

Global Ecommerce Best Practices

1. **Understand the customers.** A basic knowledge of which country your site visitors live in will help you understand if there is a market for your products internationally. If you currently ship internationally, look at the traffic and orders from the top countries as a guide to indicate which countries should be launched first.
2. **Assess the market.** Look at the international competition for your products. Can you compete there? Is it difficult to ship your goods there? Can you use a regional partner or fulfillment company? Which countries look most promising? If you sell a product that no one else does, great. If it is not sold internationally because it is not a product that has a market there, you may not be successful.
3. **Investigate your site expansion capabilities.** International ecommerce may not be supported by all ecommerce solutions. If your current solution cannot support international ecommerce, third party providers can run international ecommerce sites for you and help you manage fulfillment and shipment of orders.
4. **Think hard about the cost-benefit ratio.** The benefit and sales generated from going international is often hard to determine due to unknown differences in the international marketplace. The costs are often easier to predict, but there will still be some uncertainty based on the level of international sales. Look at both carefully and create multiple scenarios to plan for in advance.
5. **Cross-border shipping and/or fulfill internationally; consider both.** At some point, it may make sense to open an international fulfillment center, but this depends on the profitability of your international venture. Shipping times, cost and customer service implications can all be improved by fulfilling internationally (even through a third party), but factor in set-up costs.
6. **Make sure you consider local customer privacy laws.** Customer data privacy laws vary by country. Some countries do not allow their citizen's data to be sent outside of the country. Hosting in a different country would violate this regulation.
7. **Write in the local language and dialect.** To launch internationally, try to translate into the local language and dialect. Hire a third-party team to support this if needed. It's also a good idea to maintain an English version of the site, thereby giving users the option to toggle through both. Using only English on an international site should only be a short-term option.
8. **Understand local taxation and regulations.** Each country has its own taxation rules and regulations. Countries generally have their own regulations that need to be understood and planned into your international expansion strategy.
9. **Make sure you can sell in each country.** Suppliers or manufacturers may restrict sales of their products internationally. Retailers need to make sure they can sell internationally to prevent violations of their agreement with suppliers and manufacturers.
10. **Use local payment and shipping methods.** Pick a global carrier that ships to your international countries or understand the nuances of each country that you plan to expand to and support how they pay and ship.
11. **Plan your organization and work flows internationally.** Each country has its own tastes; they may react differently to merchandising and product assortment, for example. Plan your organization to effectively and efficiently run your international ecommerce sites.

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eCommerce Diligence™ Checklist

Global Ecommerce Key Questions to Ask Providers

Company

1. How long have you been in this business?
2. How many clients have you deployed? How many clients have you lost, and why?
3. What size or types of clients fall into your “sweet spot”?
4. What countries have you deployed? Which ones do you have physical locations in?

Products/Services

1. Is your solution offered as perpetual licensed software or on-demand multi-tenant solution?
 - a. What are the client support requirements for each?
 - b. What is the process to add features you currently don't have?
 - c. What redundancy and disaster recovery do you have in place?
2. What skills does my organization (or hired third party) need to use your tools? What training do you provide? Can I make my own changes to the software?
3. What technical support services are available?
 - a. Are there human beings I can reach during reasonable hours (chat or phone) or do I have to wait over 24 hours for an email response or callback? Is your support team located in the US or abroad?
 - b. What is your SLA for support issues?
4. Do you provide APIs?
5. Do you provide Best Practices?
6. Do you have a support knowledgebase, community forum, or applications that are shared by customers?
 - a. Are your technical support systems available in multiple languages? If so, which languages?

Features

1. Do you provide international ecommerce solutions?
 - a. Which countries do you support?
 - b. Which languages? Currencies?
 - c. Do you fulfill out of these countries?
 - d. Do you just run the sites, or do you handle order management and other aspects?
 - e. What features have geographic limitations?
 - f. How do you support a multi-country deployment strategy?
2. Do you provide translation services?
 - a. Which countries do you support?
 - b. Which languages?
3. Do you provide HTS services?
4. Do you provide currency exchange rates?
5. Are you the merchant of record?
6. Do you collect payment?
7. Do you take on the fraud risk?
8. Do you pick up orders or are they shipped to your facility?
9. Will you provide tracking information?
10. Do you provide customer service internationally? In the local language?
11. Does your solution provide visual reporting or a dashboard view of reports in progress?
12. Does your solution provide for monitoring site performance?
 - a. What timeframes are possible?
 - b. Can it run load tests and/or single page load tests?
 - c. What reporting or escalation processes are available?

Pricing

1. Please describe your pricing model.
 - a. Do you charge for orders, monthly, by the number of words translated?
 - b. Are there different levels?
2. How do you charge for annual support? What about maintenance and professional services (project management, strategy)?
3. Are there any additional fees?
 - a. Initial implementation? Ongoing changes? New feature developments?
 - b. How do you handle overages and campaign bursts? Transaction costs?
 - c. What are your revenue share percentages? What does that include?

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