



The Ultimate WooCommerce Guide



The Ultimate WooCommerce Guide to Your Ecommerce

During the last several years, ecommerce has grown in popularity. More and more companies sell online regardless of whether their main activity involves an e-business. Large enterprises, mid-sized companies, and even small businessmen use WooCommerce to create online stores and sell via the Internet.

Considering the fact that WordPress is the most popular content management system in the world – when it comes to building ecommerce shops – WP is the obvious choice. Businesses powered by the platform are highly developed. Why? Because WooCommerce offers simplicity and is, at the same time, perfectly adapted to the needs of users.

WooCommerce exists since 2011 and is supported by a strong team of experienced developers. Just like WordPress, it's a fully free and open-source software. This gives endless possibilities because you can expand your store by adding new functionalities.

Even though WooCommerce is very easy to use and allows practically anyone to create his own online store, the optimization of the plugin is a neverending story.

In the Ultimate WooCommerce Guide, we'll tell you what WooCommerce really is and what benefits it brings. We'll show you everything you need to know to take full advantage of WooCommerce – from choosing themes, integrating plugins, full optimization, to adding new functionalities and implementing communication tools, which will increase your conversion and sales rates, and improve customer service.

Everything you need is in this guide, so let's start! Enjoy your reading!



Rogovinski Gregor

CEO of Cut2Code

Table of Contents

1. What to Pay Attention to If You're Planning to Start an E-business on WooCommerce?	4
2. To Woo or Not to Woo - Is WooCommerce the Best Thing for You?	11
3. How to Create a WooCommerce Template – Best Practices	19
4. How We Customized WooCommerce with the Help of Plugins – the Case Study of print4display	25
5. A Multilingual Ecommerce Store – New Language, New Opportunities	31
6. WordPress. Plugins That Will Support the Development of Your Ecommerce	35
7. How to Move an Online Store to AWS Cloud in 10 Steps	39
8. How to Implement a Challenging Project Using WooCommerce - Solisci.pl Case Study	49
9. Google Analytics for Ecommerce – Get to Know Your Customer	57
10. 5 Steps to Creating Effective Banner Ads in Ecommerce	63
11. 6 Tips to Build a Positive Ecommerce Image in the Media	71
12. How to Automate Sales Processes with the Help of Chatbots	76



What to Pay Attention to If You're Planning to Start an E-business on WooCommerce?

Author: Jerzy Kozyra

Many entrepreneurs, both those who have just started their journey with ecommerce and those who already have some experience in this field, encounter difficulties at a certain point. It's not easy to choose an appropriate platform for your online store. If this is the dilemma you're facing and if you're considering the choice of WooCommerce, I'll show you what to pay attention to.

From this article, you'll learn

- why WooCommerce is the most popular choice,
- what you should consider while choosing an ecommerce platform,
- what are the pros and cons of WooCommerce,
- what WooCommerce traps you can fall into.

There are, of course, many factors that may influence your choice of platform. For example:

- the costs of starting your own business (related to creating your online store – graphic design, programming),
- maintenance and development costs (software updates, changes resulting from the expansion of your product offer),
- marketing, promotion, and SEO activities, choosing a hosting service, etc.,
- security,
- user-friendliness and the ease with which you can introduce modifications,
- access to support,
- available functions,
- the possibility of scaling your store.

And furthermore, don't forget about very important criteria often neglected during the initial project stage, which concern:

- the adjustment of the platform to the type and specific nature of your business – what kinds of products or services are sold, how wide is the range of products, and how many variants they have,
- the resources you have – knowledge, time, qualified workers,
- the way you run your business – e.g. special requirements connected to checkout, payments,
- individual requirements or needs.

Ignoring these aspects may lead to frustration, discontentment, or an unplanned (and in extreme cases also not entirely controlled) cost increase.

In this article, I will focus on WooCommerce – the currently most popular ecommerce platform (or plugin, to be more precise).

Why Does the Majority Choose WooCommerce?

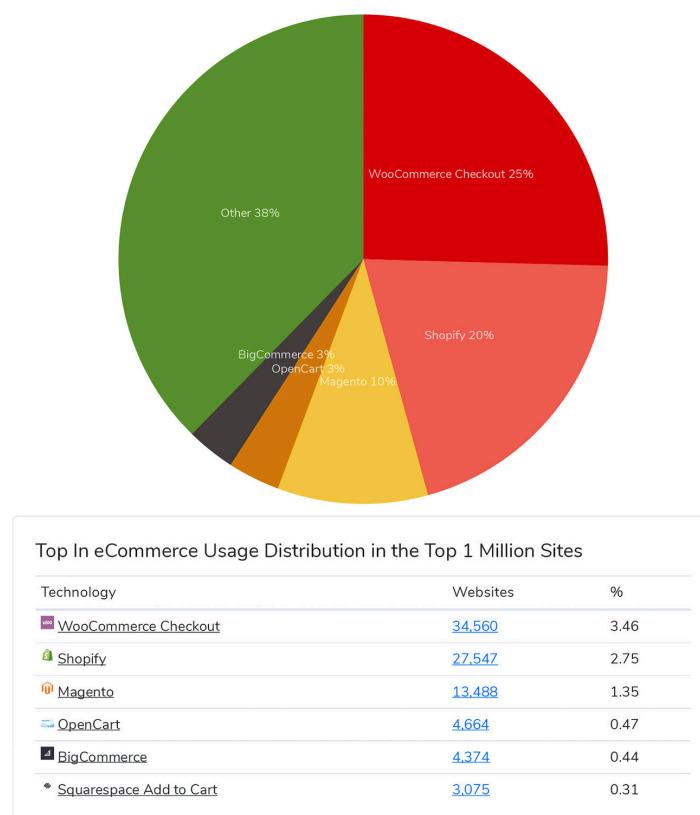
There are at least several reasons for this. The most significant are:

- **Statistics.** This is currently the most popular platform in the world. High market

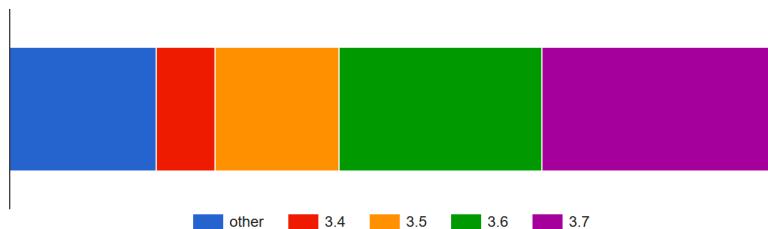
share entails access to the knowledge of experts, experienced developers, and access to plugins and ready-to-use themes provided by software companies. In other words, everywhere you look, there is social proof. The enormous WooCommerce ecosystem gives you a distinct advantage in comparison to other platforms.

- **Low implementation cost.** Creating, developing, and maintaining your online store is possible with objectively little effort. This looks different in the case of Magento – even though it doesn't cost you anything to start a business, you have to have a generous budget if you want to further develop or expand your store.
- **Many companies from all over the world use WordPress to run their websites.** Taking this into account, WooCommerce presents itself as a logical choice. It's a plugin that is compatible with a platform used on an everyday basis. Thanks to this, starting a business is easy and almost intuitive. And the fact that WooCommerce is available to download on WordPress.com makes this solution look very promising in the coming years.
- **Implementing and running a store on WooCommerce is faster and easier than on, for example, Magento.** You don't need to have experience in development in order to set up a fully functioning store. Considering the number of accessible tutorials, this plugin allows you to quickly start selling. At an affordable price, you can also commission a company that specializes in WooCommerce to implement your store.
- **WooCommerce is cheap, easy to use,** and doesn't require expert knowledge unlike other, more complicated platforms.

