WHITEPAPER

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO
MULTI-STORE E-COMMERCE

by AmeriCommerce
Table of Contents

1 Introduction

3 Chapter 1: Cornering The Market

7 Chapter 2: Getting Local

9 Chapter 3: Dominating Niches

12 Chapter 4: Segmenting Retail and Wholesale

15 Chapter 5: Working with Distributors or Franchises

18 Closing Thoughts

Click on a page title to skip to that chapter
INTRODUCTION

Welcome! And thanks for downloading this White Paper.

In the pages that follow, we’ll be taking a detailed look at AmeriCommerce’s Multi-Store™.

But first things first …

What is Multi-Store E-Commerce?

Multi-Store E-Commerce is an extraordinary feature that allows you to create and manage multiple storefronts from a single backend (i.e., admin panel). It’s one of our most popular features for online store owners and operators of all sizes.

With Multi-Store, you can:

- Provide demographics and audiences with a tailored experience built just for them.
- Wield fine-grained control over all of your stores including unique design, payment methods, shipping options, product catalogs, pricing, content and more.
- Create a variety of brands—each with a distinct look and feel.
- Dominate search results by optimizing each storefront for its own most valuable keywords.
- Run store-specific promotions to generate optimal revenue.
- Manage everything from analytics, inventory, customer relationships, sales, orders, shipping and products through one comprehensive console.
- Utilize your team for peak efficiency, assigning administrators and managers the right permissions to manage their responsibilities across one or multiple stores.
What we’ll cover in this guide ...

Here’s our promise: You won’t find the standard lists of features and benefits inside. Naturally, we’ll cover that, but the real value lies in guiding you through exactly how you leverage Multi-Store functionality to achieve great things for your business.

Even better, we’ll take a look at real-world uses of Multi-Store E-Commerce for direct application.

To help you grab ahold of everything that Multi-Stores can do, here are the five big wins we’ll cover:

1. Cornering the Market
2. Getting Local
3. Dominating Niches
4. Segmenting Retail and Wholesale
5. Working with Distributors or Franchises

Let’s get started...
Multi-Store E-Commerce gives you the power to “corner your market” by creating a host of different storefronts that carry the same products.

Why different storefronts?

Because in the world of E-Commerce, personalization is king.

Turns out, a whopping 97% of online store visitors leave without ever making a purchase. That means, generating raw traffic without a plan to convert visitors into leads into customers is online suicide. And as Janrain discovered, the leading cause for all this website abandonment is irrelevant content: “74 percent [of visitors] get frustrated with websites when content, offers, ads, promotions, etc. appear that have nothing to do with their interests.”

Personalization means offering each visitor a unique and custom online experience tailored to their interests, needs, wants and, especially, their buying behavior. Think of Amazon’s product recommendations…but on E-Commerce steroids:
Unfortunately, jumping into personalization is daunting. According to Foundr Magazine:

“*When you start thinking about how many types of personalization there are, it becomes clear just how big the minefield is that we’re about to start tentatively feeling our way through.*

“There’s navigational personalization, predictive personalization, personalization based on third-party data, database segmentation, personalized subject lines, personalized content served based on interests…*takes a breath*…real time offers, contextual messaging, location based messaging, dynamic remarketing and more.”

Obviously a tall order.

But that’s why Multi-Store E-Commerce should be your first stop on the road to personalization.

Your visitors and consumers alike want to arrive at your store and immediately see the products most relevant to them—either the ones they buy regularly or the products matching the search terms that brought them there in the first place.

Time is valuable and nobody wants to wade through swathes of irrelevant products. With Multi-Store E-Commerce, they don’t have to.

Multiple storefronts—essentially, completely different websites all run from the same master backend—let you create unlimited variations in design, product offerings, promotions, search-engine optimization, pricing and other preferences.

