



20 Export Sales and Marketing Tips for the EU

Export Europe Handbook Series

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Introduction

The European Union (EU) offers a potential goldmine for businesses looking to expand and reach new markets. However, the EU also presents its own unique challenges due to the range of languages, currencies and localised search engine results.

This eBook offers 20 top export sales and marketing tips for helping companies overcome these challenges and expand their customer base into the EU.

These tips are aimed at senior executives in Companies that already export their products but would like to improve the return on investment of their European marketing budget.

The eBook aims to help you understand:

- The potential size of the EU market
- Why a website aimed at EU customers needs to be different to one aimed at the USA
- Why you should invest in a website and marketing aimed at EU customers

The 20 tips are divided into the three steps of the sales cycle:

Marketing	-	finding qualified potential clients
Sales Conversion	-	presenting a compelling sales proposition
Order Fulfilment	-	keeping your customer sold and repeated business

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Tip 1 - The European Union - An Export Opportunity

Countries within the European Union (EU) are amongst some of the richest in the world. With most homes and businesses connected to the internet, the EU is a huge market which offers great potential for expanding your customer base.

In order to effectively sell to European customers your website must be able to meet the challenges of marketing to a region with lots of different languages, currencies and paths to your website.

Here are some statistics to consider:

- The EU has approximately 500 million citizens of which 400 million are internet users, and more joining all the time
- EU countries speak 23 different languages and have 12 different currencies, but all use the same internet
- The EU generates an estimated 30% share (US\$16.8 trillion in 2007) of the nominal gross world product

The 27 countries and their currencies which make up the EU are:

Country - Currency

Austria - *Euro*

Belgium - *Euro*

Bulgaria - *Bulgarian Lev*

Cyprus - *Euro*

Czech Republic - *Czech Koruna*

Denmark - *Danish Krone*

Estonia - *Estonian Kroon*

Finland - *Euro*

France - *Euro*

Germany - *Euro*

Greece - *Euro*

Hungary - *Hungarian Forint*

Ireland - *Euro*

Italy - *Euro*

Country - Currency

Latvia - *Latvian Lat*

Lithuania - *Lithuanian Litas*

Luxembourg - *Euro*

Malta - *Euro*

Netherlands - *Euro*

Poland - *Polish Zloty*

Portugal - *Euro*

Romania - *Romanian Leu*

Slovakia - *Euro*

Slovenia - *Euro*

Spain - *Euro*

Sweden - *Swedish Krona*

United Kingdom - *UK Pound*

The EU single market economy

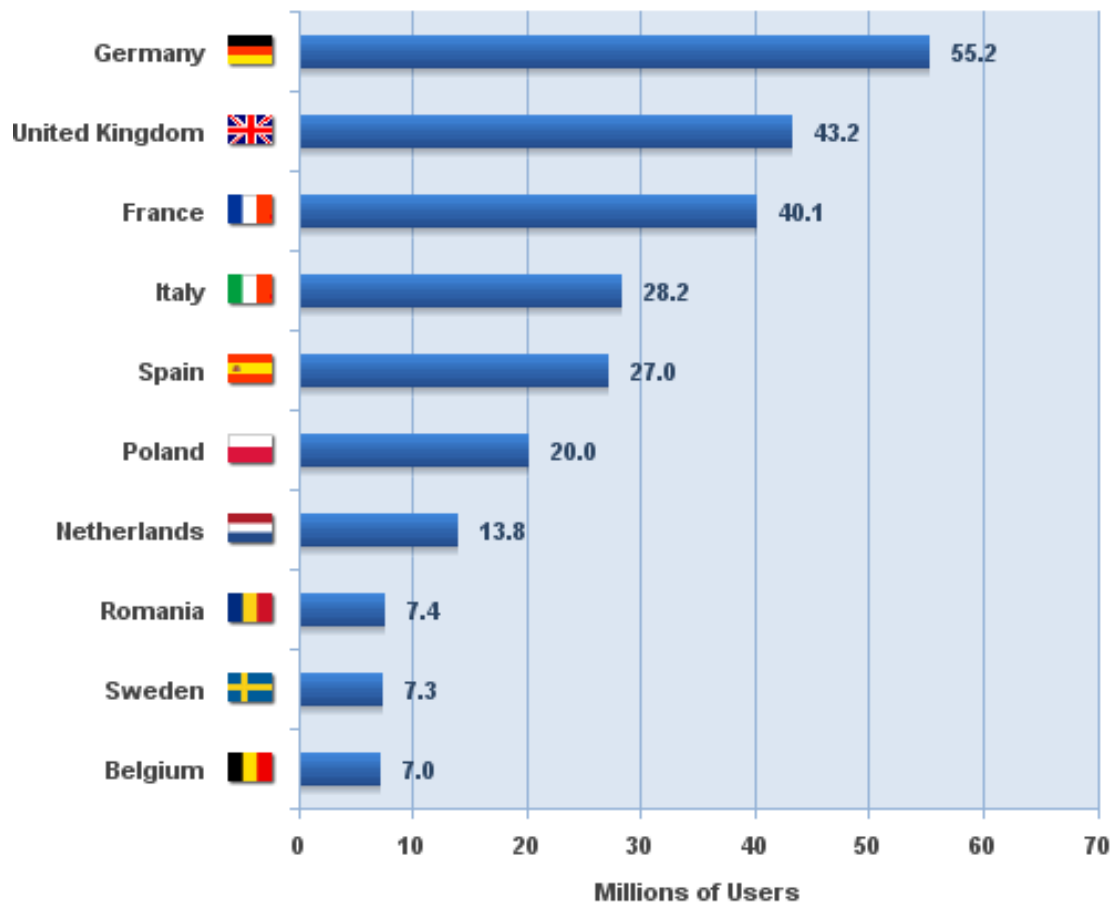
Whilst still separated by borders, countries within the EU are connected by a single market economy. The core trading objective of the single market economy involves the free circulation of goods, capital, people and services within the EU.