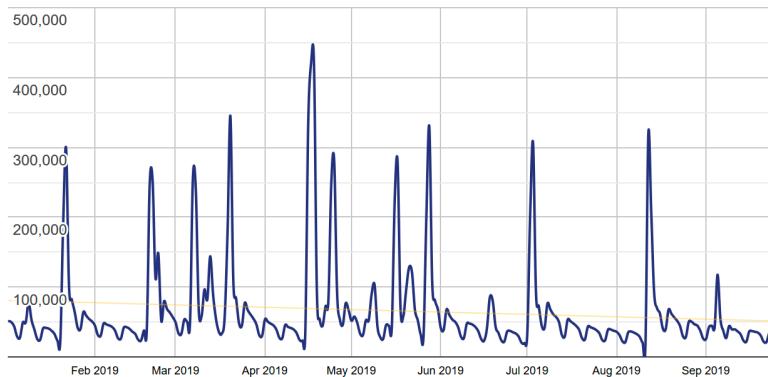
Statistics table:



ACTIVE VERSIONS



DOWNLOADS PER DAY



*The number of new websites that installed WooCommerce: plugin downloads during the last 7 days:
219 900 downloads (as of 26 September 2019).*

Source: www.en-gb.wordpress.org

Other statistics: www.barn2.co.uk

Pros and Cons of WooCommerce

As every platform, WooCommerce has its strong and weak points.

→ Pros of WooCommerce:

- + Fully professional system.
- + For free. Just like certain available plugins and basic themes.
- + Enables full customization with the help of many available plugins and allows to adapt the website to your own needs and preferences.
- + Provides many analytical tools which allow you to monitor the parameters of your store.
- + Very flexible system.
- + Security – thanks to frequent updates, fixing potential errors is easier.
- + Mobile-friendliness.

→ Cons of WooCommerce:

- Frequent updates – the frequency of WordPress updates can sometimes be higher than of plugins, which may be problematic.
- It may be costly, especially if the plugins or other functionalities that are available for free don't meet your needs. In such a case, it may be necessary to buy expensive

plugins (e.g. Premium versions) or make modifications, which may also entail costs and spending additional time on work. The more customized you want your store to be, the more expensive/labor-intensive it is.

→ Sometimes, the modifications we need require an in-depth knowledge of WordPress and WooCommerce. We may not have the skills to effectively use certain plugins.

The pros and cons will vary from the needs of your business. And the problems that may arise will, in a large part, depend on the quality of implementation and the carefulness with which you have set up your expectations.

WooCommerce Traps You Should Avoid

Just as with any other popular platform that is used on a large scale, the depths of WooCommerce can also hide some traps. I want to make you aware of the potential dangers to help you make the right choices and avoid disappointment while planning your store.

- If you decide to scale your store, it may turn out that along with the increase of client orders, the plugins that you have been using for free will have to be changed to Premium versions or other solutions requiring additional costs.
- Using too many plugins that either are unnecessary or that do not meet your needs (e.g. using only a small part of a complex plugin) can have a disastrous effect on the performance of your store. Without careful usage of plugins, you won't be able to effectively manage your store. Sometimes less is more.
- Specific needs may lead to far-reaching personalization, adjustments, and changes that entail higher costs and more work. Deeper customization carried out on your own, without the help of specialists, may turn out to be impossible.
- Resigning from expert help during the initial stage of your project, having non-standard needs and relying entirely on yourself, without a deeper knowledge of the WordPress and WooCommerce ecosystem, can require solutions which, in the long run, can be much more costly or even impossible to fix and properly optimize.
- If you decide to move your dedicated system to WooCommerce 1:1, you may need to tamper with the plugin or you'll spend a considerable amount of time on introducing necessary modifications. Sometimes completely redundant from the perspective of your business. You should have contact with a reliable partner who:
 - understands the business logic behind the original system,
 - has enough experience to propose an alternative WooCommerce solution that will help you save time and achieve the desired effect in the form of a functioning online shop.
- A badly chosen hosting service combined with business expansion can contribute to losing clients. Even if your service is properly optimized, slow page loading will discourage customers.

A Small Plugin on a Large Scale

WooCommerce is considered to be the perfect solution for small ecommerce businesses. Web traffic is low because of the small number of sold items, product variants, potential clients, and orders. In other words, all the parameters that, by definition, overload the system and server infrastructure, are "lighter" in the case of small online shops. However, a well implemented and optimized WooCommerce store can reach its full potential and turn out to be a competitive solution if you choose the appropriate hosting.

★ PROOF

To prove this, here are examples of stores with huge traffic: DailyHunt with 44.8M visitors, WorthPoint with 6.25M, and ClickBank with 4.1M.

The range of products also doesn't have to be a problem, as evidenced by one of the largest Internet libraries BookRiot (traffic: 2.98M), which offers thousands of products.

Worthpoint, in turn, uses WooCommerce to manage almost 425M items and images.

Data as of January 2019

The success of the mentioned ecommerce stores, their market position, and amount of products and traffic show that it's possible to run a large shop on WooCommerce. This, however, doesn't mean that it's easy and that each large-scale business will work flawlessly and smoothly. So what should you pay attention to?

It all depends on the products you want to sell and on the type of business you want to run. In order to develop your store, manage a large number of products and their variants, adapt the system to your individual needs and your type of business, you may want to, set requirements that reach far beyond the "standard" package.

This leads to the modification of installed plugins and the installation of new ones, and even far-reaching customization. Each of these elements is a potential threat to your store's performance and efficiency. It's easy to lose yourself in the maze of endless possibilities, variants, and options. Eventually, you may end up with a hybrid that is a long way from a user-friendly website – both in terms of customer service and customer experience. And I suppose it's not hard to guess what a slowly-functioning and unintuitive store means.

Expanding your store and adapting it to your business activities poses a further threat. The difficulty is to choose between plugins that are absolutely necessary and the "just in case" plugins. Instead of a simple and intuitive selling platform, you can be left with a bunch of different tools with absolutely no use.

So if you're planning to sell a couple of thousand products in different categories and variants and if you want to meet special business-related requirements, consider talking to a professional team that will deal with managing the complex infrastructure and, if necessary advise, choose, and properly implement the required tools.

"Multiplying" products on your own without proper configuration is asking for trouble. It impedes the performance and loading speed of your website and, consequently, leads to losing many potential clients. WooCommerce is not a plugin that is resilient to such problems. If they do occur, you'll need proper optimization.

System load depends on the server infrastructure you're using, so consider additional expenses on e.g. a dedicated server, whose parameters and configuration will help you run your store smoothly and effectively.

I dare say that if you have a properly implemented and optimized store based on WooCommerce, the only thing that limits you is the server. If you choose a reliable hosting service, high traffic and the number of products and orders won't have an impact on website performance, so the plugin definitely won't let you down.

Summary

What I described above certainly hasn't exhausted the topic, so you can treat my advice as a foundation for further discussion. I wanted to place emphasis on those aspects that frequently get overlooked when we make decisions, even though they are balanced out by the advantages of WordPress and WooCommerce. Without a thorough analysis of your business needs and online store requirements, you may end up with wrong choices or a disappointing implementation. As a businessman functioning in the turbulent world of Internet sales, you'll face many business management challenges. Struggling daily with a system that doesn't fulfill your needs or that requires unforeseen additional costs can discourage even the biggest enthusiasts and make their intrinsic motivation and excitement imperceptibly fade away.

Jerzy Kozyra – COO of Cut2Code



He started working in the digital industry in 2000, at an interactive agency Adv.pl. He was responsible for running projects for the company's key customers. From 2008, he was the Interactive Department Director, and later, after the company changed its name to Lemon Sky, he became the IT Director. From 2011, he worked as the Production Department Director of LS and then of Lemon Sky JWT after merger with J. Walter Thompson Poland. In the middle of 2017, he started managing the company's division in Wroclaw as the Head of Lemon Sky. He held this position until May, 2018, shortly after Ogilvy & Mather Poland and J. Walter Thompson Poland have merged.

mail: jerzy@cut2code.com

MMERCE

opware®

merce

XIN

esi



To Woo or Not to Woo – Is WooCommerce the Best Thing for You?

