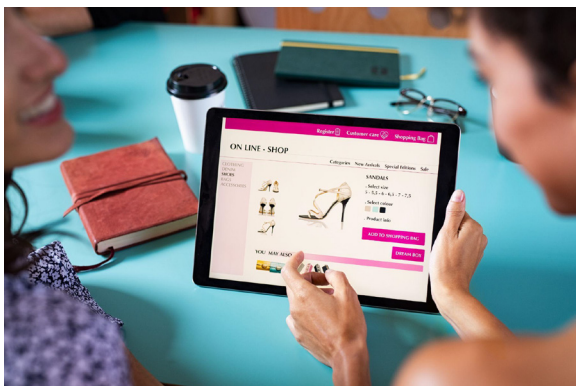
This became increasingly more important as the COVID-19 pandemic changed how consumers shop and interact with stores. From a single click or tap they want to be able to access insight into products, customer service reps at the ready for "live chats" if needed, access to real time product availability and everything else they are able to achieve in-store from the comfort of their home.

The challenge is finding simple ways that businesses can create exceptional shopping experiences that emulate the "in store" experience, as customers continue making more purchases virtually year after year.

What can business owners do to bridge the gap between in-store shopping and online shopping? How can they recreate an "in-store" experience for customers online?

We're here to discuss exactly that—how technology is transforming how businesses engage with their customers and providing them a personalized approach no matter where or when they are shopping.

Your Website is the Virtual Storefront For Your Business
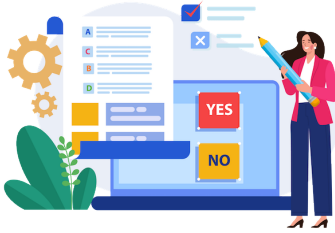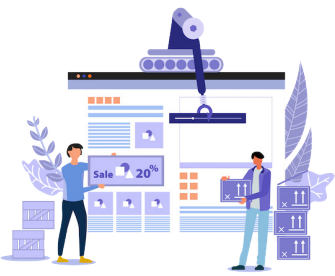

Stop looking at your website as a brochure or glorified business card and start looking at it for what it truly is, your virtual storefront. It's how your customers find you, shop with you and refer others to you. In some ways your virtual storefront is actually more important than your physical storefront. This is because it is generally the first point of contact between you and your potential customers.

Regardless of how amazing your physical store might be, your virtual storefront should be equally as amazing if not more, or you could be missing out on potential clients and sales. This checklist will provide useful advice on what your website needs to be a virtual storefront and increase sales as well as profits.

15 Point Webseller™ Virtual Storefront Checklist

Section 1: Core Features

Item #	Feature	Why Do You Need it?
1.	Mobile Optimized	Your customers are doing a majority of their shopping from their smartphone or tablet. If you have pages that don't work or display right, it is just like if customers come into your physical store and products are in the wrong place or aisles are under construction. Mobile Friendly is no longer enough, your site needs to be Mobile Optimized. **Recommendation:** Visit your website as a customer and try to go through all your funnels. See what roadblocks that are making it difficult for customers to navigate and complete purchases or requests from their phones.
2.	Sales Content	Your customers have so many vendors to choose from, when a visitor reaches your virtual storefront, it must compel them to make the purchase with you and not leave and go somewhere else. In a good "in-store" experience, generally there is a representative who explains the products to the customer. The better the agent is able to connect with the customer the more likely they will make the sale. Your website's sales content has the same responsibility to make the customer feel compelled to buy. **Recommendation:** Hire a sales professional to go through your site like a mystery shopper. Tell them to give you their opinion on how well your content scores.

3.	Lead Generation Forms	Sometimes a customer is interested but not ready to buy. This customer wants to be wooed. You need a way for them to leave their information. In addition, a customer should be able to give you all the information related to service via your website.
		All this can be done in the store, so it should also be capable in your virtual storefront.
		Recommendation: Create a basic and simple lead generation form that is easy and quick to fill out. In addition you should create more detailed specific forms related to your services. Think about whatever information you need to collect on a client in order to be able to perform a service, and create a form for it that they can fill out online in the comfort of their homes.
4.	Easy-to-use Page Builders	Businesses will change the layout, decorations and other characteristics of a physical storefront with the goal of increasing sales. Whether it is adding a new promotion, or moving products near complementary products, or putting up holiday decorations.
		With easy to use page builders you can easily change the layout of a store in seconds. In addition in combination with visitor tracking you are able to determine what is and isn't working.
		Recommendations: If your website doesn't have an Easy-to-Use Page Builder then it is best to upgrade. You should make sure that the page builder you select gives you the capabilities you need.
5.	Visitor Tracking	In a physical storefront, you and your employees are able to see the movement of your customers in real time or with security cameras.
		In your virtual storefront, with the right technology you can track the activity of your visitors to see: ● How long do they stay? ● What pages do they visit? ● Did they leave their contact information? ● Did they make a purchase?