Once goods have been admitted into the EU they can not be subjected to customs duties, discriminatory taxes or import quotas, as they travel internally. The non-EU member states of Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland participate in the single market but not in the customs union.

So once your products have been imported into the EU they are free to travel wherever they are needed without encountering additional charges. This makes it easier to sell products throughout Europe without having to pay fees for each individual country.

More European countries are planning to join the EU over the next 10 years, which means the number of customers you can reach will grow as well.

European Union - Top 10 Internet Countries



Source: Internet World Stats - www.internetworldstats.com
297,001,040 estimated EU Internet Users for December 2008
Copyright © 2009, Miniwatts Marketing Group

EU v USA

In comparison to Europe, the USA has around 300 million citizens of which 90% speak English and trade in a single currency.

This underlines the issue with language and currency, and why your marketing strategy and website for the EU has to be totally different to that needed for the USA.

Search Marketing – Making Your Website Easy to Find

Before your website can sell your products to customers in the EU they have to be able to find it. Ensuring your website can be found in the search engines is crucial if it is going to be effective in expanding your business.

In this section you will learn how to use search engine marketing techniques so that potential European clients can find your web site.

Tip 2 - How to Put a Value on Search Marketing

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is an internet marketing technique that aims to get your web pages shown on page one of search engine results for specific search phrases, so that when a particular keyword or phrase is searched your website appears in the results.

The search results on the left hand side of the page are the natural results, and appear for free after a web page has been search engine optimised. The results on the right hand side are pay per click adverts, which you have to pay the search engine for.

Three Important Statistics

- In 2001 Google indexed one billion web pages. In 2008 Google indexed one trillion web pages, which is a 1,000,000 % growth in the last decade
- 14 billion searches were conducted in March 2009, which reflects how people throughout the day now rely on search engines to research information and solve problems

- 68% of internet users do not progress past page one of search results, so unless your web site is on page one you're missing out on a lot of potential clients.

How do you put a value on having pages search optimised ?

Search Engine Optimisation vs. Paid Advertising.

Some basic assumptions:

If a paid advert costs 0.50 (GBP/Euro/USD) per click and receives 100 clicks it would cost to 50.00 (GBP/Euro/USD) per day, or 1,500.00 (GBP/Euro/USD) per month

However, if an SEO company, charging 1000.00 (GBP/Euro/USD) per month, can delivery 200+ visitors per day they can provide the equivalent of 3,000 (GBP/Euro/USD) spent in paid advertising per month, This means using an SEO company to drive traffic would cost 2,000.00 (GBP/Euro/USD) less than using paid advertising every month.

The problem with most SEO Companies

Search Engine Optimisation companies tend to only optimise sites in one language, and only work with a few search phrases.

The Solution is a fully optimised web site for all 23 EU languages

An ecommerce website targeted at customers in the European Union must have every page optimised for all 23 EU languages. If a website has 100 products in 23 languages that equates to 2,300 search phrases.