Author: Adam Chmielowiec

Do you want to open up an online store? Maybe you'd like to add an ecommerce platform to your already-existing website? You're in a right place to start! In this article, we'll be comparing the most popular ecommerce solutions against the most prominent one – the WooCommerce WordPress plugin. Is it really the best choice for you? Perhaps some of the alternatives would be better? Let's find out!

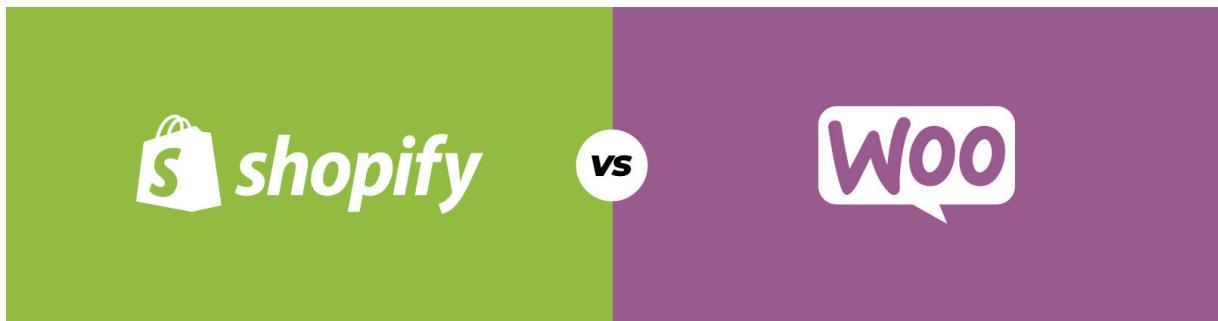
From this article, you'll learn

- why WooCommerce is so popular,
- what are the alternative solutions to WooCommerce,
- what are other ecommerce plugins for WordPress,
- why WooCommerce is the recommended solution for ecommerce.

Why is WooCommerce so Gosh Darn Popular?

It all has to do with WordPress. This CMS (Content Management System, but shorter) is responsible for powering up around a half of websites handled by a commercially available CMSes. It also powers up **around one third of all websites online** now. This is mostly because it is free, powerful, and easy to work with. A significant portion of these websites use WooCommerce for all their ecommerce services, as it is by far the most popular ecommerce plugin the platform has to offer. It's very customizable, light on the server, powerful, and easy to use. So why should we consider any alternatives, you might ask. They are often compared with Woo as the market's leader, and often try to base their popularity on competitive advantages over Woo. But are these advantages significant in any way?

Shopify vs. WooCommerce



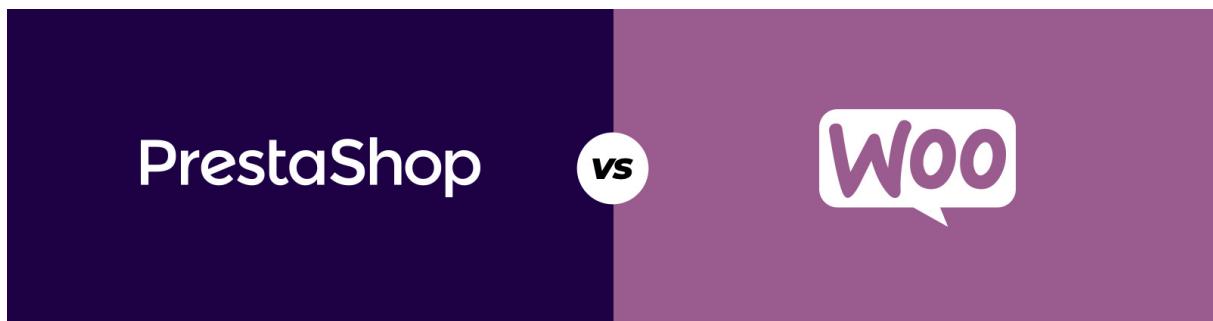
The main difference between these two is that Shopify isn't exactly free-to-use. You'll need to pay a small percentage of your profits from each and every sale in transaction fees in order to use its software. They are tiny (up to 2%), but significant, as when your store scales up, these might amount to quite a lot. In return, **you'll be given a safe and well-performing hosting with unlimited bandwidth including a free SSL certificate**, which makes Shopify stand out from its competition. There are also 10 great-looking templates to choose from for free and hundreds more available as separate orders (starting at \$140 per theme). The full Shopify pricing (excluding the themes!) can be seen below:

	Basic Shopify All the basics for starting a new business	Shopify Everything you need for a growing business	Advanced Shopify Advanced features for scaling your business
Monthly price	USD \$ 29 /mo	USD \$ 79 /mo	USD \$ 299 /mo
SHOPIFY PAYMENTS			
Fraud analysis	✓	✓	✓
Online credit card rates	2.9% + 30¢	2.6% + 30¢	2.4% + 30¢

Shopify pricing as presented on their website: <https://www.shopify.com/pricing>

Another great advantage of Shopify is its easy-to-handle drag and drop interface, which provides simple tools that made theme-editing much easier and less time-consuming. This doesn't come without a drawback, though, as there are certain limitations of what can be easily achieved, and these limitations don't exist in WooCommerce. **Shopify's 24/7 responsive customer support is universally praised, very able, and award-winning:** a nice addition that is often not matched by other ecommerce solutions. The cost, however, is significantly higher than in WooCommerce, not to mention the fact that Shopify offers much less integrations.

PrestaShop vs. WooCommerce



PrestaShop is a long-standing French ecommerce CMS that's completely open-source and free to use, while being very intuitive and easy to learn. In order to use it, the only thing you need is a compatible hosting service, and preferably a ready-made or customly-prepared theme, and you're free to go. **This software includes rich functionality available straight out-of-the-box, but unfortunately, many functionalities aren't available in the free version of this CMS.**

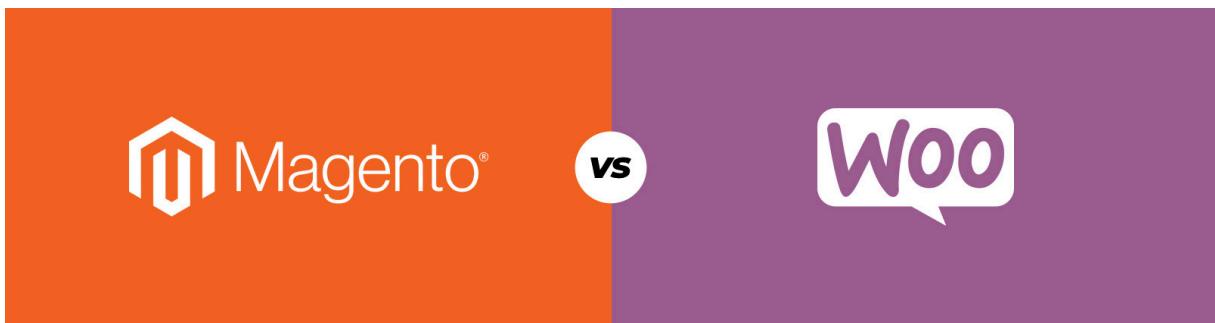
There are few, yet very important drawbacks when compared to WooCommerce.

From the frontend user's perspective, the same website will have poorer speed

performance due to all the things neatly packed in the free version that you still might end up not using at all. From the backend user's perspective, you might find yourself in need of purchasing some crucial functionality you didn't account for at the start.

What is also immensely important, it might be much more difficult for you to find the help you need with your website. **Not only, is the community much less prominent, there are also much less sources that you can use to look for help.** There aren't that many developers in the market that work with this CMS, which means that if your outsourcing agency fails, it might be difficult for you to find its replacement.

