

Starting Your Own Yahoo Store

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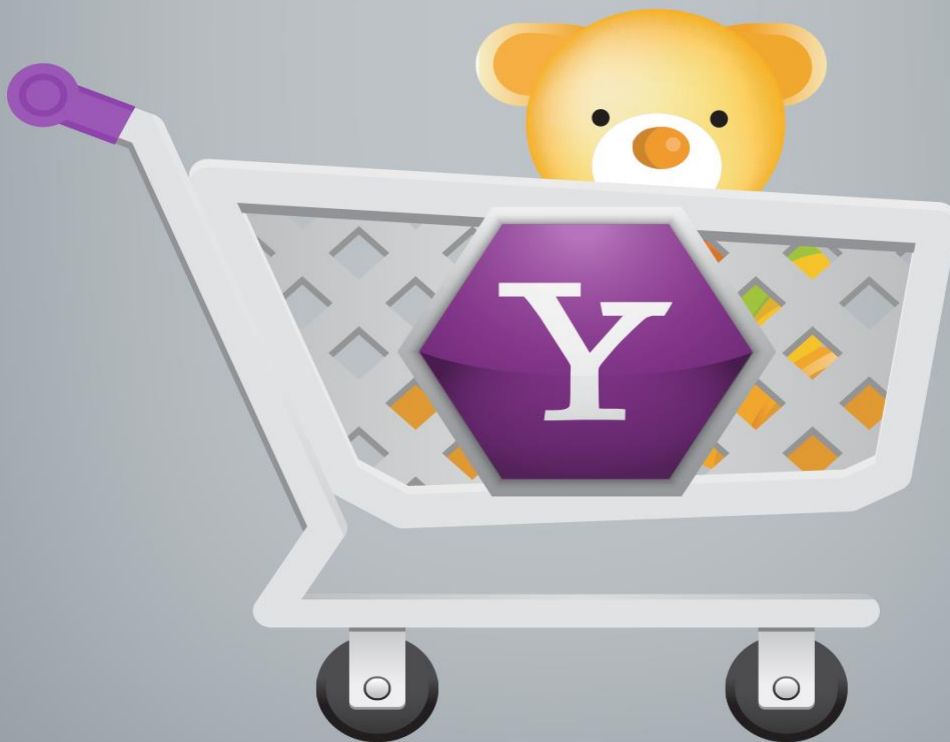


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INTRODUCTION: WHO IS USING A YAHOO STORE AND WHY YOU SHOULD TOO

Have you considered the key benefits of using a Yahoo! Store? Most people do not realize the true value that this one, simple tool can do for their business.

One of the most common reasons to turn to this type of ecommerce solution occurs when you want to take your offline business and start selling online. Imagine the local hardware store or the local print shop. While their business may mostly be through local community users, there could be a market for them in the online world, too. Because of the growing need for stores to turn to the web to increase their business, companies such as Yahoo! have come to the rescue with number of programs that make it very easy for the business to come on the web.

Why Yahoo? Many people would ask this question, but most will not ask who Yahoo is. You may use them on a daily basis for your search engine functions. You may visit their homepage to get your daily feed of the news. You may even turn to the organization to get your email. The fact is, the company is large and growing and it is well trusted. When you turn to Yahoo for your ecommerce needs, you get a quality product at an affordable rate.

You may be wondering why Yahoo is the company to turn to. The answer is actually quite simple. Other companies are having a lot of success using the ecommerce solutions that Yahoo! Store has to offer. You may know a few of these companies, for example:

- Oakland Raiders, a professional football team
- Simple Human
- Ben & Jerry's ice cream
- American Pearl
- Lance Armstrong Foundation
-

These big businesses and organizations are turning to this particular company for their web solutions. This is one reason that you should too.

One thing not to worry about is the cost. Yahoo! Store is highly affordable and provides you with a wealth of services for what you are investing in. If you have something to sell, it is always a good idea for you to choose an organization that is well known and is affordable because you are likely to get a product you can trust.

