



How to Set Up an Online Store

A STEP BY STEP GUIDE

THANK YOU

Thank you for downloading this eBook. Starting an online store can be a very exciting new journey. In 2012, seeing the great potential of the tablet devices, particularly for eBook industry, I embarked on the journey to enter the eBook industry. My first task was to build a website to sell eBooks. In that journey, I discovered that the digital world is so full of software platforms that businesses can benefit greatly.

This eBook summarises what I have learned in setting up online stores and I provide herewith my recommendations. With this, you can skip many years of trial and error and tap of my decade long experience. This book aims to set you on the right path towards running your own successful online business. It covers from planning to bringing your product to the market and competing with competitors.

The good news is that you do not need to be an IT expert nor to have a lot of capital to start an online store. However, everybody's objectives, resources and available support are different. Hence, while this book may provide you with a guide, you will still need to do your own planning and select the best direction to take.

Finally, as digital tools evolve very rapidly, a tool that does not rank high today might launch something very useful tomorrow. Hence, the recommendation in this book may be right at the time of its writing, take note that over time, products and services may change.

I wish you best of luck as you embark on your new online business!

The logo for Esther Goh features her name in a stylized, cursive font. The letters are dark green with a lighter green shadow effect, giving it a three-dimensional appearance. The 'E' is particularly large and prominent.

DIGITAL BUSINESS CONSULTANCY SERVICES

The good news is that you do not need to be an IT programmer nor to have a high capital to start an online store.



PLANNING

While you may not need a high budget to start an online store, with so many digital options available, you may end up wasting resources if you make the wrong choices. Hence, it is important to plan carefully before you begin. This ebook will guide you through all the key decisions you have to make at each stage.

Steps to setting up an online store

Essentially, there are 6 steps to start an online, regardless of whatever you plan to sell.

1

Choose A Domain Name

Of course, you would want to have your domain name same as your store/business name. However, before you register for a name, now that there are impact to your future sales. I will tell you why and how.

2

Select Ecommerce Platform

Depending on your level of technical expertise and how much time you have and want to put into managing the technicalities, you need to start right with the right platform.

3

Build

Who will build it? Depends on your budget and time. It is not just about building, it's maintaining and leveraging it for marketing. Unlike brick and mortar business, managing the website is essentially managing your business, for online store.

Steps to setting up an online store

Setting up the store is only the first half of the job. The more important tasks are how do you bring in the revenue and sustain your business growth.

4

Sell & Market

Unlike in a shopping mall, no matter how poor your store location maybe, there will still be shoppers who will walk pass your store. However, for online store, you are 1 in millions of websites. How do you get noticed? I will show you how.

5

Analyse & Engage

Digital tools provide you will a lot of analytics. When you run an online store, leverage on these analytics to get insights into your customer purchasing behavior to grow your sales.

6

Customer Fulfillment

If you are selling digital products, how do your customers download it. If you are selling physical products, how do you deliver the goods. In this whole process, how are you supporting your customers when they face problems. Good customer service will bring about repeat purchases.

Step 1

What is your
name?



SELECTING YOUR DOMAIN NAME

I shall not guide you on your selection of your business name because that will depend on what you like and what your potential clients will think in your physical location. Digitally, I will advise you on how you should choose a domain name.

What's a Domain Name?

A domain name is your website name, e.g. www.mystorename.com. It is also called your website URL. Most people would want the domain name to be the same as their business name. For example if they want to call their online store “Jen’s Flowers”, then they would want a domain name www.jensflower.com.