Magento vs. WooCommerce

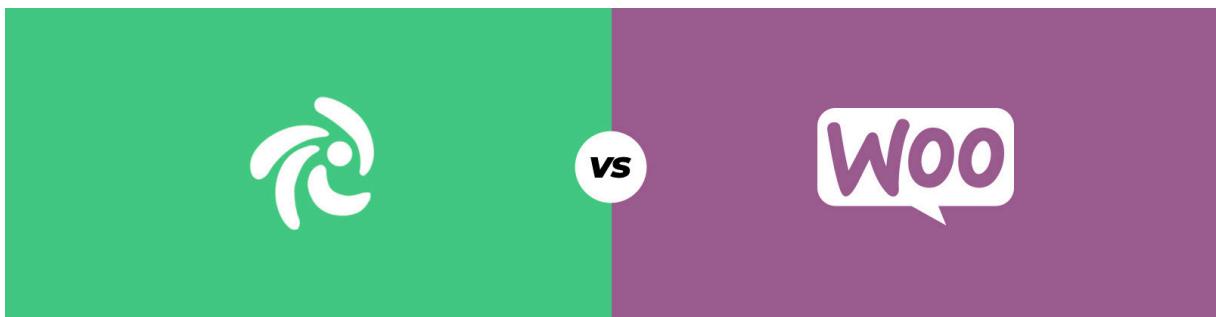


For a more in-depth analysis, I recommend checking one of my previous articles here. Magento, similarly to PrestaShop, is an entirely ecommerce-dedicated CMS, and is currently known as the most flexible solution yet. While being very hard to get a grasp on, and even more difficult to master, when you pass the steep learning curve you might become an ecommerce wizard with a website able to accomplish **absolutely anything**.

This ecommerce platform is, however, much more expensive than WooCommerce.

Magento is targeted at big companies and corporations and there's a significant number of things a developer needs to learn in order to become Magento-savvy. Since knowledge is key, and obtaining this knowledge is really time-expensive and pricely, there's no wonder that Magento developers are simply more expensive to hire. What is more, the plugins for Magento are, in general, more expensive than the WooCommerce ones, as they are aimed at big and valuable merchants.

Zen Cart vs. WooCommerce

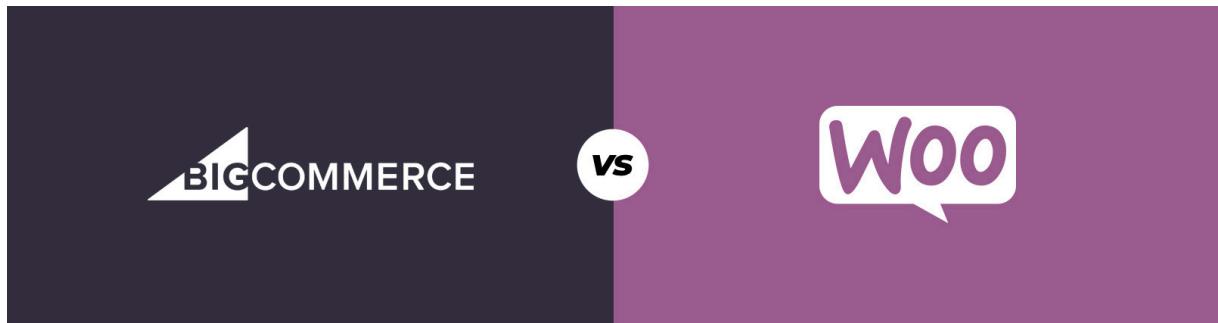


Zen Cart is another ecommerce - based CMS that is open-source, free-to-use, and popular throughout the world. What makes it stand out is the openness of its code. With enough knowledge and time, **you, as a PHP developer, can change every single line of code in the out-the-box software, making sure (by trial and error) that you can achieve whatever you have aimed at.** Additionally, there's a free and official step-by-step guide available for you to work with Zen Cart efficiently – something rarely seen in its competition. We don't recommend it though – it's a bit of an outdated technology that becomes more and more forgotten and is just not up to today's standards. Just take a look at their default work-in-progress page:



Brings back memories from the last century, doesn't it?

BigCommerce vs. WooCommerce



The main focus of this standalone platform is to manage your products and orders. What this means is that content management is not important here. There is some freedom in that regard, but WordPress will be a much better choice for making your content present on the frontend the way you intend. **On the upside, BigCommerce puts a lot of stress on your website security and offers hosting for at least \$29.95 per month.** Its full pricing is available below and, putting aside some of the additional functionalities (as saving the cart

The screenshot shows the BigCommerce pricing page. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'SELL EVERYWHERE', 'FEATURES', 'CUSTOMERS', 'PRICING', 'RESOURCES', and a 'GET STARTED' button. Below this, a call-to-action box says 'Try BigCommerce free for 15 days, then pick a plan' with a 'START YOUR FREE 15-DAY TRIAL' button. The main content area displays four pricing plans under the heading 'HOST POPULAR':

	Standard	Plus	Pro	Enterprise
Monthly	\$29.95/mo	\$79.95/mo	\$249.95/mo	Contact Sales or call 1-866-991-0672 for custom pricing lower than Magento and Shopify Plus
Annual	\$29.95/mo	\$79.95/mo	\$249.95/mo	
Save up to 10% when you pay annually. Offer available for Plus and Pro plans.				
	Sell online with your own beautiful online store	Grow your online business with marketing tools proven to increase conversion	Scale your growing business with a comprehensive set of features	Power your team's success with the best full-service open platform

Source: www.bigcommerce.com

contents in case the user gets disconnected), the pricing is mostly dictated by the amount of payment money going through your website (respectively, up to \$50k, \$150k and \$400k, with no limitations set for the Enterprise version).

Other Ecommerce Plugins for WordPress

There is quite a lot to choose from. The honorable mentions for this list include:

- Easy Digital Downloads (mostly known as EDD) is a good ecommerce alternative for stores that sell mostly digital stuff (eBooks, PDF files, audio clips, and such). When a product is bought, the plugin sends the buyer an automatically generated email with

a download link. EDD also supports processing payments and includes a shopping cart. **It comes with a very intuitive panel with only several, necessary functions and it's free in its most basic version**, but if you want to integrate it with MailChimp (for instance), this will cost \$49 extra.

- WP eCommerce is one of the most common WooCommerce alternatives, often seen as its worse and less popular counterpart. It is very similar in terms of the dashboard it provides and its pricing model, including a free core with limited functionality and paid add-ons. For instance, product reviews need to be purchased as a separate add-on, while this functionality comes for free in WooCommerce. **What makes the plugin stand out is its premium support (priced at \$49 per month or \$499 per year)**, which basically allows you to save a lot of time on reading blog posts and other self-research.
- Jigoshop is an interesting case, as it is the original WordPress ecommerce plugin, dating as far back as 2011. **Even though it's the inspiring grandfather of all the software mentioned in this part of the article, don't think it's become outdated.** It had been like that for a while, but its developers have revitalised it and updated it thoroughly. Its interface is more intuitive and simpler than Woo's, but otherwise – there have been some mixed reviews from the community.
- WP EasyCart is a newly introduced plugin with one purpose: to make it as simple and time-saving as possible to set up a store and manage it. **It's dedicated specifically to owners that simply don't have the time to learn a new tool and don't have too much of a development background.** It comes integrated with MailChimp, TaxCloud, and ShipStation, which means it can actually become quite powerful really quickly. Its users can send out invoices, post eBooks, sell video content, or ask for donations. Its free plan is more advanced than most of its competition – coupons, promotions, subscriptions, advanced product variants, shipping calculators, unlimited products-to-be-displayed... this one has a lot of advantages, even though it fades in comparison with WooCommerce.

Summary

There is really **a tremendous amount of software available out there**, designed specifically to add and manage store functionalities to your websites. If your existing website is set up on WordPress, then WooCommerce is still our number 1 favorite. But there are, of course, some alternatives that need considering – most prominently the WP EasyCart if your needs are small and your store isn't expected to grow. For any other case – **we still recommend Woo.**

If you are looking for a software to start up your ecommerce from scratch, using other SaaS solutions or CMSes designed specifically for that purpose has its benefits. But when thinking about **the sheer popularity, ease of use, offered possibilities, extensive community feedback, and documentation available online**, **WooCommerce still stands out from the competition.** It might not be as powerful as Magento, but it's much easier to

handle and learn, and also cheaper to work with when we consider employing developers and web agencies. Shopify is limited and pricy, and dedicating the whole website to that solution might become limiting further down the line.