**This automatically segments your users by sending them to the store that best fits their needs.** Catering directly to different audiences delivers a competitive advantage and a healthy margin for your overall business.
CUSTOMER QUOTE

“My favorite feature in Spark Pay is how I can establish a single product that I can dynamically change based on the website I’m selling the product on. With one product, I can change the price, the description, the shipping option. I can alter based on customer type and they can pay using different payment methods depending on which site the customer visits.”

You can even use these storefronts to “compete” for business against each other.

Let’s use a specific example:

One AmeriCommerce store owner sells indoor, family games on their website. They decided to expand these products into “outdoor” games. However, instead of just setting up another page of products on their existing site—whose design and SEO is targeted at indoor games—they set up a new storefront specifically aimed at just the outdoor crowd.

They could even position their outdoor games as ancillary products on several multi-stores, each with different looks and pricing to corner the market in this narrow niche.

For the outdoor exclusive site, the games are priced based on their competitors. But when the games are presented as ancillary products on the other, more general stores, they’re priced at a premium because they appear as unexpected bonuses. This ensures optimal margins for all products across every storefront.

Better still, the store owner can then choose whether to use the same set of shared product images for these products across different sites...or use store-specific images to reflect distinct aesthetics.
Remember, all your stores can have a different look and feel, and they can also be optimized for different keywords—giving you the power to dominate search results in your chosen market.

From top to bottom, Multi-Store E-Commerce creates a personal experience customized to draw in customers, keep your products and pricing relevant and close the gap on that 97% of visitors who come and go...without ever making a purchase.

**CUSTOMER QUOTE**

“Each of our three websites sell the exact same products at various price points. Customers expect us to be very price competitive and offer a very wide selection of products.

When they find additional products on the site, it is a bonus for them as they didn’t expect to find those. As a result, we charge a premium for those other products. This gives us nice margins on ancillary products.”
Selling to different geographic regions is a powerful way to diversify revenue streams as well as add to your store’s personal feel.

Like the old saying goes, there are three things that matter in business: “Location. Location. Location.” Here’s the thing: in E-Commerce, location isn’t about where your store is...it’s about where your customers are.

Needs, buying patterns, pricing and trends are all profoundly geographical. As Kissmetrics found, “90% of U.S. marketing agencies have had clients request geographically targeted online ad campaigns.” Why? Because advertisers now report that “geo-targeted ads deliver a stronger 60% ROI than other buys.”

However—just as with personalization—localization is difficult with variations in pricing, shipping, language, currency, legal requirements and other complexities.

Multi-Store E-Commerce solves this problem by allowing you to set up a dedicated storefront for every region you operate in—each with its own preset rules.

In other words, you can position the right products, communicate in the right messages, use the right language, and create the right content that’s both unique and relevant to your target audiences. This creates a natural, comfortable and seamless experience for your different buyers.
It also means you can ensure compliance with legal requirements with a few simple clicks.

For example, there are often different requirements and stipulations for products sold in different states. In this case, you could have different products sold from different warehouses with unique rules for each warehouse. So when a customer clicks on a product on your main store, they’d be redirected to the appropriate storefront that warehouses that product—ensuring that all legal requirements are followed to the letter for every transaction.

The same principle applies for creating unique shipping options and customizing your site for specific currencies.

However, one of the most powerful yet underrated benefits of localization is “weatherizing” each of your storefronts. What is “weatherizing”? Weatherizing your E-Commerce site means taking advantage of the climate considerations specific to your visitor’s geography.

That might sound odd, but—according to the British Retail Consortium—weather is “the second-biggest motivating factor in buying decisions” and “affects around $3 trillion in private industry alone.”

The applications are obvious. Whether your E-Commerce store sells food, clothing, sports equipment, seasonal gifts, electronics or any other variety of consumer goods, each and every one of those products ought to be positioned to address and intersect with the weather outside.

Think back to our clothing example from above. Not only are the styles, tastes and preferences different from New York to Los Angeles…so is the temperature, a consideration that screams for utilization, once your eyes are open to it.
3. DOMINATING NICHES

In today’s ultra-competitive world of E-Commerce, success often boils down to finding the right niche. We’ve already stressed this in the first two big wins Multi-Store E-Commerce provides. Now it’s time get even more focused.