If a fully translated and optimised website could attract 100 clicks per language in all 23 languages that would equal 2,300 clicks per day. In paid advertising terms at 0.50

per click, this would be worth 1,150 (GBP/ Euro/USD) per day, or 34,500 (GBP/Euro/USD) per month.

So choosing to optimise your website for search in 23 EU languages, rather than use paid advertising, could be valued at 414,000 (GBP/Euro/USD) per year to your business.

Tip 3 - Optimise Every Page for All European Languages

The variety of languages in the EU presents a challenge and means your products will need to be search optimised for each of the 23 official European languages so they can be found in the local language version of the search engines.

This is a three step process:

First Step – Translate a master product page into 23 different language versions. This can be achieved with a machine code translation tool.

Second Step – Proof read the translated pages and ensure it is localised so it can be understood in each individual country

Examples of localisation of ‘mobile phone’

- In USA they refer to cell phones
- In England they refer to mobile phones or mobiles
- In Germany they refer to Handys
- In France they refer to Téléphone mobiles
- In Italy they refer to Telefoni cellulari
- In Spain they refers to Teléfonos Móviles

This is just one example of when basic translation is not enough, and when localisation is also needed to improve a page’s performance in the search results.

Third Step - Correctly set the page country and language settings. This is done by setting the code in the header section of a web page to the correct country code and language code. This instructs the search engine which language a web page should appear.

Now when a potential client, using their country's version of a search engine, enters the search term or search phrase in their own language the correct product page will appear in the search results.

The page position depends on how closely the search engine considers the product page to match the search term, and some other SEO functions.

When a product page is translated and localised, it has every chance of being found by potential clients.

A product page not translated, localised or submitted to the search engines has no chance of being found by potential clients.

Tip 4 - RSS Feeds – Product Pages

Using a free system called RSS it is possible to distribute your website's content around the web. This helps increase the visibility of your website, and can also help improve how quickly your pages appear in the search results.

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is used by blogs, news sites and article marketing sites to syndicate and spread their content around the internet. These websites use RSS to create a 'feed' of its content which then redistributes this to 100's or even 1000's of other websites. RSS is a free, fast and automatic system to use.

In fact, RSS is such a valuable service that Google bought Feedburner, the leading service for managing RSS feeds, in 2007 for an estimated USD \$100 million.

E-commerce websites often comprise of static product pages which aren't updated regularly, if at all. Blogs, news and article sites, on the other hand, are continually publishing new pages. This means the search engines regard these pages to be more up-to-date, and therefore rate them higher in their results than older static pages.

RSS is free and gets your pages more easily found

At ONID we have run numerous long term tests and found it is much easier and quicker to get pages indexed into search engines using RSS than a standard sitemap submission tool.

On many occasions we have been able to get new pages indexed and shown on page one of search engines in less than 20 minutes from being published. Then, depending on the level of competition for a key phrase, the page may stay on page one for a day or two before disappearing (in highly competitive situations), or remain on page one for a long time.

So having a fully automated RSS feed system that will publish product review pages, in all languages, would be a significant SEO advantage.

Publishing articles or product reviews on an ongoing basis is a time consuming and costly exercise. Many SEO companies offer this as a service, but might not also use RSS to help spread your content and improve your search engine ranking.

SEO Back Linking

Search engines use many different factors when ranking website pages. But one crucial factor is the number of back links to your website. Back links are links which appear on other websites pointing back to yours. The general rule is that more back links that point to your website the higher the search engines place it in their search results.

The higher your website's position in the search results the more clicks it will receive and the more opportunities of making a sale.

If you create product pages in RSS feed format they can appear on article and blog sites all around the internet. As the search engine indexes the internet, the back links on these blog sites will help improve the page rank for each product page, and the authority of your website in general.

In summary, using RSS helps to generate back links which leads to better results in search engines, which means more clicks and then more sales.

Tip 5 - Hosting Your Ecommerce Website on a European Internet Server

Having your website aimed at EU customers hosted on a European internet server with a European domain (such as .eu) offers three distinct advantages:

1. Speed - Hosting in Europe means web pages and images will load quicker for European customers, than if it was hosted elsewhere, because your visitors and servers are all connected to the same European backbone of the internet.

If a website is hosted outside Europe the response rate can be very slow. Large images and pages with a lot of content can take a long time to load, which risks losing potential customers who will get frustrated at waiting and leave the site.