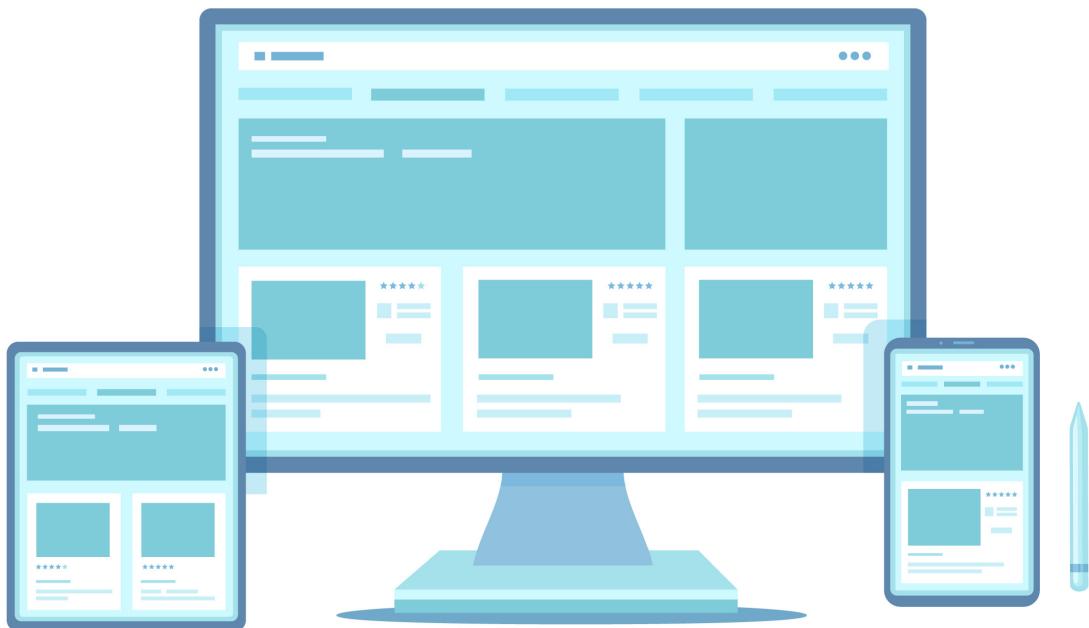
This isn't the case with WooCommerce, as WordPress on which it's built still remains the definite winning CMS worldwide. If this isn't something you are looking for, I still hope this article will serve you as a good starting point to explore and research other possibilities.

	Ease of Use	Pricing	Features	Support	Overall Score
WooCommerce	9/10	10/10	9.5/10	9.5/10	95%
Shopify	9.5/10	8.5/10	9.5/10	10/10	93.75%
PrestaShop	7.5/10	9/10	8/10	8.5/10	82.5%
Magento	5/10	6/10	10/10	7/10	70%
ZenCart	7/10	10/10	7/10	6.5/10	76.25%
BigCommerce	8.5/10	7.5/10	9/10	9/10	85%
Easy Digital Downloads (EDD)	8/10	8.5/10	9/10	7/10	81.25%
WP eCommerce	6.5/10	7/10	3.5/10	7/10	60%
Jigoshop	7.5/10	10/10	6/10	7/10	76.25%
WP EasyCart	10/10	9.5/10	3/10	7/10	63.75%

// **Adam Chmielowiec** – Project Manager at Cut2Code

PM with a strong English background. After his philology studies, he worked as a primary school teacher, sharing language passion among young learners. At Cut2Code, he is responsible for the management of many of our projects. Flexible, goal-oriented and communicative, he is always open to customers' expectations. Privately, a music fan, a good listener, and a science enthusiast.

mail: adam@cut2code.com



How to Create a WooCommerce Template – Best Practices

Author: Grzegorz Pisarski

A well-functioning ecommerce store is a must if you want to build a successful online business. That's why I would like to give you some tips that will help you create an effective WooCommerce template. This article is mainly addressed to web developers who already have some experience in designing WordPress templates. However, it will provide you with useful and helpful information even if you have no such experience.

From this article, you'll learn

- the basic principles of creating a good design,
- what to avoid when coding your template,
- what tools will improve your workflow,
- how to create a design that is consistent with your template, secures your website, and makes it fast.

Design – the Foundation of each WooCommerce Template

I'd like to say first that I'm not a designer and I won't tell you how to create an attractive layout for your website. What I'd like to do is to give you some advice that will help you create a template based on a graphic design. Thanks to my recommendations, this stage of the project will be much easier for you, even if you're not fully involved in the design process.

The WooCommerce system abides by its own rules but some elements remain the same as in other ecommerce platforms. To put it simply, the shop consists of a **product list**, **shopping cart**, **product and checkout page**, and a **my account** section. Each of these pages has its own specific elements, so it's not worth bothering about them during the design process.

Of course, WooCommerce is a very flexible platform that allows you to code any type of graphic. Often, unfortunately, budgets are not as flexible. The simplest way to deal with this problem is to install a demo shop with the Storefront theme and to examine each subpage and its elements. This will be a starting point both for the developer and the designer.

It's worth paying attention to:

- the presence or lack of form fields (e.g. additional fields on the checkout page),
- the way website elements are arranged,
- design consistency (the same font size for headlines and text, button versions, unified form layout).

If you prevent the designer from making simple changes in the arrangement of website elements (for example, replacing the "Remove items from cart" button from the left side to the right), you won't have to modify these elements in your template file. Thanks to this, **you'll spend less time on creating templates and making subsequent updates**. Be open to the designer's ideas because some of them can meet the client's business needs, however, apply these ideas carefully.

REMEMBER

The more elements you'll be able to code in CC instead of PHP files, the easier WooCommerce updates will be.

Development – from the Design to the Template

After finishing your design, you can begin coding. WooCommerce is an expanded WordPress theme, so you're most probably familiar with its structure of template files (I won't focus on them in this article but you can find more information about them here: developer.wordpress.org).

If you're creating a website from scratch, you can, of course, start by programming the blog and the static part of your page. And if your goal is to improve the functionality of your existing website, the best option would be to create a Child Theme (codex.wordpress.org).

After designing the basis of your template, you can move on to coding your WooCommerce template. Before I tell you how to do this, you should know that **your theme will support WooCommerce** if you use the following lines of code:

```
1. add_action( 'after_setup_theme', 'woocommerce_support' );
2. function woocommerce_support() {
3.   add_theme_support( 'woocommerce' );
4. }
```

Next, you can make modifications. WooCommerce has over **140 template files but, fortunately, you don't have to modify them all. In fact, you can introduce many changes without having to modify a single WooCommerce file**. That's exactly what I advise you to do because you'll make updates much easier. However, it's possible only when you have a good design. If you don't want to waste your time on template file modifications, use **Filters and Actions** (codex.wordpress.org) known from WordPress.

They are a mechanism that allows you to introduce your own modifications without having to make changes in the source files. Observe whether Filters and Actions work. If you won't be able to code a given function with their help, you can modify the template file. **But remember not to do this directly in the plugin folder.** Each file you want to modify should be copied from the templates to the `woocommerce` folder, which is located in the main folder of the WordPress template.

If you're not acquainted with Filters and Actions or if you don't feel confident using them, you can make all the necessary modifications and even create your own ones.

But remember about these rules:

- do not copy all the files from the plugin folder to the theme folder,
- modify files only when it's necessary (sometimes CSS will be enough to make small changes),
- do not delete Filters and Actions from the modified files,
- if you're creating your own file, upload it with the help of the `wc_get_template` function.

WooCommerce offers many functions, methods, and classes, so it's worth using them (I advise you to take a look at the [documentation](#) of WooCommerce plugins). The documentation is very helpful but difficult because of its size. Google, however, will definitely help you find the information you need.

