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Salted Stone

When companies are faced with the complexities of developing an eCommerce Site or upgrading their current online store, understanding industry best practices can assist you in making the right decisions for your company.

5 Pillars of Online Store Development

There are five primary factors that need to be considered when developing an online store: 1) clientele, 2) products/services, 3) payment processing, 4) shipping and 5) online presence development. When these five work harmoniously together, an online store can be extremely successful. Unfortunately, when these items are not properly aligned then it can cause friction within the workings and sales of an [eCommerce](#) website. This article will explore the proper development of an [eCommerce](#) store in respect to the five pillars of online store creation.

Pillar 1: Clientele

Are you going to be selling clothes for toddlers, music for teens or legal pads to middle-aged business persons? Knowing the comfort level of your clientele and what they will expect when visiting a website is critical in the overall design, feel and functionality included within a website. For example, mothers shopping for toddlers will probably expect a clean, cheerful website with an easy-checkout capability. On the other hand, teenagers may expect an edgier website that keeps up with the current fads of teenagers and a busier

website would be acceptable. Finally, middle-aged business persons are going to expect a professional website with clear options and secure checkout. Another aspect of knowing your target market is understanding their aversion to risk. Certain target markets may not feel comfortable putting their credit-card information online or may not fully understand the process for completing an online checkout. Therefore, from design to the functionality of your [eCommerce](#) store it is important that you leave your personal tastes and ability out of the design and personalize your online store to your target audience.

Pillar 2: Products/Services

Know what you are selling! Understanding your product, from whether it has different color options, can be combined into several products or comes in different sizes can help in setting up the CMS backend of your online store. Some [eCommerce](#) stores have the ability to support customizable and modifiable products with specialized backend and other solutions have these features included. It is also a good idea to understand how many products/services you



will be selling and how this may expand in the future so that you do not set-up an [eCommerce](#) solution that will fit your current needs but that will not allow for your expected growth.

BREAKDOWN OF THE 5 PILLARS OF ECOMMERCE



1) Clientele

Understand your target markets, their expectations and how to best position yourself to encourage their on-site conversion.

2) Products/Services

Understanding what you are selling and its value statement to your target audience will help you to choose merchandise, expand and properly modify your [eCommerce](#) platform to meet these needs.

3) Payment Processing

Using secure authorizations and best practices will help encourage customer confidence in your site and encourage conversion rates.

4) Shipping

Having a clear shipping policy, rates and fees posted on the website assists customers in understand their shipping costs. Additionally, integrating your shipping information directly into the [eCommerce](#) platform will save you time!

5) Online Presence Development

Developing a strong online presence will assist with generating traffic to your website and gaining the awareness of your target audience.

Pillar 3: Payment Processing

How are you expecting to process online payments? Are you planning on taking electronic checks, credit cards and/or PayPal? How are your customers going to feel secure putting their secure information online to purchase your items? In order to properly set-up payment processing, you need to ensure that your payment processing server is secure, which is often shown by the <https://> or a lock-symbol. Additionally, it is considered poor practice for the shopping cart or purchase processing to be hosted on another server or for the consumer to be transferred to another URL in order to process the order. The reasons that these practices can hurt business is due to the fact that they illicit the feeling that the website does not pay proper attention to security or may be a “fly-by-night” operation that will close down, process the payment without sending/providing the service/product.

Pillar 4: Shipping

Are you going to ship internationally or only domestically? Are you going to be shipping UPS, USPS, FedEx or provide insurance and tracking number? Would you prefer flat-rate shipping or to ship products based on their weight? Understanding the answers to these questions and developing a clear shipping policy will assist when the need arises to develop shipping parameters within your [eCommerce](#) site and integrating your current shipping accounts into an online environment. Additionally, having understandable shipping options, their prices and an explanation of how that price is calculated (flat rate, weight dependant, location) helps to ease the anxiety that many consumers feel when purchasing online and they have to make shipping decisions based on their needs.

Pillar 5: Online Presence Development

How are your clients going to discover that your online store? Once you have fully developed your [eCommerce](#) store building online presence in crucial for cultivating traffic and conversion rates. There are multiple avenues that are available for

companies to utilize including social media, search engine optimization, cost per click, content networks and video promotions. Using the correct channels will help in reaching your target market. For example, if you are targeting the teenage market then social media and video promotions would be the most appropriate venues. On the other hand, if the target audience was middle aged business persons then the most appropriate channels to reach them would be cost per click and content networks. Search engine optimization will work within all target markets and if there is only one online presence item that is utilized, then search engine optimization is the most important of all online presence development tools.

Following these five pillars when developing or updating your [eCommerce](#) store will help to ensure that the store is successful and properly designed to meet the target audience.





Salted Stone Goes Mobile!

Salted Stone, Inc. Now Offers a Mobile Suite of Internet Services.

Salted Stone, Inc. announced the release of their newest product suite – smart phone application development. Specializing in the Android OS, Windows Mobile 7, Palm OS, Blackberry OS and the iPhone OS, Salted Stone, Inc. is expanding their offerings to include the latest in internet innovations - the mobile web.

“As mobile technology becomes more sophisticated, faster and accessible, we desired to treat our clients to the most cutting edge and comprehensive online business development approach on the market – this includes taking the next step in enabling our clients to offer their base the convenience of an online web experience. At Salted Stone our customers expect the best, and we want to ensure that we are adding services to help them meet their evolving needs and goals,” Nick Vena, Vice President of Business Development.

Coinciding with the release of the iPhone4, Salted Stone, Inc. revealed the launch of their newest suite of web-related products: The Mobile Suite. This product suite will include Mobile Application Development, Mobile Application Marketing and Mobile Application Analytics. There are several additions the suite to be rolled out over this next year – so expect to see more. The additions will change and evolve with the newest technology and the requirements for success on a mobile online environment. Salted Stone, Inc. “leverages the most cutting-edge of technologies towards the development of innovative applications for a multitude of operating systems including the iPhone OS 4, Android OS, Windows Mobile 7, Palm OS, and BlackBerry OS.” Ahmed Khanzada, Director of Mobile Development.

Salted Stone, Inc. made the move into the mobile application arena because they saw that the future on the internet is going to be handheld. According to Mike

Skeehan, President and CEO of Salted Stone, Inc., “The mobile marketplace is experiencing more rapid and diverse growth than many other sectors. It is still in the frontier stages - there is significant room for prosperity with an Application that features the right blend of utility and creativity.”

Salted Stone, Inc. was founded in 2006 and has continually been adding services to meet the growing needs of their clients and consistent with the rapid changes in technology and operational requirements in the online arena. Their services include web design, web development, website programming, search engine optimization, an analytics suite and custom programming. The Mobile Suite is the latest addition to their offering.

If you would like more information about Salted Stone, Inc.'s mobile suite or to learn more about their other services, please call 626-817-3146 or email at sales@saltedstone.com

NICK VENA

SMARTER ECOMMERCE: Magento vs. The Others



The Magento Software is an opensource solution for the majority of eCommerce needs. This free solution has been built from the ground-up as an eCommerce CMS platform, instead of a module or plug-in to be added to non-eCommerce Platforms which include Joomla and Wordpress. At Salted Stone, Inc. we recommend that you design your eCommerce site for the Magento platform. Outside of being designed as a robust eCommerce solution, Magento is also a robust CMS solution that will host both static, eCommerce and unique content pages with plug-ins and modules that exceed those available for any other free eCommerce software. For these reasons, Magento is considered the new standards in eCommerce solutions.



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JULY BONUS
\$300 Off Your First eCommerce Site with Salted Stone, Inc.
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