2. SEO – the search engines tend to rank websites higher in the countries where it believes the website is located. For example, a website hosted in France will rank higher in the French search results than it will for the same key phrases in the USA. Having a website hosting on a European Internet Server will improve its placement in European search results.

3. Confidence - When a European potential client lands on a .eu ecommerce website they automatically assume the company is ready to do business in Europe. This helps build confidence and trust, which are both crucial before a potential customer will buy your products.

Tip 6 - Compelling Sales Message

Having a compelling sales message in the search results helps your listing stand out from your competitors, encourages more people to click on your listing and can help generate more sales as a result.

When search engines show a list of results they include a small amount of text which describes what the web page or website is all about.

For example:

[Lutron Rania Single Touch Dimmer - lutron lighting | eu online shop](#)
Buy **Lutron Rania** Single Touch Dimmer - Lutron lighting Control Systems for UK and European Properties. Get help and advice with lighting design and system ...
www.onidserv.com/lutronshop/.../rania-single-touch-dimmer - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#) -   

This page's product title is very clear, which shows that the page is for a Lutron Rania Single Touch Dimmer

The second line has a clear sales message and makes it clear that this is a place where you can buy this product – **Buy Lutron Rain Single Touch Dimmer...**

It also offers reassurance that you can ask for help and advice - **Get help and advice...**

Second example:

[R & B Star Electrical Wholesalers Ltd Lutron Rania](#)
R & B star Electrical Wholesalers , Suppliers of Lutron grafik eye, Rania Dimmers.
www.rbstaronline.co.uk/acatalog/Lutron_Rania.html - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#) -   

In this case the product title starts with the supplier's company name, which isn't relevant at this point in the sales cycle.

The second line does not really have a compelling sales proposition. It does not state that you can buy the product on this website but instead just lists a number of products from the manufacturer. There is no compelling reason to click on the link.

In terms of SEO, the first example appears on page one and in first position in google.co.uk. The second example also appears on page one but in position ten, which will attract far fewer clicks and sales.

Tip 7 - Clean URL

Having a clean, well defined URL can improve the number of clicks your website receives in search engine results and help your target customers identify what it is you sell.

URL stands for 'Uniform Resource Locator' and is the unique reference for a page on your website which appears in the address bar of an internet browser.

Here are two tips for creating a clean URL:




1 – Ensure your URL is readable and contains the product name. Some online shops use large databases which generate URLs that are a meaningless series of numbers and characters.

In the example below the URL is the link in green type

This example is taken from the same page as the previous two examples. This URL does not help in the selling process –

[Lutron Rania Table Lamp Dimmer](#)

Click here to see the **Rania** demo. Available in Mica, white. We recommend that the all Lutron dimmers should be used with branded bulbs ...

www.litespot.co.uk/special_detail.asp?prod_id=3022 - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#) -   

When you look back at the first two examples, both have clean, readable URLs

Second tip – don't use '_' underscore to separate words in the URL, use the '-' dash.

This is an advanced user search engine optimisation tip - The reason is that search engines and many computer programmes use '_' underscore added to a word to change a word.

For example:

In the URL Lutron_Rania above – the underscore before Rania changes it to _Rania.

When you use a dash '-' as in the first example, the dash has no effects on the words in the URL

Bonus Tip - Never Use Capital Letters in the URL

Never use capital letters in URLs because Unix (the web operating system) sees Rania and raina as two different words.

These basic errors show that the websites in example two and three have not been very well thought out in terms of search engine optimisation or basic sales and marketing techniques.

Making sure you do not use capital letters will help reduce the risk of errors occurring that prevent potential customers finding your website in the search engines.

Tip 8 - Email Marketing

Email marketing can be a highly effective tool for finding new potential clients. But only if your recipients receive your messages in their inbox and can understand what it says.

When marketing to customers throughout the EU your emails must be translated into the recipient's language if it is to have any chance of leading to a sale.

All email users now suffer from ever increasing levels of junk mail. And as the anti-spam filters fight to stop junk mail entering our inboxes the spammers work harder to trick them.

Emails in a foreign language are often regarded as junk mail, and these emails will almost certainly end up in the junk folder and deleted without being viewed. So ensuring emails are translated into the recipient's language is a vital step in getting the email read in the first place.

Emails sent from non-European email servers are also more likely to be flagged as junk email. However, using a European internet email server with a European domain name, such as .eu, will improve the chances of an email getting read.