Narrowing your marketing scope lets you invest your attention and resources into one small area.

But don’t be misled. There’s riches in niches.

The narrower your scope, the more effective your marketing and the more qualified your customer acquisition. Plus, it’s a far easier approach than trying to reach a huge global audience all at once.

“How To Conquer E-Commerce Through A Niche Market” lists even more benefits:

- Identify and target potential customers.
- Experience significantly less competition.
- Drive organic and paid traffic to your website.
- Gain higher conversion rates from customers typically looking for something specific.

Sure, you could run a store that sells a huge range of different products, but this is a near-impossible model for all but the biggest E-Commerce retailers.

Dominating a single niche is so critical for success that the geniuses at I Love Marketing prioritize choosing one audience as the very first of nine “profit activators”: “Narrow your focus and Select ONE Target Market (at a time).” “How To Conquer E-Commerce Through A Niche Market” As their Breakthrough DNA Report explains:
You’ve seen the consequences of not following this at work in lots of failed businesses.

The big mistake that a lot of business owners make is trying to think about and capture the broadest possible audience for their business, trying to be too much to too many people. Trying to be one-size-fits-all, being broad versus narrow, thinking about the forest and not thinking about the individual trees and not realizing that all of these individual trees have different needs.

And when it comes to dominating a niche, Multi-Store E-Commerce is a must.

CUSTOMER QUOTE

[Add customer quote about the benefits and results of creating multiple stores based on specific niches/]

Another current AmeriCommerce customer, for instance, primarily sells children’s books on her main store’s website but has a range of additional sites that carrying other books as well as products like rings, artwork, teaching supplies and more.

Why does she separate them?

Because offering all these products on one site would turn her children’s bookstore into a “general store.” In that case, her online competition would be vast and fierce.

Using Multi-Store E-Commerce, she can host these products on their own domains with tailored content meant to attract and support each site’s core offering—all richly optimized for product-related keywords.
The beauty is: every single one of her niche-specific sites is run through one AmeriCommerce’s account and admin panel. Likewise, you can manage catalogs, orders, customers and content without resorting to multiple logins and reports.

This is just one example of how Multi-Store can help you dominate your niches... without becoming a time-consuming burden.

CUSTOMER QUOTE

“We decided to use Spark Pay because of the Multi-Store feature. As we run multiple websites with the same product, it streamlines updating product prices, images and descriptions. It saved us a TON of time on the product updating process.”
4. SEGMENTING RETAIL AND WHOLESALE

Many modern E-Commerce businesses sell to both wholesale and retail customers.

If your site serves both audience, then Multi-Store can “split” these two customer types and dedicate individual storefronts to each—again, with appropriate content, features and pricing rules.

The major advantage of this approach is it allows you to accommodate the significant differences between B2B and B2C.

Of course, B2B and B2C buyers share a host of common expectations when it comes to E-Commerce. On at least five fronts, the best practices are nearly one for one:

1. Simple Navigation
2. Intuitive Search
3. High-Quality Product Images
4. Multiple Shipping Options
5. Real-Time Product Availability

However, to dominate B2B specifically, the nuances (not to mention the complexities) mount:

“Business execs need flexible pricing, higher volume order capabilities, complex shipping settings and variable secure logins. With more regulation, tax complexities, and the need for logistics solution, B2B Marketing is undoubtedly more complex than the B2C business model.”

You can certainly set up custom pricing using AmeriCommerce’s quantity rules, but that only addresses one of the differences between B2C (retail) and B2C (wholesale):
B2B customers still require additional “musts” like advanced security, quick-ordering features and business-account integration.

What’s more, because wholesaling is predominantly a B2B transaction, it’s vital to anticipate multiple users and decision makers throughout the buying process. According to LinkedIn’s massive new study—Rethink: The B2B Buyer’s Journey —the average B2B buying decision involves three or more different departments:
This means creating a wholesale storefront that accommodates “buying by committee”—along with the other “musts” already mentioned—is nonnegotiable.