Before you decide to code your own plugin or function, make sure no one has already done it. Don't reinvent the wheel. The large WooCommerce community offers ready-made codes and gives answers to many web development problems, so it's worth looking there first, even if you have to pay for the plugin or function you're looking for.

When you write your code, I advise you not only to adopt solutions provided by the WooCommerce community but also to look for tools that will improve your workflow. The groundwork for any coding is an **appropriate IDE** (integrated development environment). I don't want to impose anything on you but make sure that your editor supports:

- intelligent code completion,
- the Emmet extension,
- SCSS compiling,
- version control,
- PHP debugging.

This will help you create your template quickly and effectively. I'd also like you to pay special attention to tools for **code debugging**. Most probably, you use browser development tools, since using a PHP debugger isn't so obvious.

Personally, I recommend you to use [Xdebug](#), a tool without which I cannot imagine creating advanced themes and plugins. Of course, it's not the one and only PHP debugger, so if you find a different solution that works better for you, then use it. Anyway, a PHP debugger will definitely improve your workflow.

Website Maintenance

Usually, before sending the finished project to your client, you save it as a package file or install it on the client's server. However, it often happens that you also have to take care of website maintenance, and this, of course, poses new challenges. Continuous project

development **entails the risk of a worse performance** and, if we're talking about an ecommerce, this can lead directly to a **revenue decrease**.

That's why it's so important to monitor the speed of your website and to pay special attention to your code and database. You have to remember that **every time you install a plugin, you have to do an analysis first**. Check if a new plugin is really necessary and how it affects the performance of your website. Of course, there is no way you can check this just by analyzing the plugin's code, so I recommend you to use these tools:

- website analysis, e.g. [Google Analytics](#), [Piwik PRO](#) (they allow you to measure, among others: the server response time, page loading speed, and other parameters connected to website speed),
- [Query Monitor plugin](#) – allows you to monitor database queries, for example, you can check which one is the slowest,
- [PageSpeed Insights](#) – an online tool for measuring the speed of specific website elements,
- [Pingdom](#) – monitors your website's performance and availability.

There are many more similar tools available on the market, so if you don't like the ones I have mentioned, you can definitely find a better alternative.

Summary

What should you pay attention to during your project? What tools will help you create a WooCommerce template? These are the main question I focused on in this article. Remember that to make your project successful, you have to know how to improve your workflow, template quality, and website maintenance.

REMEMBER

- *cooperating with a designer is very valuable because a good design leads to a good template,*
- *coding everything by yourself may be something to be proud of but don't reinvent the wheel – try adopting ready-made solutions,*
- *using different types of code debuggers will help you correct errors quickly and effectively,*
- *when possible, instead of modifying WooCommerce template files, use Filters and Actions – this will make website maintenance and updates much easier,*
- *if you're also in charge of website maintenance, monitor and measure its performance.*

 // **Grzegorz Pisarski** – WordPress developer and WooCommerce Jedi

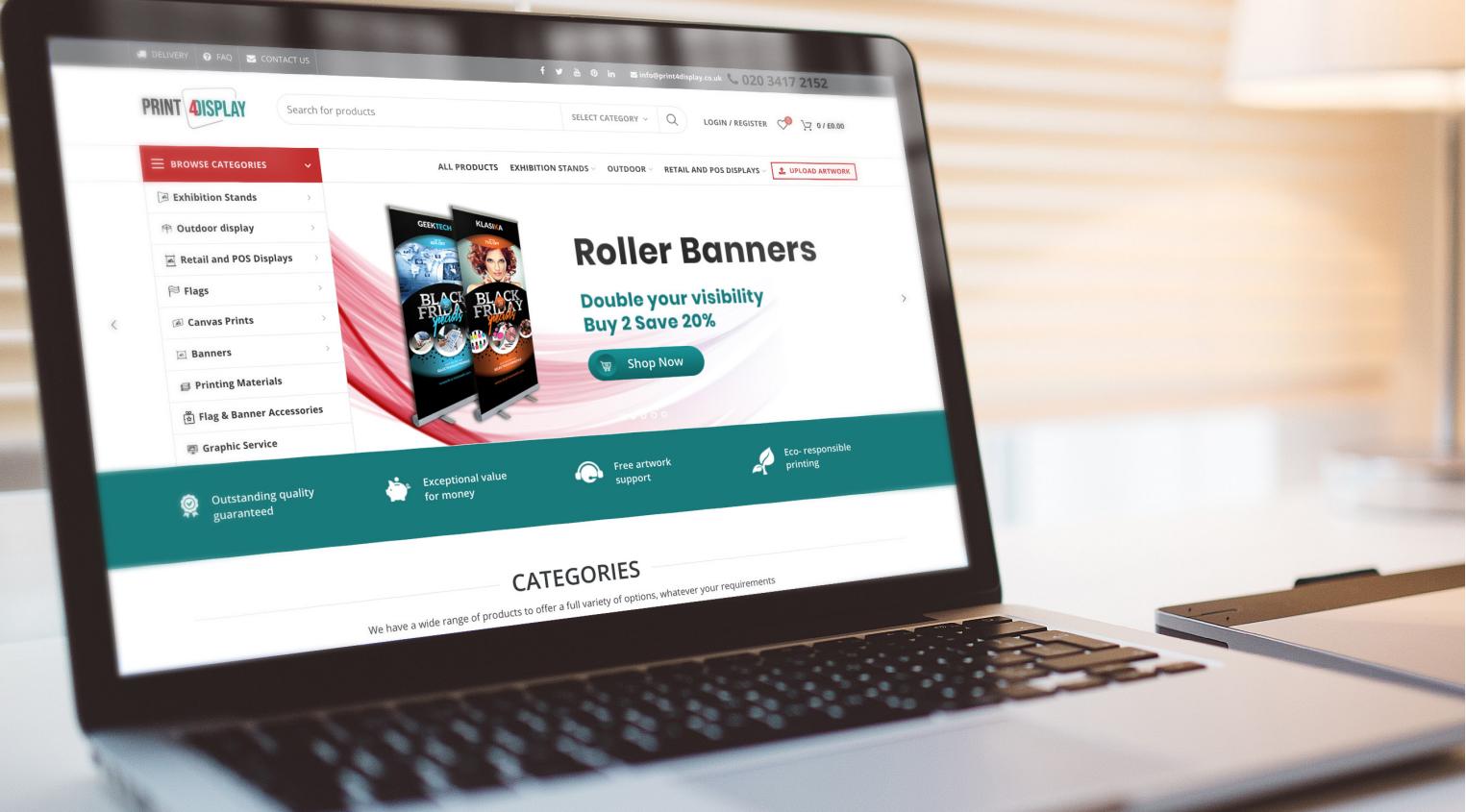
WordPress developer and WooCommerce Jedi. Since 2010, he coded more than 150 themes from scratch, and over 100 plugins that have never existed before. Addicted to family and coffee :)

mail: g.pisarski@webgp.pl



**Need help with your
WooCommerce platform?
Contact us!**





How We Customized WooCommerce with the Help of Plugins – the Case Study of print4display

Author: Anita Nowak

It sometimes happens that when building an online shop, you're not able to find the perfect theme that meets all your needs – both from the visual and functional perspective. Especially when the options you need go beyond the default possibilities of WooCommerce. So the best thing to do is to choose a theme that comes closest to your ideal page and to install appropriate extensions (plugins), which will enrich your website with custom functions. After all, your web service has to be unique.

From this article, you'll learn

- how plugins can help you optimize and customize your WooCommerce,
- what plugins were used while customizing print4display,
- how the Woo Custom Product Options (Premium) plugin helped in customizing the service,
- why the Flexible Shipping for WooCommerce plugin was the best choice,
- how the Custom Order Status for WooCommerce plugin was useful.

On the basis of a web service we've created, we'll show you how to customize WooCommerce with the help of plugins. Our shop (www.print4display.co.uk) was created using the WoodMart theme.

The website's purpose is to sell advertising material, such as banners, stands, etc. In its case, however, WooCommerce options were insufficient. We needed creative solutions in the shape of plugins (described below) and sometimes even additional lines of code.