So to improve the response rate and effectiveness of your email campaign, you need to have a European email server.

Bonus Tip - On Email Attachments

Many companies make the mistake of sending sales emails with images of their products attached, which can sometimes mean five or six large attachments which need to be downloaded. All anti-virus software treats email attachments as possible viruses, which often means the email ends up in the junk folder or deleted at the server post office by ant-virus software.

From a sales and marketing point of view, there is no need to send image attachments of products. Instead your email should simply include a clear, concise sales message and provide a link to your website for additional information.

So removing image attachments from your emails will help increase the amount that are received, read and responded to.

Bonus Tip - Background Images

Some companies send emails with background images. These images can be distracting and can also make the text difficult to read. Adding background images is unnecessary and can reduce the response rate to your emails, so instead focus on having clearly written black text on a white background.

Tip 9 - Link to Website to Correct Language

It is important that your marketing emails contain a direct link to your website and also link to the correct language section of your website.

More importantly, if the email is making a sales offer, the direct link to the web page should go to a landing page that is related to the offer in the email.

For example, if your email is offering a 10% discount the direct link to your website should be to a page dedicated to your offer, and not go to a random page or even the home page.

Ensuring your emails link to relevant web pages will help keep recipients on a path towards buying your products, and not lost along the way.

A/B Split Testing Your Offer

A/B split testing is a process used by skilled marketing practitioners to improve sales conversion rates.

To conduct an A/B split test you create two different versions of the main sales page on which you rely upon to generate sales.

You then need to find out which page is the most effective by sending emails to an equal number of people with a link to each page.

Measuring which page generates the most sales or enquiries will then tell you which you should keep on your website to maximise sales.

You can extend your testing by creating yet another page and comparing it with the best performing page from your previous A/B split test.

Running this process over and over again will help to keep improving the sales performance of your web page and the amount of sales it generates.

Sales Conversion - Landing Page

For your website's landing page to be effective at generating sales it has to create a compelling sales proposition. It has to create desire trust and value.

The landing page is the first page your visitors arrive at when they visit your website, and is the page you rely on to generate sales, so it isn't necessarily your website's home page.

Tip 10 - Translated into Your Potential Client's Preferred Language

When a potential client visits a website they need to be able to understand the benefits of what you're offering before they can decide whether your product or service meets their needs.

So it is crucial that your website's landing page is translated into your visitor's preferred language.

A website can be divided into three areas:

- 1) Navigation
- 2) Static information pages
- 3) Product (goods or services) pages

It is common sense that unless the website's navigation is in the visitor's preferred language they won't understand how to find what they are looking for, and will leave the website right away.

The static information pages, such 'about us', 'terms and conditions' and 'contact', also need to be understood by the potential client.

Your product pages also need to be translated into your visitor's preferred language, as well as present a compelling sales offer.

Translating your important web pages into the language of your visitors, whichever country their from, means they can understand the benefits of what your offering and are more likely to buy your product.

Tip 11 - Trade in Your Customer's Preferred Currency

When selling to EU countries, you need to ensure potential customers can purchase your products in a currency of their choice, and not force them to pay in US\$ or the Euro.

Of the 27 EU member states, 16 members use the Euro. The other 11 use their own currency.

Selling products using the US\$ or Euro will not be acceptable for visitors who use another local currency. So when a website is translated into a specific European language, the correct corresponding currency must also be used.

Potential business clients will want to use their own currency so they can accurately calculate sales margins on products and because it allows them to quickly make price comparisons.

If online payments are to be accepted on the website, more than one online payment processor may be needed. Some of the larger online payment processor providers operated by European Banks do offer multiple currencies, which includes all European currencies.

PayPal also offers a full selection of European currencies. However, PayPal has a low transaction limit and is generally used for small payments and consumer online shopping.

The online payment processor will undertake the transaction in the local currency, and then do an exchange back into the shop owner's preferred currency. It is therefore not necessary for the shop owner to open multiple currency accounts in order to trade in the EU.

Offering your products in as many currencies as possible makes it easier for people to buy from you and can increase sales as a result.

Bonus Tip – Euro Bank Account

Many banks in the EU offer free internet bank transfers for Euro account customers. Many private individuals and companies take advantage of making internet payments.

A non-European Company or a European Company that does not normally have a Euro Bank Account might find it financially advantageous to open a Euro account with a European Bank. This will allow customers to pay for goods as they would normally pay for goods if trading with a local company.

