



# The Holy Trinity Of E-commerce Success

How to stand-out and generate sales online with a competitive product, promise and price mix.

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## Your store is now online – who cares?

Your e-commerce store has just opened its doors. Along with a greater number of potential customers comes a greater number of competitors.

You're going to have to ask yourself: what does my new web site have that the others don't? Why would someone buy from me and not the competition?

In fact, maybe you should ask why anyone would care you're online at all? Because to succeed, you're going to need to attract and persuade the 99% of Internet users out there who are ready to buy (but frankly, don't have a clue who you are) to buy from you and not someone else.

It's a challenge, but it can be done. In this white paper, we're going to show you how to use a combination of **product**, **promise** and **price** to keep new visitors visiting your store, old ones returning, and keep that virtual tumbleweed from rolling past your virtual door.

## To make people care, you've got to be brutal

A well-designed web site with friendly sales copy will go a long way to creating a favourable impression of your brand, but it won't get you a sale on its own. It's a secondary point, a reinforcement of the meat & potatoes of your basic proposition, which is: why you should buy from me.

The three pillars that make this proposition are:

- Product
- Promise
- Price

Fail on any of these and there's a high probability you will lose the sale to a competitor; it's 'Product, Promise & Price' or bust.

Sorry – but we said you'd have to be brutal.

## The Holy Trinity of e-commerce success

### 1. Product

Everything and anything to do with the goods you stock or the services you provide falls under 'product': quantities stocked, presentation, photography & videos, the optimisation of your listings for search engines, everything.

It sounds simple, but if any of these factors don't match your visitor's expectations ("The photo is really grainy" or "They don't have this shirt in my size") they'll head for the exit. The challenges you face are:

- Stocking the correct amount of products online: a balancing act of consumer demand and budget
- Ensuring the standard of the product photography and videos is high
- Ensuring your product listing is optimised for the most popular and targeted search phrases so you can attract traffic from search engines

Then there's the product itself: do you know how popular it is online? How many other retailers are selling it? Who it appeals to? A thorough understanding of your product's standing in the online marketplace is essential to listing and presenting it more attractively on your web site.

This is the first hurdle. If a visitor stumbles here, you've no chance of getting the sale, no matter how competitive your promise or price are.

Which brings us neatly on to...

### 2. Promise

We call the experience that surrounds making a purchase on your site the 'promise'. The strongest promises usually centre on delivery or customer service, because these are areas where you can really impress by going the extra mile. Think of the promise as a prominent aspect that distinguishes shopping at your site from the competition. For example:



*'Order until 11pm & get free next day delivery'*

...is a very strong promise. People who only have time to shop in the evenings and want to receive their items quickly will love it. It could easily satisfy the urgency required to swing the sale in your favour, especially if the competition is charging the same price *plus* postage.

The promise your site offers can also involve holistic, good-will touches like sending birthday emails to account holders, but essentially, it should be something none of your competitors are offering. Think: hand-wrapped packaging and hand-written 'thank you' notes as standard; free samples with every purchase (you get the idea - now you just have to think up one of your own).

The 'promise' is the second hurdle visitors have to clear (they're close to the sale now). We've put it second because the strength of your promise determines how high or low you can set your price hurdle.

The balancing act is finding a promise that creates the impression of substantial 'value-added' for the shopper without demolishing your profit margin.

Which brings us to (you guessed it)...

### **3. Price**

The Internet is a playground for bargain hunters, enabling quick price comparison in just a few clicks. That's why many retailers worry about their competitiveness online.

Let's be honest: if you can afford to be the cheapest online, you'll find it easier to generate sales. If you have to sell at the recommended retail price or more, you'll need to bring something extra to the table (namely, that promise we talked about), but the strength of your promise affects how high or low you can set your price. If you can offer a remarkable promise, shoppers will forgive an extra 5% or 10% in price. The same goes if you stock a niche product that is hard to find elsewhere.

Price is probably the least exciting hurdle in the mix. You can be creative with your product and promise while price is fairly pedestrian. Nonetheless, it's the third and final hurdle visitors must clear in order to give your site serious consideration. If you've made it easy for them to get to this stage and set your price sensibly, your chances of their converting into a sale are that much greater.

Remember, price is not the only factor behind shoppers' decision making - they can be swayed easily with the right promise to buy the right product. Not everyone can afford to be the cheapest, but not everyone wants to buy the cheapest either.

### **Is your product, promise and price mix up to scratch?**

#### **1. Look to your visitors**

Understanding your visitors' behaviours will help you diagnose the health of your product, promise and price mix.

If you know visitors are only arriving by typing in your web address into their browser, or by typing your company name into Google, it would suggest large portions of your site aren't visible in the search engines for other phrases. This suggests there could be something wrong with the way you've listed your stock and it's in need of some search engine optimisation. By the same token, if most visitors are exiting via the product pages, perhaps your promise and price combination isn't strong enough.

It used to be difficult for retailers to gather this information, but free analytics software has changed all that. Identifying entry and exit points is much easier now, but it's still down to you to identify *why* these points are there (and we can help with that).

#### **2. Look to your competitors**

People are impatient. Shoppers will almost certainly leave to find the product they want



elsewhere if you don't have their size, colour, etc. in stock (unless you happen to have a phenomenal promise or *very* loyal customers).

Shoppers are also very price-sensitive. If you are in a market where your competitors price their products similarly, you could afford to be the same or a little more expensive (with a good promise). But if *all* of your competitors start discounting, you might have to follow suit to some degree, again, depending on the strength of your promise.

Being ignorant of fluctuations in competitors' prices and consumer demand can be disastrous. Sales for popular products drop for no apparent reason and you lose valuable traffic to other sites. But with software programmes now available that can alert you to low stock levels, suggest recommended re-ordering levels based on historical data and scan competitors prices automatically, you can make fast strategic decisions at your convenience.

**Blatant Plug!** – Docnet have observed both of these scenarios played out time and time again online, which is why our e-commerce platform, SprintEcommerce has systems to cope with them. To find out how in more detail, please contact us using the details provided in this white paper.

### Turning the Holy Trinity into online sales

Effective online retail is an art in itself. It is *not* an effective strategy to simply transplant your brick and mortar store to an e-commerce platform and expect it to operate the same way. Re-evaluate how price, product and promise fundamentals operate online by following our advice and soon you'll find your business taking to online retail swimmingly.

E-commerce has presented a great opportunity for retailers to massively extend their reach. Reaching potential customers is just the first stage however; the next is to give them reasons to care, to be loyal. Once you've achieved this, you'll find that e-commerce can become a highly profitable sales channel.

**Docnet** is a full-service e-commerce company based in Manchester, UK that has helped businesses turn online into their biggest sales channel throughout a range of industries.

Let us show you how we can:

- **Attract more visitors to your site** with search engine optimisation, pay per click and other online marketing channels
- **Increase sales turnover** with user-friendly site design and checkout processes
- **Reduce operational costs** with content management systems and full-support coverage

Just some of the great brands that trust us to achieve their marketing objectives:



Call us on **0845 521 0444** to find out how we can help you meet your business objectives or visit [www.doc-net.com](http://www.doc-net.com) to find out more today

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