Domain Name impacts on your online sales

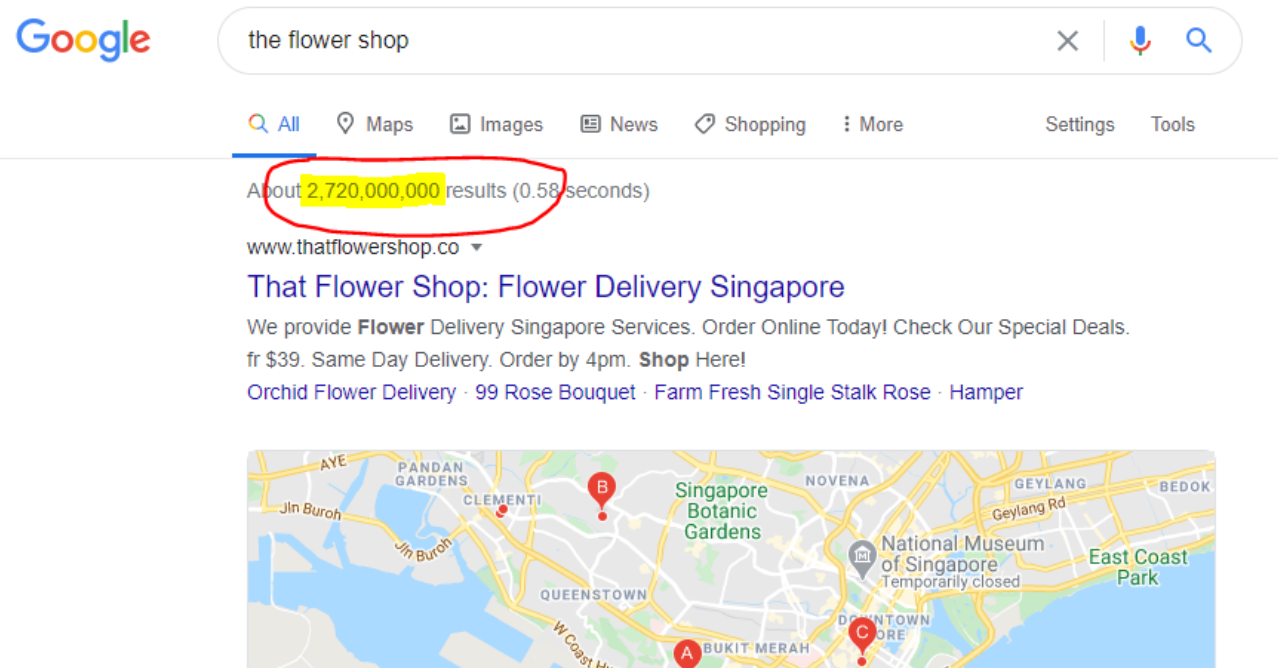
Why? For online stores, your sales depend on people searching on Google. If they want to send a bouquet of flowers to a business associate, they may search in Google “Flower Delivery”. If your company appears on top of Google Search Results, then you will have visitors to your online store and hence sales.

SELECTING YOUR DOMAIN NAME

As you can see, your store name and domain name affects your sales. So how should you choose a domain name?

Choose Unique Domain Name

If you google “flower shop”, you will get 2billion results. This means, you will be competing with 2billion results. You will have a lot to work on to be right on top of the search results.