In some case internet payments only take a matter of hours for the transfer to be completed. This speed of transaction and ease of use improves cash flow and reduces late payment issues. There's also an additional trust element, because the potential client is transferring funds into a known European Bank, which continues to build confidence in your company and the likelihood of them buying.

Tip 12 - Display Methods for Online Payments

Displaying the available methods of payment is crucial both for fulfilling legal requirements and to make it easy for people to buy.

There are many regulations for European companies to comply with when running e-commerce sites in the EU.

One of these regulations is that the available methods of payment must be displayed prior to an order being processed.

Incorporating images showing the available payment methods also makes it clear to visitors that this is an ecommerce site and able to take online payments 24/7.

Bonus Tip – Display Payment Processor’s Logo

All the online payment processors provide logo images you can use on an e-commerce website.

Displaying the logo of a European Bank that processes online transactions builds confidence and trust with visitors.

People are concerned about giving their credit card details over the internet due to the high level of internet fraud reported in the news. But dealing with a well known European Bank makes people feel a lot more secure than with an unknown operation, and can increase your sales conversion rate as result.

Tip 13 - Simple Contact Form

A simple contact form can improve sales conversions whatever the language of your visitors.

It is essential that the website has a clear, simple contact form. Email contact is the best method of contact, especially when you are potentially dealing with clients from all over the EU.

Translating emails into your preferred language can be easily done using a machine code translator. The translator can then also be used to send replies in the recipient's language.

Contact forms also cut down on spam emails. A contact form normally opens in a smaller pop-up window and incorporates a cipher code which is shown as an image and needs to be typed into a text field by hand. This stops email robots sending spam emails.

Keep the contact form simple

Only a few bits of information are needed –

- The contact's name
- The contact's email address for replying
- The contact's telephone number is optional (if the contact would like a call back, they will normally make this request in their message)
- The body of the message

At this early stage in the sales cycle, it is not necessary to request lots of information. Anything else you need to know can be collected during the sales process.

Contact forms should be answered within 24 hours or the next working day.

Make sure the contact form email is sent to a group email address, so at least two people receive the details. Then if one of the members is away sick or on holiday someone else can follow up the enquiry.

Sales Conversion - Product Page

This section examines how to use basic sales techniques to present a compelling sales proposition – create desire, trust and value.

Tip 14 - Use a Descriptive Product Title

In an e-commerce website the product title is the most important item of information. Getting the product title right can make the difference between a successful e-commerce website and one that fails.

The product title should be descriptive and contain at least two search terms that a potential client might use to find the product in a search engine.

Note. Search engines do not need words to be in any specific order to be considered relevant. So you do not need to repeat keywords in the product title.

Specific Search Term.

The specific search term may be two or three words that specifically describe the product. It might include a part number, manufacturer name or model name.

Some products do not have specific or meaningful products names so other descriptive ‘use’ of a product can be used.

If a potential client is going to be able to locate a product then keywords linked to its use must be included in the product title.

General Search Term

The general search term should also be incorporated in the product title. This might be a general use for the product or product group, or it would be a wider search term used.

Other relevant words that should be included in the product title can include the material the product is made from. For example, for furniture you could use oak table, leather sofa or metal bedstead. It is likely a potential client would use these phrases when searching for these types of products, so it's a good idea to include them in the product title.

In some cases colour is an important factor when searching for specific products.

For branded items, the manufacturer's model numbers are often used by potential clients when searching for a price comparison.

Tip 15 - Clear Product Images

High quality images of your product are not only appealing to look at, but can also enhance its appeal and increase sales

A clear product image is very important in the sales process. It should be at least 600 by 600 pixels in size, which allows the image (when enlarged) to fill a normal computer screen. Smaller versions can then be used in other parts of the website.

If possible, there should be some additional images to provide further detail, also 600 by 600 pixels in size. These can be used to highlight special features and enhance the appeal of your product.

Having a uniform image style is also important. If the product images have a background, then all product images should have the same colour background. Mixing image styles will make your web pages look inconsistent and look unprofessional.

Making an effort to present your products with the best possible images will reflect favourably on your company's expertise and enhance the perceived quality of your products.

Bonus Tip - Name Images Correctly

It is possible to add text descriptions to images. This is very important for SEO because search engines use image descriptions to rank pages in image searches.

Some people use image search to find products when there isn't a clear product description to search on and when the look of a product is more important than its function.