Plugins we used during the web service customization, which extended default WooCommerce functions:

1. Price calculator of different product variants – [Uni Woo Custom Product Options \(Premium\)](#)
2. Shipping cost estimation based on the weight of products from the shopping cart – [Flexible Shipping for WooCommerce](#)
3. Creating your own order status – [Custom Order Status for WooCommerce](#).

1. Product Price Calculator

Because our shop offers a wide range of products and numerous possibilities of product modifications, one of the most important elements of the website is the price calculator of different product variants.

The basic plugin function allows to increase the number of possible product variants which sum up into the final price. To come up with the perfect solution, it was also important to enable clients to convert different units of measurement so that they could enter them in the most convenient way possible.

Home / Banners / Fabric Banners / Custom Printed Fabric Banner < >

Custom Printed Fabric Banner

£25.00
£30.00 inc. VAT

Custom - sized
 Full-colour digital print
 Numerous finishing available

MATERIAL *
115gsm Polyglans

FINISH *
Please select...

MEASUREMENTS
meters

WIDTH *

Fig. 1. Calculation of the product surface area based on different units of measurement (meters, centimeters, feet, and inches).

What's more, the product variants (such as width and height) chosen by the client had to fit within the measurement limits of a specific product. Therefore, the adopted solution not only had to have a price calculator but also had to offer the possibility to set appropriate validation rules.

MEASUREMENTS
meters

WIDTH *
5

Maximum printing width 5m wider banners hemmed together

Fig. 2. Validation of specific measurements entered into the form fields.

It was also necessary to customize the size of the main product photo so that it changed accordingly with the chosen product variant. This seemingly trivial option was the main cause of why we have rejected most free plugins.

Home / Banners / Fabric Banners / Custom Printed Fabric Banner < >

Custom Printed Fabric Banner

£25.00
£30.00 inc. VAT

Custom - sized
 Full-colour digital print
 Numerous finishing available

MATERIAL *
115gsm Polyglans

FINISH *
hemmed+eyelets evety meter

Fig. 3. Main photo resizing according to the chosen option (in this case FINISH: hemmed+eyelets evety meter).

Most plugins, however, didn't have any problems to multiply prices on the basis of a given variant.

In the case of print4display.co.uk, we used, among others, a price multiplier that changes depending on the shipping time. The shorter the shipping time is, the higher is the price multiplier and, consequently, the final product price. After reviewing available extensions and matching them with our requirements, it turned out that the best solution was the [Woo Custom Product Options \(Premium\) plugin](#).

Apart from requirements connected to price calculation, our final choice of the plugin was also influenced by:

- its compatibility with the newest WooCommerce version,
- web browser support,
- no contraindications for using the plugin with the chosen page template,
- product support offered by the plugin authors in the case of website errors caused by the extension.

After choosing the plugin, we moved on to the implementation. Unfortunately, in the case of these types of plugins, installation and basic configuration isn't enough. Apart from general rules connected to price calculation and the activation of the necessary plugin options, each product had to have a separate calculator formula that took different product variants into account.

It was a pleasure to work with this tool, as it opens up many customization possibilities. At the same time, it was challenging because we had to carefully read the plugin documentation and learn about the correct ways to use the extension before implementing calculators on given product pages. As to the option that allows for product image resizing according to chosen product variants, it was also necessary to have a basic knowledge of CSS selectors to indicate a specific "Settings" element responsible for displaying the image.

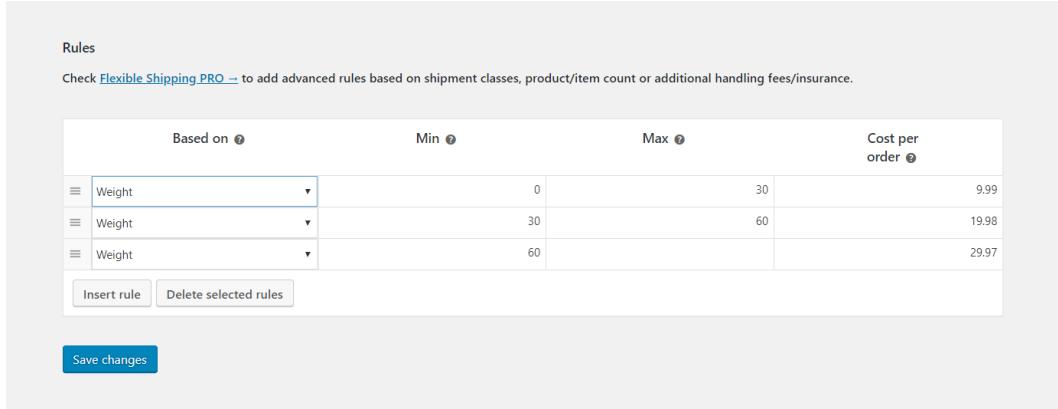
The plugin has inbuilt CSS styles that give it a default appearance. The last step was to add our own style sheets that would change the appearance of calculator elements to match them with the chosen WooCommerce theme.

2. Additional Shipping Cost Estimation Options

Another problem we had to face was connecting shipping costs with the product weight. The product weight was to be dependent on the options chosen on a given product page, for example, size or type of stand.

For this purpose, we also used the earlier discussed Uni Woo Custom Product Options (Premium) plugin. After setting all the rules connected to product weight, we started looking for the appropriate extension.

We chose the [Flexible Shipping for WooCommerce plugin](#) because it met our needs perfectly. It was easy to use and it matched the appropriate shipping cost in accordance with the weight of all products from the shopping cart.



The screenshot shows a table for defining shipping rules based on product weight. The table has columns for 'Based on', 'Min', 'Max', and 'Cost per order'. There are three rules listed:

Based on	Min	Max	Cost per order
Weight	0	30	9.99
Weight	30	60	19.98
Weight	60		29.97

Below the table are buttons for 'Insert rule' and 'Delete selected rules'. At the bottom is a 'Save changes' button.

Fig. 4. Settings of the additional shipping cost estimation that depend on product weight.

We chose this plugin not only because of good ratings but also because of ongoing technical support and regular updates, which can be useful if there later arises a need to create more advanced shipping methods. The Premium version of the plugin offers more options, among others:

- shipping classes support,
- shipping cost estimated on the basis of product item count and/or cart line item count,
- additional costs for price, weight, item, cart line item,
- stopping a rule (if the rule matches, the following rules are not calculated)
- cancelling a rule (if the rule doesn't match, the shipping method is turned off),
- additional ways of estimating costs (sum, lowest and highest cost),
- maximum shipping cost per shipping method,
- coupons support for free shipping,
- CSV export.

3. Custom Order Status

By default, WooCommerce has several order statuses that allow clients to track their packages, that is:

- Pending payment,
- Failed,
- Processing,
- Completed,

- On-Hold,
- Cancelled,
- Refunded.

The additional option that our website lacked was related to custom order statuses that would match with the order process. Since the shop sells also virtual products, we could set our own order statuses, like graphic image delivery and client's acceptance. For this purpose, we chose [Custom Order Status for WooCommerce](#). The plugin is easy to use and offers precisely what we needed – without any unnecessary options that would increase the weight of your website and slow it down.

wc-order-placed	Order placed	e011			Delete	Delete with fallback	Edit
wc-artwork-received	Artwork received	e011			Delete	Delete with fallback	Edit
wc-pdf-approved	PDF approved	e011			Delete	Delete with fallback	Edit
wc-under-production	Under production	e011			Delete	Delete with fallback	Edit
wc-dispatched	Dispatched	e011			Delete	Delete with fallback	Edit
wc-delivered	Delivered	e011			Delete	Delete with fallback	Edit

Fig. 5. Custom order status settings.