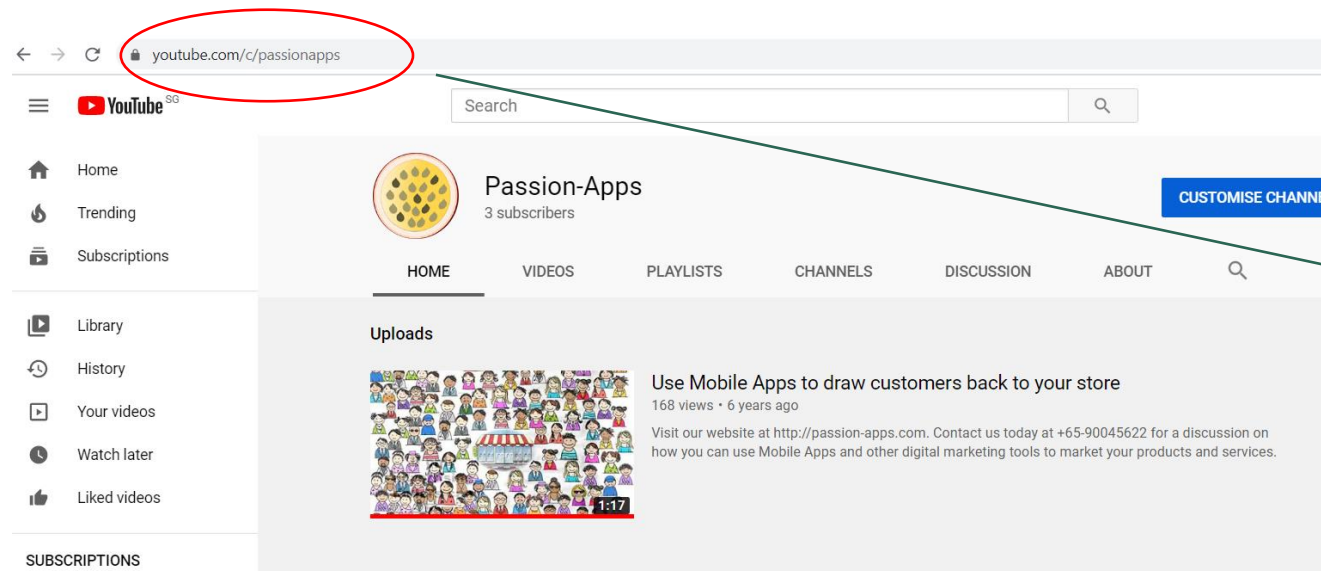


SELECTING YOUR DOMAIN NAME

When you first build a website (your online store), your site will not appear on Google Search until at least 1-2 weeks later unless you type the full domain name (www.mystorename.com) in the Google search. After about 1-2 weeks, when people type your store name, you are not likely to appear on page 1 until about 6 months later and that depends also on your Search ranking (Search Engine Optimisation –SEO ranking). If you have an unique name, you will have lesser competition. After 6 months, you will likely appear at the top of first page. However, if you choose a generic domain name, you may not appear on first page even after 6 months.

Check the Social Platforms for availability of Custom URL

Most social media, e.g. Youtube, Facebook, linkedin, will allow you to set up a business page and allow you to get a custom URL. You would want this URL to be same as your domain name. So check that they are available.



Custom
URL

SELECTING YOUR DOMAIN NAME

One final word about domain name. It is important to purchase privacy protection when you buy your domain name. In this way, your contact details will not be used by spammers and marketing companies. You can look for hosting companies such as Dreamhost where they provide free privacy protection.

How to buy a Domain Name?

I would recommend Dreamhost because of the free privacy protection, free SSL website encryption and also their 24hours good support. Just go to:

<https://www.dreamhost.com/domains/>

In addition, every website has to be hosted in some server. When you purchase your domain name, you can buy your hosting from the same company. However, if you are using an e-commerce platform or engaging a web developer, then the domain name and hosting may come together with your e-commerce platform. Hence, before you do the purchase, check out the next section.



Step 2

**Where is your
store built?**

Photo by [Allie](#) on [Unsplash](#)

WHERE IS YOUR STORE?

Why this question? Well, because, these days, there are many ways you can get your store built. You can :

1. Do It Yourself

These days there are many e-commerce platforms to self build your own stores. I shall name two good ones here:

- a) Wix
- b) Wordpress (with WooCommerce)