Bonus Tip - Use the Product Title

Translating a product's title into all 23 European languages will get the same image indexed in all European language versions of the search engine's localised image search, and increase traffic to your website as a result.

Tip 16 - Product Description - Sell the Benefits

Many online shops are little more than catalogue sites. Few incorporate high quality descriptions that actually help to sell their products. When you don't have a salesperson to talk to customers, it is your descriptions and images that you have to rely on to sell your products.

Writing a good sales description requires some basic good old fashion selling techniques. The most important tactic is to sell the features, advantages and benefits of every product. Using bullet points to list them can be a good method of getting the message across.

Even if there are similar products on the website with the same features, repeat the benefits for all products as if the reader has never seen the product before. Making sure your product descriptions focus on the benefits can significantly improve your website's sales conversion.

Bonus SEO Tip – Detailed Product Descriptions

The search engines use all the text on a page to understand what a page is about. So, for example, if your products are 'windows' the search engine will use other text on the page to work out if your product is connected with Microsoft 'Windows' software or the windows used in buildings.

So it is vital to use words in the product description that have a connection with how a product is used to improve a page's performance in the search results.

Bonus Tip – EAN

EAN stands for European Article Number. Every item sold in Europe will eventually have its own unique EAN.

If your products have an EAN it should be included in the product description to help people find it in the search engines. Many potential business clients will search for products using the EAN as it is a clean unique means to identify a specific product.

Sales Conversion - Checkout Page

After you have made your website visible in the search engines and written great product descriptions that make people want to buy, the last hurdle is 'shopping cart abandonment'. This is where a potential buyer makes it all the way to the checkout and then abandons the sale, and can be a serious problem in e-commerce.

So to avoid it happening on your website, you need to understand what issues cause shopping cart abandonment and ensure they do not affect your online shopping experience.

There are a number of factors that can cause shopping cart abandonment. Here are a few tips to help overcome them.

Tip 17 - Registration Process

Registering as a new customer on your website needs to be as simple as possible and able to register people from all 27 EU countries.

There are normally two very different registration processes: one for business to business clients and the other for retail consumers.

Consumer Registration

Login/password - Online shoppers can have many different user logins and passwords for the different shopping sites they visit. One simple solution is to ask visitors to use their email address as their login name. Every email address is unique, so the login name will also be unique.

Requesting passwords - The first question to ask is whether a password is really needed? Some visitors will want to have a password, others may consider it unnecessary. Let the user decide. Offer them the option of entering a password, but it should not be compulsory unless there is a good reason to have one.

Delivery Address - Many European countries use different address formats. It is not possible to meet all these different formats in one form. The most simple and flexible option is to have a free format text box for potential clients to enter their address.

Only ask for the information you really need. The fewer items of information you ask for at registration the better. Ask too many questions and you risk potential client giving up and going elsewhere or entering random letters to complete the process.

Business to Business Registration

Registering business users may need to be a little more formal, but can still be simple.

You can use the same login/password options used for consumer registration.

The address format can also be similar with the one exception. Business to business customers may have different delivery and invoice addresses. So it is important to capture both.

Business to business customers may also have different delivery address for each order. So it should be possible for business customers to change the delivery address at the checkout.

Email confirmation

If the website offers 'pay by invoice' or other off line payment options, it is ideal to arrange for the shop administrator to approve the business to business registration before the potential client is able to shop online.

Most European companies are VAT registered, and if goods are transported within the EU the invoices will be VAT zero rated. For this to occur, the customer must confirm their VAT number, and the VAT numbers for both the seller and purchaser must be on the invoice.

Once the business to business account is confirmed an email should be sent to the customer advising them they can now trade online.

Order Fulfilment

To reduce the risk of a sale being abandoned after an order is placed, you need to send automated emails to customers to keep them informed of the delivery process.

Keeping the customer well informed maintains the high level of confidence and trust they have already built up with your company, as well as reduces the risk of them losing confidence and cancelling the order.

European Distance Selling Regulation

Due to EU distance selling laws, after a customer has received goods they have up to seven days in which they can cancel the order for a full refund. This is due to the fact that they have bought the goods without actually seeing them in the real world, although there are some products which are exempt from this law.

The Distance Selling Regulations do not apply to business to business transactions.

Well managed order fulfilment communications ensures that the customer knows that the order has been received and is being processed.

Keeping the customer informed maintains a high level of confidence. This is especially important if the items ordered will take more than three or four days to be delivered.

