

E-Commerce Shopping Carts Selection

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When choosing an e-commerce shopping cart, you need to think both ways: as a merchant and as a customer. Ask yourself these questions: What are the features you need? How large is your business? Do you have several products and require a closely monitored inventory? Do you sell few products? Do you need simple hosted carts? As a customer, what kind of cart is good? How do I want to pay for the products I buy? Do I need order tracking? The answers to all these questions matter a lot, so let us discuss them one by one.

Types of shopping carts. Features. Business size.

Let us tackle all these simultaneously since they are interrelated to one another. The types of shopping carts depend on the number of features they offer; the number of features carts offer depends on what type of business they cater; and the type of business these carts cater categorizes the types of shopping carts.

The simplest form of "shopping carts" is not actually a cart but a merchant-generated webpages that contain product description and prices with "Buy now" button. The "Buy now" button transfers the customers to a third party payment provider like PayPal. This type is best for merchants with simple needs and few products but is not suitable for large businesses with several products that require constant monitoring.

If you sell several products that have to be closely monitored, what you need is a shopping cart that is either hosted by a cart provider or hosted by the same server as your website. Most carts work by keeping track of what the customers select and take them to the checkout page, which is linked to the third party credit card payment provider. This type is often preferred choice by most small- and medium-size merchants as the price is comparatively reasonable with the features it provides. Fully hosted shopping carts provide everything that the merchant needs: from shopping carts, checkout counter, payment system and even shipping. This product can be integrated with your website and can be customized to adapt at your website's appearance. If you are handling a wide array of products with complex business rules, this is an ideal choice.

Budget

Since sophistication determines the price of the shopping cart, make sure that you only get the features you really need. Decide on the features that are right for your business. I advice that you make a list of the things you need for a shopping cart and rank it in order of priority. Then, find different shopping cart vendors that offer the features you need. If the price is higher than what you can afford, remove features that are least important.

Customer Appeal and Ease of Use

A website that looks good may not always matter in terms of sales. But the behavior of the traffic towards a certain feature in your website - in this case a shopping cart - can make or break a sale. You can use the trial and error method but unless you are given a free trial on every shopping cart provider, it may be very costly. The best thing you can do is to review different cart vendors and

focus your attention to the ease of use. If you are satisfied, then you can add it to your list of possible items. Do not forget to consider if the vendors are offering popular payment methods such as PayPal and other major credit cards.

Selecting an e-commerce shopping cart is a serious matter; evaluate the products based on the things that are discussed above.