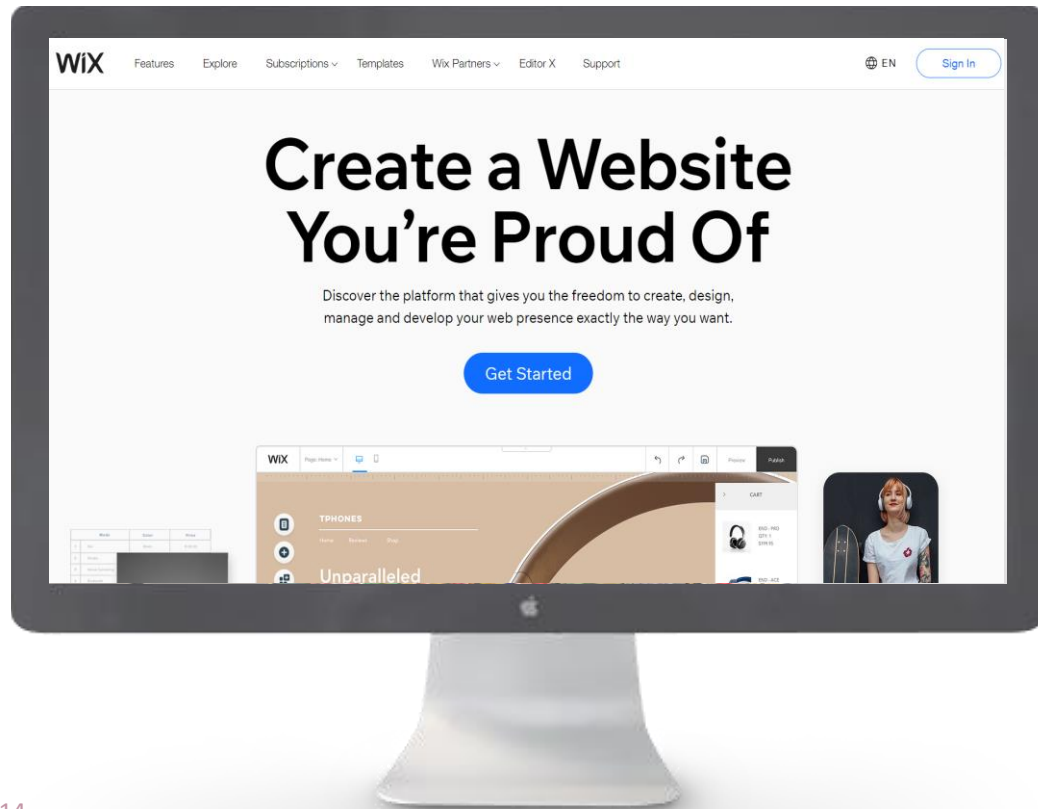
2. Get a Web Developer to build it

If you choose this option, then it will be up to your developer to select which platform. The pros is you need not have to worry about all the technicalities. The cons are, everytime you want to add even a simple feature to enhance your marketing, you need to go to your developer and that means additional costs.

Each of the above selection will impact where you host your website and where to purchase your domain name.

Wix

If you do not want to get into learning technicalities, so that you can focus on selling & marketing but are able to accept some level of feature limitations, then wix is a good option. It is what I recommend for designers & business owners who are not tech savvy.



Pros

Very easy to set up. Much like using MS powerpoint. Drag and drop features.

Even the linking to Google Analytics, paypal, etc. are done with just one-2 clicks.

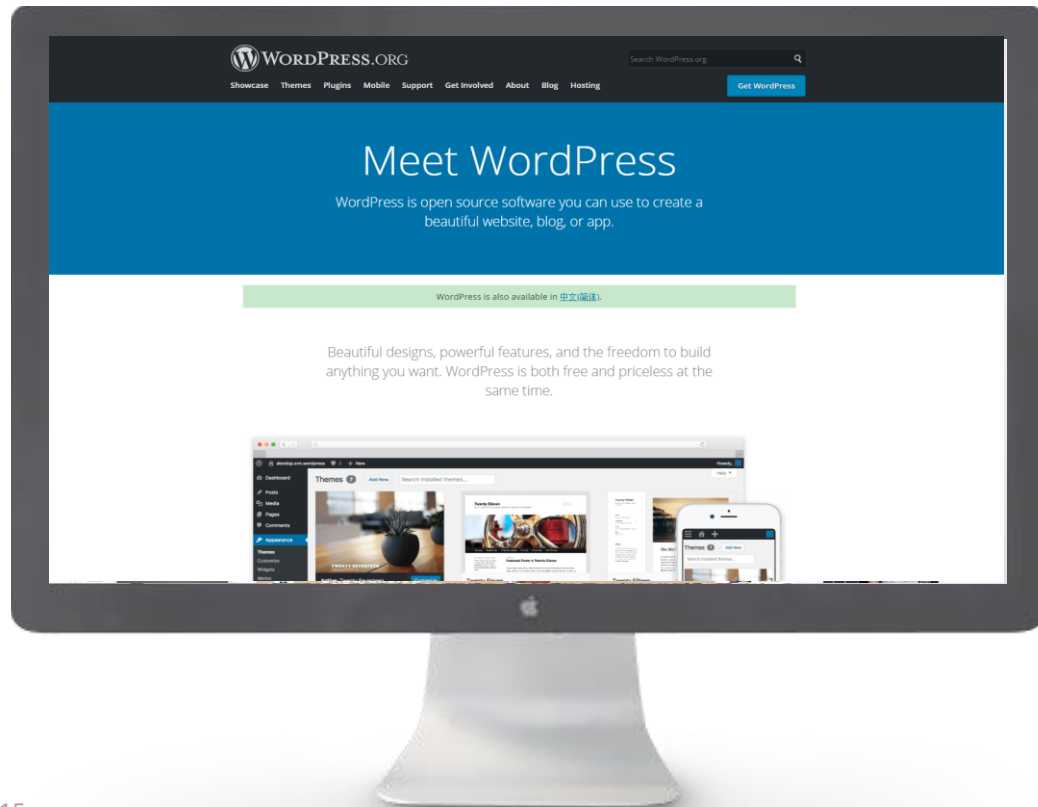
You can focus on analysing your results.