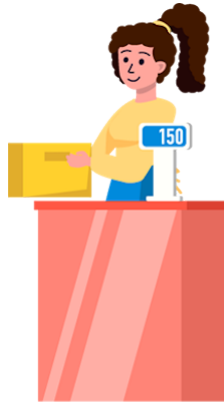|		
		● Last page visited before exiting ● Last section of the last page visited before exiting All this information can be used to determine what parts of your site need improvement to give the customer the "in-store" experience they desire. **Recommendations:** Setup Google analytics on your website. Make sure it is configured properly so that you are able to track the above bulleted items at minimum. Create a custom report to give you the data you need monthly.
6.	Automation Friendly 	In a physical storefront, when it comes to tending to order requests and fulfilling orders it may require the involvement of several employees. This requires them to share information related to the order or the prospect's request. In your virtual storefront, automation allows you to streamline these processes that are standard procedures, which can take up valuable time. **Recommendations** If your current website doesn't support automation, then it is time to upgrade. Make sure your new site is built on a platform and with plugins that all support the automations your business may need.

Section 2: Greeter Add-Ons

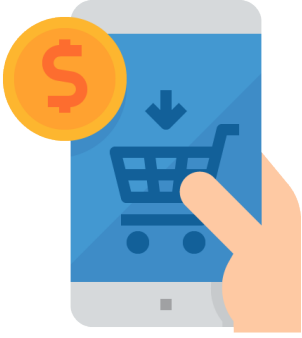| Item #	Feature	Why Do You Need it?
7.	Introductory Video	When a customer enters your physical storefront, you have staff members who are ready to explain to them about your company, its culture and the products you offer. When a customer is on your virtual storefront, though text is good, a video helps to give customers an idea of who you are and to tell them about your product and get a sense of the culture. **Recommendations** Having a simple video that is done well is better than having no video at all. You can create a video with just a stock audio, a narration voice over and an animated slideshow of images if film production costs are out of your budget.
8.	Promotional Pop-ups	When a customer enters your physical storefront, the first thing you do is tell them about your promotions. Many stores have a person in front to hand them a brochure about the active sales. **Recommendations** Think about what promotions work in-store on new and existing customers. If you sell products, you can even offer free shipping on orders over a certain amount.

Section 3: Reception Add-Ons

Item #	Feature	Why Do You Need it?
9.	Scheduling	In-store and on the phone people can schedule a call The same should be possible on your virtual storefront. If your business model involves customers scheduling appointments either to receive your service or inquire about your service, then you should offer the same ability online. **Recommendations** Figure out who on your team schedules appointments with clients and set up online scheduling for these live team members and make it accessible on your website and include the link in your email signatures.
10.	Live-Agent or Bot Chat	When a customer comes "in-store", sometimes they are ready to make a purchase and don't need assistance, other times they may have some questions before they are ready to purchase. The same thing happens on the virtual storefront. Most websites are unattended and so what ends up happening if a customer doesn't get all their answers they end up leaving. **Recommendations** Consider the most common questions your customers ask, and create scripted answers to save time responding to customer inquiries and allow them to get the feedback they need quickly.

Section 4: Cashier Add-Ons

Item #	Feature	Why Do You Need it?
11.	Basic Payment Forms	Tired of hearing "the check's in the mail"? For the customers that always lose emails but want to submit a payment, this solution makes life easier for everyone. Allowing a customer to pay directly on the website gives them no excuse to delay payment. **Recommendations** Setup a basic payment form on your website. You can set up directly on your website or you can get a link to use from your merchant services provider.
12.	Single Product Payment Forms	Having single product payment forms, allows your customers to submit the information of an order and make payment all in one place. You can walk the client through it over the phone if they need assistance, otherwise they can do it themselves. **Recommendations** Create a list of your products that either have a fixed price or a fixed set of variable costs. Start with your top sellers and create a payment form with additional fields related to the product and publish on your site.

13.	Full Eccomerce Integration	If you have a vast inventory of products and want to give customers the ability to add multiple products to cart, without the need of project specifics, then you need a shopping cart site. **Recommendations** Pick a system that integrates with your merchant services and accounting systems so you can seamlessly integrate.

Section 5: Customer Service Add-Ons

Item #	Feature	Actionables
14.	Customer Support Ticketing	Even in-store not every transaction will go as planned. Sometimes customers return to the store after a purchase to make an exchange, return a product, or deal with issues in the product they ordered. Giving a customer a way to submit a support ticket on your website gives them the opportunity to resolve this issue without having to come into the store. **Recommendations** Find a customer support ticketing system that is compatible with your existing processes and integrate it into the website.

15.	Reputation Management	If you want to get new customers from the internet, then your business's online reputation matters. This reputation is also known as your Google Review score (as well as other review sites).
		It is better to resolve a negative customer experience before they tell it to the world. Usually all they need to do is vent their complaint once.
		Recommendations:
		Setup Reputation management with an automated trigger upon completion of order fulfillment. This. is the best time to get feedback from a customer when their experience is fresh.

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RK Answers is a digital marketing agency that helps businesses better serve their customers online so they can reach financial freedom. RK Answers has played an integral role in helping several of its clients significantly grow and expand their businesses over the years.

15	**15**	**5.0**
Years in Business	Mergers & Acquisitions	Star Google Rating

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