Check out these other reasons to turn to Yahoo! Store for your needs:

- You get virtually everything you need to put your business on the web. Everything is included in one tool to make the process that much easier for you.
- You get help along the way if you need it.
- Each step in the process is easy to do. You do not need any HTML experience, or any idea what web hosting is to get started. The product is very easy to use.
- You get the tools you need to start ranking in the web. This allows you to get your business online quickly and to start seeing a profit from it.

However, there are a few things to learn along the way, before you can start to invest in this product. You do want to ensure that Yahoo is the best option for you and that the company's product will work with your particular needs. Keep in mind that most people will have no problem achieving this goal.

The information in this book will teach you about Yahoo! Store and how to get your business online using it. Keep in mind that product packages, discounts and sales may be available frequently from Yahoo! Store. Therefore, you do want to check out the latest information available before you begin to invest or use the product. In general, Yahoo is all about offering the best price, for the best features available.

Like the other businesses that are using this product and ecommerce solution to get their business online, you can do so too.

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WHAT IS YAHOO STORE?

There are two important questions to learn the answers to from this chapter. What is Yahoo! Store and Is it right for me? If you can answer those, you know you are well on your way to investing in this company's product.

Here's a roundup of what Yahoo! Store has to offer to you in a nutshell:

- It provides you with the web hosting you need to get your business on the web.
- The company provides you with the software you need to build a catalog.
- It provides you with the marketing tools you need to get your business out in front of people who will buy from it.
- It provides the management tools to help you to oversee and monitor the success of your business.
- You also get access to something called Yahoo! Shopping. With this service, you get access to incredible amounts of traffic, which are just visitors and buyers to your site. Most sales come from this resource!

So, what does this all mean to the business owner who wants to get his or her business off the ground and online? In short, having a Yahoo! Store website allows you to do just that but in a simplistic way so that you are not overwhelmed by the process of getting your business up on the web.

In short, a Yahoo! Store website is a type of ecommerce platform. You are able to sell your products and services through this store as you would in the off line world. However, with Yahoo! Store, the company gives you more security and more dependable services and features that other companies may not. For example, the shopping cart system used is highly recommended because it is an easy tool to use by your customers and works well from the business owner's standpoint as well.

Although the Yahoo! Store is incredibly easy to use as a tool for getting your business online, some people do invest in having a professional web designer set up the site. This is an additional cost, and it will require a third party to do so, but the fact is, you do not have to use that service to reap the benefits of a Yahoo! Store.

TOP PRODUCTS

Yahoo! Stores do best when they sell a popular item that people go online to buy. For example, if you head online to purchase electronics, a Yahoo! Store is a great place to visit. You will find numerous products to choose from and you are likely going to find just what you need. Keep in mind that your store is just one of many that will be on the site, called the Yahoo! Mall.

Imagine if you will visiting your local mall. You walk in, walk around and walk into various stores. If you have come to the mall to purchase something specific, such as a pair of shoes, chances are good you may visit a few different stores. You want to see what your options are and you want to choose what works best for your particular needs. You may do a little bit of price shopping too.

The same is true when you visit the Yahoo! Mall. Keep in mind, there is not a website out there called the Yahoo! Mall. Rather, this term describes the numerous online stores that are selling products to consumers through the use of a Yahoo! Store. In other words, there is not going to be numerous retailers lining up with you to get each person's business. Your Yahoo! Store does stand-alone.

Check out Yahoo! Shopping. When you go to this website, you will find a wide range of stores. Each of these are using Yahoo! Store to operate. What is fantastic about this is that the Yahoo! Shopping location is a one stop shop for just about anything you can buy online. Do you have something different or interesting to offer? If so, this is the place to get it listed so that you can easily start taking advantage of the traffic pouring in to this website.

Keeping that in mind, you may be wondering what types of businesses do best in a Yahoo! Store. You will find hundreds of options, of course. For example, the Lance Armstrong Foundation is a very specific brand and their products are very limited. On the other hand, some companies do very well by offering a full line of unique items for people to buy. There is variety and there are a number of ways for you to use this store to benefit your business.