Cons

The functionalities are limited to what they have. However it's good enough for small business.

Wordpress.org

Wordpress powers 60% of the website in the world. So it's definitely a good platform. Wordpress provides 2 types of platform. Wordpress.com is similar to Wix. But it's the Wordpress.org that gives the difference. It is an opensource platforms. Hence there are thousands of developers developing features. I would recommend for companies who believe they need to scale for business growth.



Pros

Because there are thousands of developers developing features, you can use Wordpress to build very websites with almost any functionalities. It is therefore scalable for future growth.

You don't need to be a programmer to use Wordpress.

Cons

You will need to spend some time reading documentations to learn up wordpress and use each themes and plugins.

Engaging Agency

Another option is to engage an agency. For this option, you need to be prepared to pay around \$1800 to \$5000 or more for an e-commerce website. In engaging an agency, check out the following:

- What's their maintenance cost
- How do they support you when the site is hacked
- What's the cost of adding functionalities
- What if you do not like their designs
- Will they do on-site SEO for you
- How about site security/ encryption with SSL



Step 3

Tailoring your website



KNOWING WHAT YOU WANT

Whether you do it yourself or you are engaging a web agency to build your online store, you need to think through and consolidate your ideas. Visualise how your store will look like, how it will function in selling and serving your site customers and how you are tweaking the sites as you go along in managing the sales. If you start building and along the way, discover there are features you need, you might end up slowing down the development process. This is what I will advise:

1. Research into Competitors' websites
2. Browse the latest web designs. You can visit www.themeforest.com and check out how people are designing the themes.
3. Select the look and feel you want for your online store – the color, the layout, the process flow.
4. Think through your product's value proposition –what will make people buy your products over competitors' products
5. If you are doing it yourself, choose the theme/templates that provide you will exactly the purchase flow that you think is good.
6. If you are engaging a web developer, make sure that he can deliver the process flow are the price he quoted to you.

Mobile Version



The generation z these days make their purchases on mobile devices. You must make sure that your website is mobile friendly. In addition, you can consider creating a mobile app if your budget allows. There are several mobile apps platform that allows you to build mobile apps without coding. Examples are:

1. MobileRoadie
2. Apps-Builder
3. Good Barber
4. The App Builder

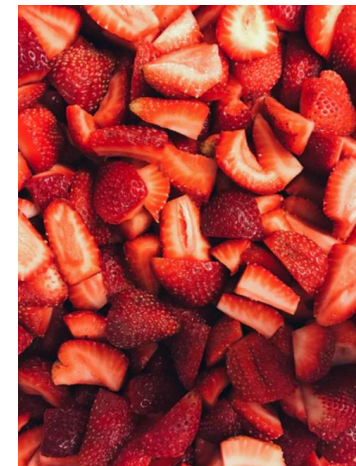
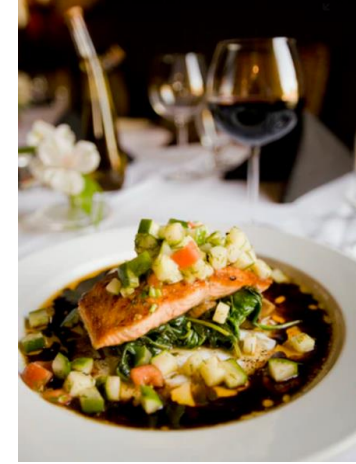
However, because these are cloud solutions, the loading time can be slow. If your budget is low, getting a website that is mobile friendly is sufficient.

PHOTOGRAPHY & IMAGES

For an online store, one major factor in making your products look appealing is the images you use.

You can get free images from internet sites such as www.unsplash.com.

Be careful that when you engage freelancer to build the site for you, make sure that the images they use are royalty free or that they have purchased the images accordingly.



COPYWRITING

Writing good descriptions as well as good contents for your web pages are crucial not just to convince your customers but also for your website to rank high on Google Search.

