Start an Online Store

Step 1:
C R E A T E   Y O U R   B R A N D

What is a brand? Branding is a way to describe your business with a company name, logo and general design aesthetic. It is a tool to not only be a symbol for your company, but a way to connect with consumers and turn them into loyal customers, help stand out among competitors, builds brand recognition and creates consistency.

» First, you will need to **define your company's identity**. You can do this by:
- Choosing a name for your company; select something catchy
- Figuring out your target audience

» Next, you need to **build your brand** by establishing a mission statement and brand values. Your mission statement should be short and succinct to help describe what your company does and its purpose. Meanwhile, your brand values are your company's vision at its heart. Here are some questions that will help you come up with your brand messaging, so that you can organize your company around your desired identity:
- Why did you start this company?
- What does it mean to you?
- Did a life event inspire the creation of the company?
- What are the core values you wish to stick to?
- Are you going to give back to the community?

» After all of the initial details of the brand come together, you will need a designer to bring your vision for your company to light and **create the brand elements** for your company. Here are the things that you will need:
- Logo + Icons

- Color Palette
- Imagery
- Brand Guidelines

Once your brand is finalized and ready for the world, you are ready for the next step in creating your online store.

Step 2:
SETUP YOUR STORE

Opening an ecommerce website not only creates a digital presence for your brand, but is the way that consumers turn into customers. It's important that your website aesthetically represents your brand while also being easy for your target audience to interact with and find the things that they're looking for.

» First, you will need to **decide on the ecommerce platform** that you want to use for your store. The two most popular options:
- Shopify; this platform is first and foremost for ecommerce websites and provides some support if for some reason you did not have a developer at hand for troubleshooting any issues that arise
- Wordpress + WooCommerce; this platform is the best for building completely custom websites that you will be able to easily edit, but lacks support unless you have a developer at hand

» Once you have decided on a platform, you will need a web designer and/or developer to **design & build your ecommerce website**. Together you will work through the basic website functionality and integrations needed for the website. For example, you might need a form on your website to integrate with an email campaign platform like MailChimp, so that you can send your monthly newsletters to customers. Here are some questions to help compile a list of functionality requirements:
- Are you going to contribute to a blog?
- Do you have a CRM that your store needs to connect to?
- Do you have an email campaign platform such as MailChimp?
- Should customers be able to create accounts on the website?

- Are you offering shipping or just local pickup?
- How are you handling orders? (DropShip, shipping yourself via USPS, etc.)

» During the development phase, you will need to **create the product listings for the website**. There are many details needed for each product:
- Product Images (these are THE most important part)
- Product Title
- Product Category
- Price
- Product Description
- Product Details (sizes, weight, instructions on how to use)
- Related Products
- SKU (if integrated into inventory tracking)

» After the website design and development is completed, you will need to **set up payment processing and shipping**. Most major payment processors and software integrate with both Shopify and WooCommerce, though there may be additional fees.

Once your website is completed, the next step is to launch the ecommerce store. Once it is live, you will be able tackle the next and final step to starting your ecommerce store.

Step 3:
MARKET YOUR STORE

When you have a website, users don't just automatically know about it. You need to market it through various different methods so you can reach your target audience and start turning consumers into customers.

» First, you should **set up social media pages** for your store; most importantly, create an Instagram for people to interact with your brand and see products. You can even use social media as a platform to sell your products. You should always make sure that anything you post on social media follows your brand guidelines mapped out in step one.

» You should also **implement SEO (Search Engine Optimization)**, which is the practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to your website through

organic search engine results by modifying the way your website's content is relayed to search engines through keywords placed on the website through:

- Page Titles
- Page Content
- Alt Tags
- Image Titles

» Furthermore, you can utilize the services of a marketing manager to **strategize other marketing tactics** in order to expand the presence of your brand. Some things they might suggest are Facebook ads, Instagram ads, email campaigns, and more!