Again, those stores that sell products that people shop for online are going to do best with the Yahoo! Store. What do you shop for online?

- Clothing
- Shoes
- Electronics
- Books
- Health foods or supplements

- Jewelry
- Advertising packages and marketing services

This really is only a small portion of the types of stores found on Yahoo! Store. Remember that most businesses will do well here.

WILL YOUR BUSINESS WORK ONLINE?

Yahoo! Store works for many businesses. Ask the following questions about your business to determine if you should be using Yahoo! Store to get your business on the web.

- Does your business sell a product that can be sold over the web? A physical product will do best on the site.
- Do you have products that are in demand in the online marketplace? To find out, do some keyword research using some of the tools available. If people are searching for products like yours, getting them into your Yahoo! Store can be a profitable option.
- Do you want to start a drop ship business but you are not sure how to get it online? Yahoo! Store can work in this particular case, too.

If these things sound like things that you would like to do, then investing in a Yahoo! Store is a good place to start. It could be the best option for you regardless of what your goals are. If you are ever unsure about your business and Yahoo! Store, simply check out the company's website shopping.yahoo.com and check out your competition. If they are doing well online, your business is likely to do the same too.

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YAHOO! STORE MERCHANT SOLUTIONS

At the time of this writing, Yahoo! Store was the web host for 500 more ecommerce businesses than the competition. That says a lot since there are thousands of companies out there all trying to compete for your business.

When you invest in the Standard or the Professional plans offered by Yahoo! Store, you really get to take advantage of some amazing products and services. Check out some of the reasons why this ecommerce solution is the best bet.

STORE DESIGN BENEFITS

One of the first things you will encounter when it comes to Yahoo! Store is the actual development of your store. You need to get your store online. This process is excellent for providing you with an easy method. Later, we will take a look at some of the benefits of hiring a professional to help you with the design of your store, but before that, take a look at some of the plan features here.

- You are able to design a professional looking website. That speaks volumes for your business. To do this, you will be able to use a Yahoo! Store wizard tool. The store design tool is quite simply a step by step tool that takes you through the process one step at a time.
- In addition, each of the pages you create for your store are going to be search engine friendly. This means that the pages are set up in such a way to allow search engines to easily work through the site, page by page, and to rank it. Search engine optimization helps your website to be found by those searching for it or searching for similar websites.
- Let's say that you are interested in hiring someone else to help with the design. On the other hand, you may be interested in using other tools from other design programs. That is no problem since Yahoo! Store supports third party tools on the site.

Now that you have used the tool, you are able to get your storefront up. Now what?

GETTING YOUR PRODUCT CATALOG UP

The next of the benefits that comes from using Yahoo! Store is the product catalog. Yes, there are other companies out there that offer product catalogs and some may be a better option for you, but most businesses will do just fine with the use of Yahoo! Store.

Take a look at what you can expect. These are some of the benefits of the product catalog:

- You are able to manage up to 50,000 products on your site for sale. That is a sizable amount and most businesses will fit well within their range, even medium sized businesses.
- To get the products on the site, you will use a step by step wizard. Like the tool you used to set up the site, this tool takes over the process and makes it incredibly easy to use.
- For those who already have an existing storefront online, you can easily upload an existing product database to the system. That makes the process easy to benefit from, too.

The product catalog is like a virtual version of the a paper catalog. It inventories all of the products that you have for sale on your site. This catalog gives your website some organization as well as structure. When someone visits the site and is looking for a specific product, they can easily find it because your catalog has organized it properly.

SHOPPING CART AND CHECKOUT

Next, consider what happens when someone visits your websites and browses through the catalog. They see something they would like to buy and, what do they do? In the early days of the Internet and shopping online, people would simply call the company over the telephone and request the product they saw online. However, today, things are different.

Now, a shopping cart is used. A shopping cart is similar to the type you might find in a traditional grocery store. As your customer works through the store, he or she will find items they wish to purchase. They then add the item to their shopping cart. At this point, the item is tagged for their purchase. However, a shopping cart allows the customer to keep shopping. They can buy more than just one item.