If you are engaging a copywriter, make sure that he works with your SEO agency to write with the required keywords.



Step 4

Go to market



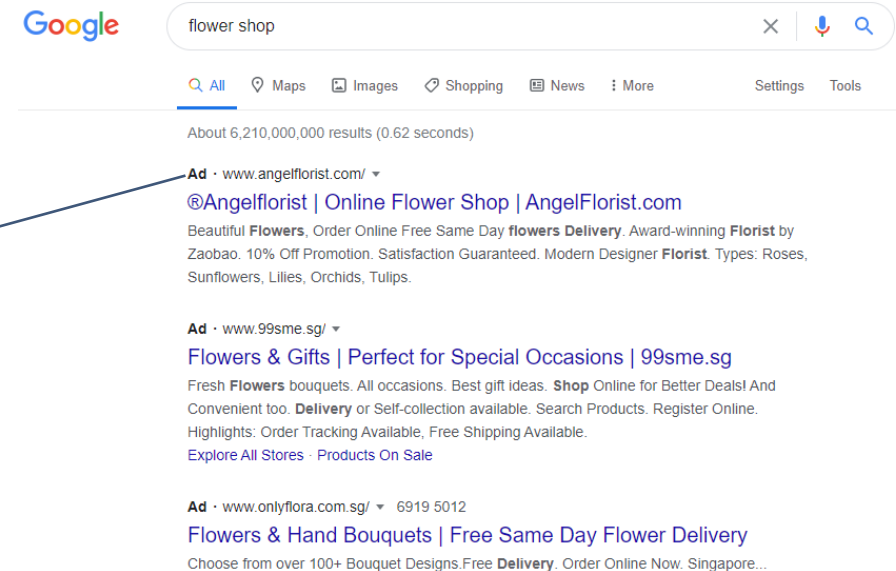
BE FOUND ON GOOGLE

Needless to say, these days, you want your website to be found on Google and other Search Engines such as Bing and Baidu.

There are 2 ways to be found:

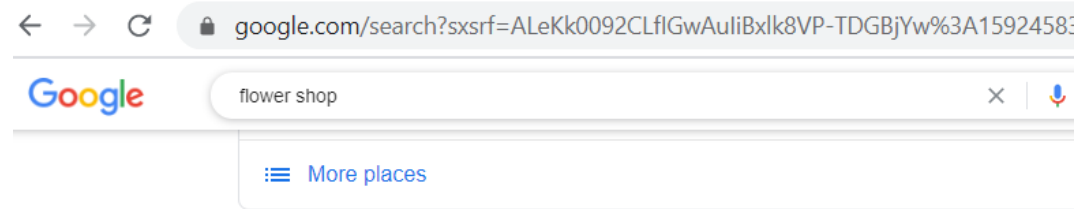
1. Google Advertisement– For this you pay Google each time someone clicks to your site. To get started advertising on Google, go to <https://ads.google.com/home/>

These are
Google Ads



BE FOUND ON GOOGLE

2. Organic Search – The second way is to be found via organic search. For this you need not have to pay Google, you use Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) techniques to rank high on search results. While you may not need to pay Google, you need to put in a lot of effort on SEO.



There's no
"Ad",
hence
these are
ranked
high
because of
SEO.

- www.xpressflower.com ▾
XpressFlower: 24Hr Flower Delivery in Singapore | Florist with ...
Xpressflower.com is one of Singapore's leading **flowers** & gifts service provider that has been delivering gorgeous **flowers** for more than 15 years! Being a major ...
Shop By · Midnight Flower Delivery by ... · Condolence Flower Stands · Bouquets
- farmflorist.com ▾
Flower Delivery Singapore | Florist Singapore | Full Refund ...
The florist Singapore loves. Full Refund for Late Orders. Enjoy free **flower delivery** same day in Singapore. Farm fresh flowers of a wide range of designs.
Kovan Florist · Our Delivery Promise · Shop · Flower Guide

BE FOUND ON GOOGLE

You should engage a SEO expert to help your company rank high on search engines. If you do not have the budget, you can do the following:

1. Leverage on the SEO tools available on your e-commerce platforms. If you are using wix, there are built-in SEO tools. You can find out more here: <https://www.wix.com/features/wix-seo>. If you are using Wordpress.org, add the Yoast SEO plugin.
2. Register your online store with Google Search Console : <https://search.google.com/search-console/about>
3. Create an account with Google Analytics : <https://analytics.google.com>
4. If you are using Wix, item 2 and 3 above can be done by going to the “Marketing” module of your dashboard.
5. If you are using Wordpress, add : “Site Kit by Google” plugin, activate it and follow the steps to set up.
6. After that, be sure to keep adding contents to your website regularly and frequently.
7. Make sure to define your website Name, site identity, meta description and page titles.