With Multi-Store E-Commerce, the same products or even different products can be carried on each site, all of which are centrally located behind-the-scenes. Your inventory levels update live across all of them via a centralized database.

**CUSTOMER QUOTE**

“I love that all my orders and customers are in one place.”

Lastly, the ability to assign multiple store admins and managers within your own organization allows your retail and wholesale stores to be overseen by the appropriate person—keeping store management straightforward and streamlined without over-simplifying.
5. WORKING WITH DISTRIBUTORS OR FRANCHISES

The final big win Multi-Store E-Commerce provides is to storeowners who work directly with distributors or who use franchises to run their business.

With the first—distributors—let’s say you’re a drop-ship wholesaler.

Most wholesalers work to a host of distributors, but a mere handful of those overall distributors account for the vast majority of their business’s total sales.

This is what’s known as the Pareto Principle or the “80/20 Rule”: in almost all cases, 80% of a company’s revenue comes from 20% of their clients or products. Even more interesting is what marketing mastermind Perry Marshall discovered. As Forbes explains in "Pareto Principle: How To Use It To Dramatically Grow Your Business:"

*The Pareto Principle is exponential!*

*We already know that 20% of your customers represent 80% of your revenues. What Marshall found is that, within that initial 20%, the 80/20 rule also exists. Meaning that the top 20% of the top 20% of your customers (or the top 4% overall) represent 64% of your sales (calculated as 80% times 80%).*
What's all that mean for Multi-Store E-Commerce?

Using multi-store, you could (1) create custom storefronts for your top performing distributors, (2) invite them to sign up with you directly and (3) offer new distributors their own website and store functionality as part of a premium wholesale package.

This would enable you to make the most of your best distributors while at the same time providing a unique service to set yourself apart.

With AmeriCommerce, all you'd need to do is give your distributors the right permissions to manage the areas of their site you wanted them to. On your end, you'd be able to update catalogs automatically on each of your distributor sites from one console.

**CUSTOMER QUOTE**

“We chose Spark Pay [Online Store] solely because of the Multi-Store functionality and the ability to share resources between stores.”

Similarly, if you're a national business with various regional franchises, you could have one main website with all of your company information on it along with a host of regional sites dedicated to serving, reaching, and marketing within their specific location.
When a visitor clicks on a local franchise—or finds it via search—they’d land on an individual storefront with specific products, contact information, shipping rules, warehouses and more all tailored to them.

This would also give your franchises the power to manage their own website while ensuring oversight and consistency. For both distributors and franchises, Multi-Store E-Commerce not only gives you great control of inventory, fulfillment and shipping, but an advantage over competitors in your niche.
CLOSING THOUGHTS

We hope this guide proves inspirational for you, and we hope it gives you some ideas on specific ways to use the Multi-Store functionality for your business. The possibilities, as you can see, are endless!

**Here’s the bottom line:** Multi-Store E-Commerce delivers different storefronts—either radically different in their target audiences, product offerings, and aesthetics—or consistently in line with your overall branding.

The choice is yours.

You can seamlessly and efficiently segment your audience to dynamically address their needs and interests. With the rise of personalization and greater competition online, “one-size-fits-all” doesn’t work; but **Multi-Store E-Commerce gives you the power to** personalize with widgets and features that are most appropriate for your customers.

**CUSTOMER QUOTE**

“Did I provide a reasonable case for a multi-store platform? It would probably help to tell you that we have grown from $100,000 four years ago to $1.3m in 2015 – we are up 41% for the first two months of 2016!”

You can corner niche markets, cater for retail and wholesale users, facilitate great working relationships with your franchises and distributors, and operate effectively across multiple regions or markets.

It’s all possible with Multi-Store—and you can do it all using one login and one single admin console with AmeriCommerce.