Once they are done shopping at your site, they might have a few items in the shopping cart to purchase. That is when the checkout process occurs. During this process, the customer is able to verify their information, mailing address, shipping methods and payment options and the software

handles the transaction for them. You do not have to swipe a credit card nor figure out shipping charges. This is done for you.

With the Yahoo! Store, you are able to do this using a variety of the features found with the Yahoo! Store products. Here are some of the key benefits you may have with your Yahoo! Store plan:

- You will have single or multiple page checkout options.
- You are able to set up your own fields during the ordering process, which simplifies the process for your end. It also makes it easy for your customers to get through the checkout process.
- The system automatically calculates the shipping charges for you, based on the type of shipping you offer and the selection of the customer. It also handles sales tax where it is applicable.
- You can customize the layout of the pages. This allows you to personalize your business to make it stellar, or just the way that you want it to be.

There are some other nice features about the Yahoo! Store set up. For example, did you know that most people who are going to buy a product online will usually come back to the store two or three times (sometimes more) before they actually make the purchase? This is especially true about higher priced products such as electronics. One of the features of the Yahoo! Store is that you are able to set up the shopping cart to save the contents of the cart for up to two weeks after the customer places the item into it. Even if they close out their web browser, it will remember them when they come back.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Now that you have your website up and running, you cannot just sit back and wait for the magic to happen. Rather, you need to get started on the next step in the process: marketing. Most small business owners struggle with the concept of marketing because it seems so daunting. However, when you utilize the features found in Yahoo! Store, the process really does get easier.

Later in this book, we will provide some more information about marketing and how you can incorporate it into your plan, but first, let's mention a bit more about what Yahoo! Store can offer:

- It helps you with search engine ranking.
- It provides you with automatic submissions to search engines such as Yahoo! and Google.

- It helps you with local listing services
- It gives you some awesome discounts to use for marketing needs.

But, that is not all. It is not just about positioning yourself in the web that will help you to find people who will buy from you. Rather, you also need to stand out from the crowd. In other words, you want to make sure that your store has the means to do well. For this, Yahoo! Store offers some excellent benefits:

- They can help you to create and use coupons on the site.
- They will help you with discounts for pricing for particular timeframes or events.
- They can help you to offer gift certificates.
- They will help you with volume discounts you may wish to use.

There are several other options, too. The bottom line is that you will attract people to your Yahoo! Store using the tools that the company has available to you. Many of these tools are proven to be the most effective for nearly all who use them across the web, not just with Yahoo! Shopping.

WILL THIS WORK FOR YOU?

Many people ask this simple but all-important question. Is this what I need to do well online? Here is a checklist of the basics you need to start making money online.

1. You need to have your website up and functioning properly.
2. You need all of your products to be properly displayed on the website so that they are enticing for others to view.
3. You need the products you offer to be items that people want or items that you can somehow convince them they want (such as marketing services.)
4. You need to have a way for people to pick up items and purchase them, such as a shopping cart.
5. You need proper payment solutions so that customers can safely make payment to you.

6. You need to be able to market your business so that customers can find you online.
7. You need to entice them with special offers.
8. You need to be able to analyze and manage your online site and ecommerce.

The good news is that Yahoo! Store does all of this for you. You do not need to worry about having the right tools and resources from two, three or more companies, which is what happens when you try to set up a store like this through a new website.

As a merchant solution, this tool is highly effective, but do not forget that you have to do your part, too. By that, we mean:

- You need to have a professionally designed website and you need to invest in the services of a professional to design it if you cannot do so yourself.
- You have to actively participate in your business. These are not self-serve online businesses.
- You need to treat your online customers with just as much respect and attention as you do those who might walk into your local shop.

By taking the time to do this, you will garner not just one sale from a person who visits your Yahoo! Store, but you will also be able to get repeat sales from that customer over and over again. That makes it highly valuable and it makes repeat customers a profitable focus of your business.