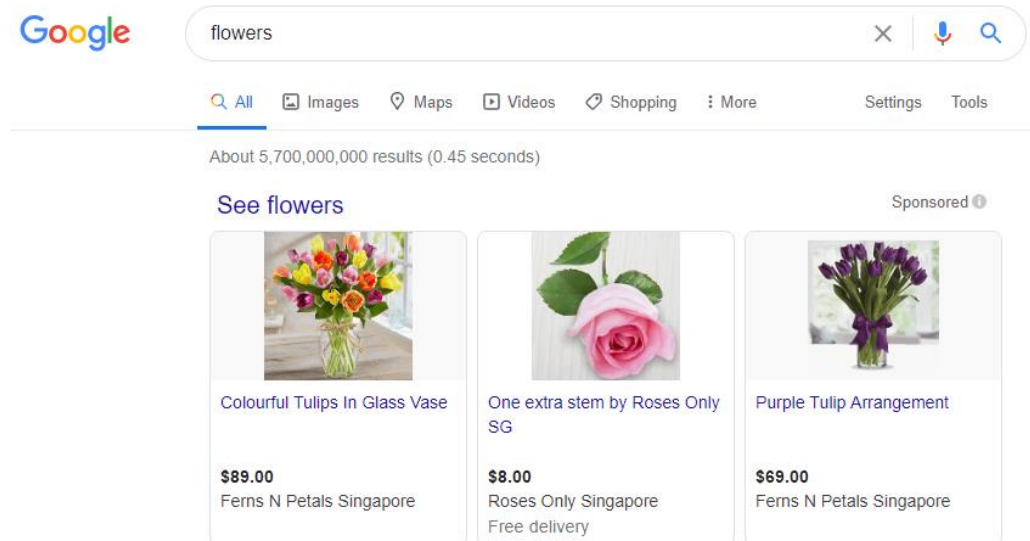
If you follow the above steps, your ranking will increase over time. However, for a quick way to be found, for new business, always go for Google Advertising.

6/18/2020

BE FOUND ON GOOGLE

For e-commerce, one very important feature is to use Structured Data markup to be found on Google shopping.

The [Structured Data Markup Helper](#) helps you mark up elements on your web page so that Google can understand the data on the page. Once Google understands your page data more clearly, it can be presented more attractively and in new ways in Google Search. Your products will then appear like this. Go to <https://www.google.com/webmasters/markup-helper/> to mark up products on your stores.



6/18/2020

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark patterned shirt, is looking at a tablet computer. She is standing in a city at night, with blurred lights and buildings in the background. The image has a dark teal overlay.

**THE
FASTEST
WAY TO BE
FOUND
ONLINE IS
TO
ADVERTISE
WITH
GOOGLE.**

Step 5

Analyse & Engage

Photo by [NeONBRAND](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Promotion

It may be an online store. But to be successful, many online businesses run roadshows and promotions to create awareness of their stores. They get customers to like their facebook page and follow to be updated on new promotions. Integrating online analytics with physical promotions give you maximum insights to your customers purchasing behavior. Here's some ideas:

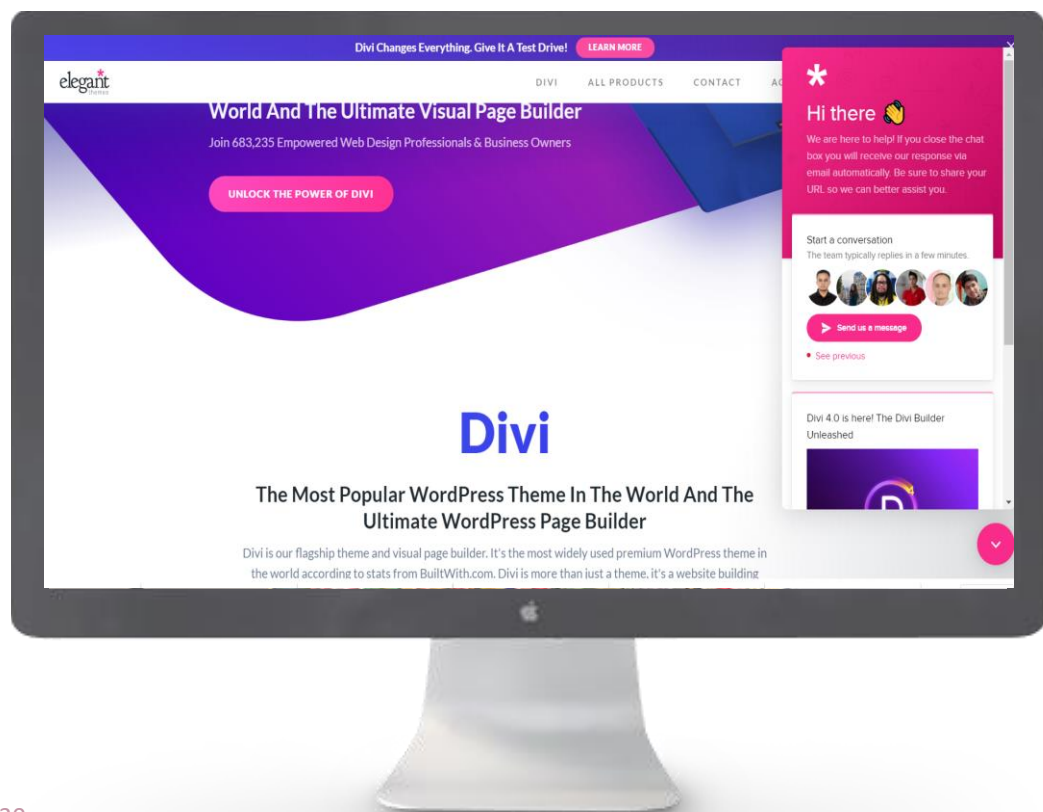
- Participate in roadshows to promote your products while telling your customers to visit your online store for future purchases.
- Give discount vouchers when they like your facebook page. In this way, you are connected to them on facebook. With the help of marketing tools such as Salesforce.com or Hubspot, you can track when your followers visit your online store.

Photo by [JJ Ying](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Live Chat- Don't miss any potential customer

Add a live chat box to your website. Below is an example of what Elegantthemes did. They have a live chat box and it's so excellent whenever people visit their site, the support personnel can engage and answer questions. Make your store realtime and alive!



Recommended Chats:

Some good live chats software:

1. Zendesk
2. Intercom
3. Hubspot
4. Freshchat

Visit <https://www.getapp.sg/directory/561/live-chat/software> for more recommendation.

A photograph of a well-organized closet. The top shelves are filled with neatly folded stacks of light blue and white shirts. Below the shelves, several shirts are hanging on wooden hangers. The closet is lit with warm, soft lighting, creating a clean and professional appearance.

Step 6

Customer Fulfillment

Delighting the Customers



If you wish to be successful in online business, delighting the customers should be your top priority because that's where you get repeat purchases and sustainable sales and business growth. How do you delight the customers? First, recognize that there is “post purchase behaviour” particularly with online shoppers. Imagine after you make a purchase, the item does not fit or you found something more suitable. Or when the item is delivered, it's not in good condition. Or the delivery takes too long. All these are what upset customers and they will never come back after a bad experience.

Refund & Exchange

Ensure good packing and transportation. Choose a good delivery company that provides fast delivery & product protection. Consider the following policies:

- Product return within 30days if damage?
- Product exchange if size does not fit, within 1 week?
- Product exchange if customers simply change their mind?
- Refund allowed for unconsumed products?





Fast Delivery

Make sure you select a good warehouse and delivery company. Here's some recommended ones if you are selling within Singapore:

1. Uparcel
2. Hewtransportation
3. Ninja Van
4. Parcel Post
5. SingPost SmartPac



Thank you

We hope that this eBook will help you kick start your online store business.

Esther Goh
DIGITAL BUSINESS CONSULTANCY SERVICES