Online consumer shoppers can order online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Unfortunately, many believe that the order fulfilment operation run by the online shop is also working around the clock. It is not uncommon for a customer to order on a Friday evening and expect delivery by Monday morning. If the order fulfilment

operation maintains normal office hours, the earliest the goods could be delivered is generally Tuesday, when the goods have been sent out on Monday.

The timing of the email communications is important and, as previously mentioned, all emails to customers must be translated into their preferred language.

Tip 18 - Sales Invoice

A sales invoice is a legal document, and by European Law must contain certain information:

- The seller's company name, trading address and contact details, and the legal registration address if different from the trading address.
- The seller's company registration number and place of registration. Some EU states also require the share capital value of the company, names of all directors and other local tax codes.
- The seller's VAT registration number
- The date on which the sale legally took place
- It should list all the items in the order, ideally with unit price, total price, the VAT Rate and VAT amount.

A sales invoice should be sent to a customer at the same time as payment is taken, which is often when the order is placed online.

When you are selling to customers throughout the EU, you must ensure that the invoice has been translated into the customer's preferred language as it will be entered into their bookkeeping system. However, the currency used in the sales invoices should remain the same.

Providing invoices translated into your customer's language is great customer service, and will help improve the likelihood of them placing future orders on your website.

Tip 19 - Delivery Note - Keeping the Customer Informed

The delivery note is a document sent with items which has the customer's delivery address, a list of all items enclosed in the package and the seller's contact details.

It is a good idea to show the quantity of items ordered, the quantity of the items sent in this package and the quantity of items still to be sent, so that if there is a discrepancy it can quickly be resolved.

It is also useful to email a copy of the delivery note when the items are ready to be sent. This informs the customer that the goods are now in transit. It is also very useful to include in the delivery note a web link to the courier's website, so the customer can track the delivery progress for themselves. This gives the customer piece of mind knowing when the goods are due to be delivered.

More importantly, if the goods have not been delivered the customer can see directly from the courier's website if there are any delivery problems.

It is less of a problem for a customer if there is a delivery issue which they can see for themselves and understand, than if there is a delivery issue and they do not know what is happening.

If there is a delay in getting items delivered due to stock issues, you should send periodic emails apologising for the delay and that you are doing everything possible to get the items delivered as soon as possible. These emails can be automated to keep your customers informed.

Ensuring customers are constantly informed of the status of their order, using delivery notes and emails is great customer service and will also increase the likelihood of repeat business.

Tip 20 - Thank You Email

A simple email saying ‘thank you’ could be one of the most important emails you send to a customer during the entire sale, and should be sent a few days after the goods have arrived.

A thank you email serves three purposes:

- 1 – A genuine, polite thank you for their business
- 2 – An opportunity to make a follow up offer to the customer. This could be a small discount which helps to increase the repeat business opportunity. It might be as simple as offering a coupon which can be used at the checkout when they order again.
- 3 – Feedback on how well you did in fulfilling the customer’s expectations. Good constructive criticism can be the best feedback because it can help you to improve your whole sales system.

Online shops currently offer the most efficient sales order processing system available. If the system runs smoothly, and the customer feels that they are being treated with respect and kept informed through out the whole sales and order fulfilment cycle, you will reduce the time spent with customer service issues, and that will have a positive impact on your bottom line and profitability.

Website Review

We hope you have found this eBook and its 20 top export sales and marketing tips useful and it helps you understand what your website needs to be able to do in order to expand your business to reach customers in Europe.

Having read through this e-book, you can now do a quick review of your own website to see which areas could do with some changes and improvements.

Alternatively, ONID Limited offers a FREE review service of your website to assess what action is needed for it to market more effectively to customers in the EU.

In our review we will go through all the key points outlined in this eBook before submitting you with a free report on how well your website performs in each area, and what can be done to improve how it sells to the EU market.

The report will be emailed to you in Adobe Acrobat PDF format for you to print out, share with colleagues and use as a blueprint for improving the ability of your website to generate sales.

If you would like ONID Limited to undertake a FREE review of how your website can be improved, please email njb@onid.co.uk with the subject 'free website review'.

In the body of the email message enter your contact details and the URL for your website.

This Concludes This Report.

Thank you for reading this eBook. I hope it has provided some useful ideas on how and where you can improve your strategy for marketing to EU customers. If you have any feedback or comments please email me at njb@onid.co.uk and I will reply promptly.

Nicholas Broadway

Ends.