Once you make the decision to use Yahoo! Store, the next logical step is to set it up and to start using it. However, it is also important to do this the right way.

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SETTING UP YOUR ECOMMERCE STORE

An ecommerce store will provide your offline store or your new store concept a place to grow and develop into a profitable opportunity for you. However, you do need to focus on what this type of store requires of you to set it up. If you were to set up a store through your own website, you would likely find yourself with countless obstacles and numerous third parties to work with.

With Yahoo! Store, this process is very simple. In this chapter, we are going to take you through the process of setting up your ecommerce store using Yahoo! Store.

DESIGN THE STORE FOR YOU

The first step in the process is to design the store. As mentioned previously, you have two main options here. You can hire someone to do the work for you or you can work on building your ecommerce store yourself. We recommend giving it a try if you have even just basic knowledge of what it takes.

Use the Wizard

The wizard provided by Yahoo! Store is very simplistic and provides step by step directions. Even those who have never attempted to set up a store will be able to work through this process fairly quickly.

The wizard does allow you to customize the design of your website. You can choose logos, graphics and color schemes that work for your particular needs. In short, these tools really do provide you with the options.

The nice benefit of using this method is that you are using a system that is designed to be used on Yahoo! Store. That means that the process is integrated, easy to do and most likely successful the first time out the door.

Third Party Tools

To make it easier on you, the company has designed Yahoo! Store to be flexible enough to allow you to use various other tools for designing your

website. Many people have experience with a particular program and want to keep using that program for their needs. That is no problem.

If you have your own design tool, you can use it easily. The most common option here is Dreamweaver, though most any type of website design tool will work with Yahoo! Store.

Have Someone Else Do It

The next option for you is to have a professional do the work for you. The website design process can be complex, especially if you are not sure what it takes to get your site up or you are unsure what you want on that site.

Some people simply want to hand over this task to a professional because their time is valuable. You may want to let a professional do the design work if you are looking for something highly customizable that will not work otherwise.

In all of these cases, the option is yours. You will find that the company is highly flexible in terms of allowing third party products to be used on the site or allowing companies to design the site for you.

LOAD YOUR PRODUCTS

Once the website is done and in place, the next step in the process is to load your products. You may have a list of products that you would like to add to the company site. You may not. If you do not, you will want to write these out and ensure that you have great pictures of the products, too. Accurate descriptions using search engine optimization are key to actually getting sales.

You will need to produce the names of your products as well as the descriptions for each one. If you do not have this type of list available, do take the time to design it with the following in mind:

- Use names that are descriptive.
- Do research and use keywords within the description.
- Keep the description readable and make sure that it sells your product. Do not overuse keywords in place of a well written, sales like product description.
- Do research the products and know the specifics. The more information you provide, the more likely the consumer is going to buy from you.
- However, keep descriptions as short as possible and to the point. Do not use too much text here as people do not like to read it.

- Do invest in professional looking photos. This is one of the elements that will make the most impressive decision for the consumer. They expect for you to have great pictures!

All of your details need to be placed into a spreadsheet. This spreadsheet will then be used by the wizard to upload the data to the website.

Once you have that list of descriptions, Yahoo! Store makes the process of getting that list of products online fairly easy. Like the design process, the product upload process also has a very easy to use wizard. This step by step wizard is designed to ask you questions, to locate your files or information and to upload it. It may take some time, depending on the amount of products you have.

Once you work through this process, it only takes a matter of time to open your doors, virtually.

SETTING UP PAYMENT METHODS

Now, you move on to the payment methods. Payment methods is a term used to describe the methods in which you will allow customers who visit your website, place their product in your cart and purchase it. There are several options out there, and you should research them for their costs. However, you do need to do a bit of set up work before you actually can get payment methods set up on Yahoo! Store.

First, you need to set up what is called a merchant account. A merchant account is a relationship you create with payment processors. Not just anyone can set up this type of account. You do need to be an official business operating in the United States (or elsewhere if allowed.) In addition, you will need to work through a series of set ups which will allow you to verify that you are a business operating where you say you are.

