

# The 7 Deadly E-Commerce Sins

## By Deborah M. Collier

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*Are you happy with your online sales and profits? Are you tired of discounting your goods and services? You are experiencing a common dilemma, particularly in challenging times, when competing for customers is increasingly difficult.*

*Deborah Collier, President at The Certificate in Online Business, analyses the mistakes businesses are making, and provides valuable tips on how to maximise online sales.*

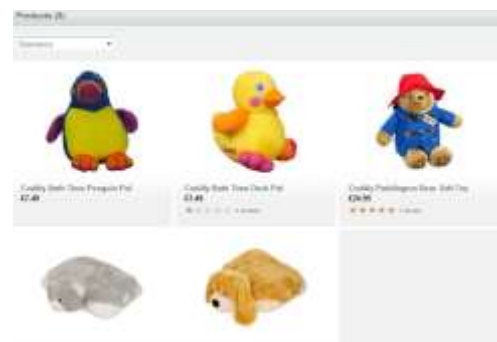
The world has been challenged with the economy taking it's time to recover from the great recession. Despite the new and exciting tools and technologies available to organisations both large and small, businesses are still failing to make the most of e-commerce to maximise their sales. Let's explore the common mistakes enterprises are making with my 7 Deadly E-Commerce Sins

### 1: Selling too cheaply

Getting the price right is absolutely critical. At the outset of your business, you and your team will have completed some market research to ensure pricing is right. There are two elements to any pricing decision – What your customers are willing to pay and what they are able to pay. You also need to assess the competition. If you are a retailer selling the same product as a competitor, then the best price is the No.1 motivator for a purchase. However this is not the only reason customers buy. The common mistake that businesses make is focusing wholly on price. Research demonstrates that if a customer is loyal to your brand, they are more likely to purchase from you, even if a competitor has the same or slightly higher price. So there is no need to sell your soul! Underselling isn't good for your brand or the ability of your business to survive. There are two lessons to learn. Firstly focus on branding and generating customer loyalty. For example, delivering great customer service each and every time will keep customers coming back. Secondly focus on clever merchandising, and consider how you might combine and package products together.

### 2: Failing to optimise search as a web merchandising tool

Search is an essential element of any successful e-commerce store selling a reasonable selection of products. Good navigation is an essential tool, but you can do some very clever things with your web site search tool. You can dictate what position and how products appear in the search results. For example, a standard search for an iphone might only show the iphone in the search results, but a sophisticated search will show the direct competitor below that in the results. Armed with insights about your competitors pricing, you can implement some sophisticated settings. You can even personalise the search results to your customer.



### 3. Having your store built in Flash

If you still have a web site built in Flash, or with Flash components for animation, then you will be in trouble and most certainly lose sales. There are three reasons not to use Flash

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- It's not search engine friendly
- Some very commonly used mobile devices such as the iPad cannot view Flash
- A frustrated customer forced to download a Flash plug-in will instantly go to a competitor's web site

You can still implement an engaging customer experience without using Flash, using alternative e-commerce solutions and programming languages such as HTML5.

#### 4. Not facilitating mobile



According to IMRG and Capgemini's Quarterly Benchmark, for the first time in Q4 2015/16 over 50% of online retail sales were made through mobile devices (smartphones and tablets). Can customers using mobile devices purchase from your web site? Depending on your type of business, your customers and products, your customers may purchase from you using their mobile phone. There is a strong chance they will at least browse your web site. Can they view it easily? You may need a mobile site version or simply ensure your main web site is usable by mobile phone. What about payments? Have you considered enabling payments from

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Our studies show that it costs on average five times more to acquire a new customer than it does to gain business from an existing client. How have you nurtured relationships with your customers? As well as community building and loyalty offers, you should focus on high-quality customer service. Many businesses make the mistake of reducing client support resources and costs during difficult times. This is a false economy. If you provide good service, customers will appreciate it, remain loyal and potentially refer you to new clients.

#### 6. Providing a lackluster customer experience

Is your web site engaging? Does your web site entice your customers to buy, subscribe and interact with you? To engage your customers you need to ensure that your web site content is interesting, relevant and well presented. This includes any text, articles, sales and informational literature and multimedia, as well as the display of your products. In addition, make it easy for your customers to contact you, by displaying a choice of communications methods clearly on your web site. Web support tools such as chat, are one extremely effective online customer service mechanism.

#### 7. Out-of-date with payment methods and security

When was the last time you reviewed your e-commerce payment facilities. Are you using the same old 128-bit encryption from the last decade? What about mobile payments and international customers? If you are selling to an international audience you will need to consider alternative payment methods to credit and debit cards, particularly in emerging markets where fraud and the ability to obtain cards are a challenge.

## Deborah M. Collier

### President & Chief Marketing Officer – The Certificate in Online Business

Deborah is the founder of the Certificate in Online Business™ (COB) series of globally-recognised industry qualifications, which were established in 2008. She developed the reputation of the programs among well-known brands gaining testimonials from Directors and managers at government organisations and leading companies such as Mars, Schneider Electric, House of Fraser and Procter & Gamble. Deborah leads the strategic direction of the training programs and company. In addition, she oversees marketing, partnerships and licensing.



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