The fact is, in order to provide you with the ability to charge someone's credit card, for instance, these companies need to verify that you do have a real business and are trustworthy. The process is painless.

With Yahoo! Store, the recommendations are that you sign up for a merchant account through First Data or through PayPal. If you have a PayPal account already, this may be the simplest of options to start with.

Once you do this, you can then choose the types of payment methods you would like to accept. With Yahoo! Store, you can choose any or all of the following:

- American Express
- PayPal

- Visa
- Others, depending on your needs.

Once you select the choices you want, then you can start to tell the Yahoo! Store wizard what those decisions are. You will do this through a simple set up during the process.

If you do need to get a merchant account, the good news is that it is very easy to do. It should take you just a short amount of time to do so. It is recommended that you use both First Data and PayPal, but even just having one merchant account is enough.

If you already have an existing merchant account, the good news is that Yahoo! Store will provide you with the resources that you need to set your ecommerce store using that information. You need to ensure that this type of merchant account used is FDMS compatible. You may also need to contact Yahoo! Store's support to get your system set up.

From here, you just need to tell Yahoo! Store which of the payment methods you will allow your customers to pay with. This is as simple as completing a form within the wizard set up. It takes minutes. People often wonder which options to choose, though.

It is highly recommended that you give your customers as much freedom to choose here as is possible. The fact is, if someone tries to pay with one type of credit card and you do not support that credit card, the consumer may have no other choice than to turn to your competition to purchase their products. Do some research to find out what your competition is offering. Chances are good, you will want to offer numerous options for payment. Most are within the same range of cost anyway.

ESTABLISH SHIPPING METHODS

Now that your customers can select items from your store and they can pay for them, the next step in the set up process is to determine how they will receive those items. Anyone who has purchased anything online knows that some companies offer one or two shipping options while others offer numerous. In terms of what you should offer, determine what works for your customers.

In addition, keep in mind the type of products you are selling. If you are selling products such as computer parts, most people who buy these are trying to upgrade or fix a problem they have. They need fast shipping and will often pay a high price for it. On the other hand, if you are selling shoes, there may be less of a need for overnight delivery (though wedding products may be a different story!)

Like with all other steps in this process, Yahoo! Store really makes it easy for you to set up your payment needs with the company. All you need to do is to select which shipping carriers you would like to offer to your customers. Moreover, you will need to select your shipping rates.

When it comes to the shipping carriers, most companies will want to work with the most common and well-known companies, such as FedEx, USPS and UPS. You can visit the websites of each of those companies to learn more about their shipping options and how the process works for you in particular. Choose one or more of these companies based on what they can offer to you in costs and services. Most companies are fine with just using one company for shipping.

Now that you know which company you will ship with, consider what you will charge for shipping. When you visit a website to make a purchase, you will likely be charged a shipping and handling fee. What you may not realize is that fee is not necessarily just a charge from the shipping carrier, but also has other factors included such as the labor cost of the employees who are doing the shipping for you. You can wrap other costs into this cost, but there are several things to keep in mind.

Ensure that you select shipping rates that are based on:

- The product you are selling's weight
- The destination the product is traveling to (especially when servicing orders that are overseas)
- The order total (less shipping when the total is higher in some cases)
- Your costs for shipping that product to the client

If you are not sure where your shipping costs lie, take the time to factor in the profit you need to make as well as the costs of each step of the buying process from the maintenance of your website to the costs of paying the shipping carrier. You may also want to look towards your competitors to ensure that your costs are not too high or too far above where other competitors are.

Shipping charges are one of the biggest sticking points for many customers. For example, if you sell books on your new ecommerce site, the customer comes to the site, finds that you have the book they want but your shipping is expensive. They could spend ten minutes going to the local bookstore to get it instead. If your shipping is affordable, chances are good they will buy right then and there and avoid traveling to the actual bookstore.

The good news is that Yahoo! Store does a lot of this work for you. It will help you to determine what costs to charge. It also will automatically

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