Summary

Using plugins to extend default WooCommerce functions is a great way to save time on writing codes by yourself. What's more, plugins usually don't require advanced technical knowledge. Remember that using different types of extensions may cause plugin conflicts, slow your page down, or affect its security. That's why, when choosing possible solutions, you should consider:

- the plugin quality, which is often reflected in user ratings,
- the amount of time that has passed since the recent plugin update,
- plugin versions that support WordPress and WooCommerce,
- the number of installations,
- if the plugin authors reply to problems reported by its users.

This, however, is only the tip of the iceberg. More problems may arise. It all depends on the complexity of your project and the customer's needs. If you have any questions regarding WooCommerce customization, we'd be happy to answer.



Anita Nowak – Web Developer at Cut2Code.com

Fueled by curiosity and passion for creating quality products. She started her IT career over 2 years ago. Since then, she's been working on various projects, gaining wide experience with creating modern websites. Her interest lies in front-end technologies, as well as CMS WordPress and ecommerce solutions. Crazy about constant development, she never stops learning. She diversifies her free time with piano sounds and carefree laughter.

mail: anita@cut2code.com



A Multilingual Ecommerce Store – New Language, New Opportunities

Author: Tomasz Ludward

A vision of a multilingual ecommerce website is tempting. It creates a string of associations, such as global clients, more sales, and better brand recognition. In theory, an extra language entails that you display the same products for audiences from different countries. But getting through to customers who speak a foreign language is just the beginning. When the roadblocks disappear, you reach the unknown. And since only 25.4% of the online traffic relies on English-speaking users, there is still a huge chunk of the Internet to explore.

From this article, you'll learn

- how to start with a multilingual ecommerce store,
- what plugins were used while customizing print4display,
- how to choose the best option for translating your website's content,
- how to avoid inconsistencies between content on your multilingual ecommerce,
- what you can do to make your multilingual service shine.

Where to Start?

Another language on your website will not twist your world around. It will not force your visitors to Google foreign terms in fear of losing a hot deal, either. If you own a WordPress website based on the WooCommerce extension, you can easily go through the entire process of adding multilingual support yourself. From a technological standpoint, it would require a dedicated plugin. I recommend using one of the two most popular extensions – WPML and Polylang.

Polylang works best for microsites and blogs. It is fast and light but requires paid add-ons to become an integral part of WooCommerce. In contrast to Polylang, WPML is addressed to tech-savvy users. At the same time, it receives decent support from online communities. Have a look at the way you add translations to your posts in WPML.

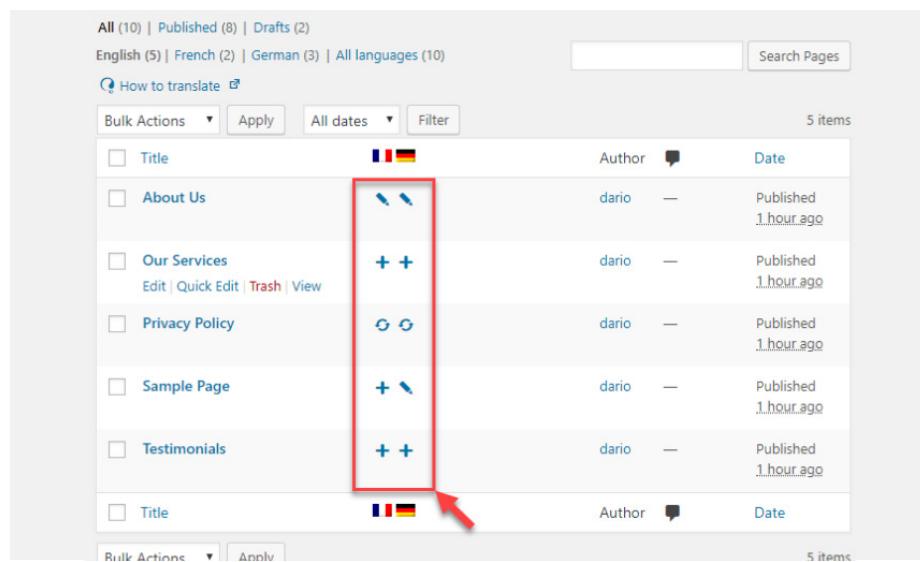


Fig. 1. Source: www.wpmi.org

To translate posts and pages, use the icons listed in the column marked red. Behind every icon there is an action. Once performed, the status of your translation changes. For example:

- The plus icon tells you that content is not translated. Feel free to add a new translation.
- The pencil icon signals that the content has been already translated.
- The “sync” icon means that the content has been translated but needs an update.

These two plugins, WPML and Polylang, translate strings of text in two slightly different fashions.

Picking the Best One

Choosing the best option for translating your content poses a challenge. The old-fashioned, yet the most reliable way, is to hire a professional. With his translations diligently done, you can get new product descriptions, portions of WordPress posts, categories, pages, and themes in whatever language you need.

Alternatively, you can leave it all to the Google machines and hope for good results. This is a low-profile solution that will save you more time and let you wrap other things up. But it poses a risk of your website falling behind with what helps it stand out of the crowd: valuable content. Because only a faithful copy will speak for your product, bring value, and convey the right message. Unfortunately, Google Translate may fail to reflect the accuracy of the original texts. It only gets worse if you choose to access a language that Google libraries have not yet managed to cover. That's why you should always make sure to double-check if all the texts have been translated correctly. To find out how Google carries out its translations nowadays, check this great [article](#) from *The Atlantic*.

Accuracy is the Key

Maintaining the selected language across the entire website is especially important for online stores. What makes them special is a fixed checkout process that usually consists of a number of subpages – each getting us closer to the purchase. Whether it's a product selection, shipping method, or a payment gate, every such a page should encourage visitors to make each next step until the successful end. In terms of translations, be sure that products keep their default names for every new language and that there are no inconsistencies between the visual elements of your website, such as buttons, sliders, and menus.

At a certain point, when you decide that the multilingual shift deserves even more attention, you can take some of your marketing actions offsite. Think about how different languages may keep your customers up to date with your offer. For example, you can communicate it via newsletters, banner ads, or chatbots. One great way to go the extra mile is to issue invoices in a language your clients prefer. This will create an impression that you aim at the best experience even after the project has been already submitted.

The same should, in fact, apply to any documentation around your orders. In the end, your message should say how important your clients are for you and your business.

Make Your Site Shine

Somewhere between all the texts and assets, the Google bots are hidden. No wonder that in the wake of the change, you might be a little concerned about the visibility of your site. To be better prepared against the search algorithms, pay your attention to:

- The WPML plugin, which pairs nicely with the Yoast plugin. This combination will let you translate breadcrumbs and SEO attributes, such as titles and meta descriptions. That comes in useful for product and category pages, in particular.
- As per Google recommendations, use different URLs for different languages and let Google know that your store uses more than one language, for example, by applying HTML tags and by using hreflang and sitemaps.
- Let your visitors easily switch between languages. A set of clickable flags visible in the navigation bar should be helpful.
- Optimize WooCommerce and WordPress by translating slugs as they typically contain search engine friendly keywords.

After you get results and hit high sales numbers, you probably do not bother to think of how WooCommerce can help you sell even more. That is why a new language can give grounds for a spectrum of new WooCommerce functionalities that you have not been aware of so far. For example, go and check out the Stripe extension, which lets your website access more payments methods. Add WooSubscriptions to accept monthly payments or take things a step further and build a membership area. There, you will build customer value and increase brand loyalty. Every such an upgrade unlocks new areas for successful copy and the strings of additional translations. So do not limit yourself. Instead, look for something extra.

Go Get it

Offering your products in multiple languages has great potential. With WooCommerce and an array of add-ons, the management of translating becomes a task anyone can manage. Even though the scenario of reaching a customer we yet know nothing about poses a risk, the whole process pays off really quickly. Because, in the end, if we believe in our product, our vision should overtake the challenge.



// **Tomasz Ludward** – Sales Manager at Cut2Code.com

More than 6 years of experience in working with global and local partners from the web development industry. He combines strong communication and project management skills that help him develop new opportunities and turn them into long-lasting relationships.
mail: tomasz@cut2code.com



WordPress. Plugins That Will Support the Development of Your Ecommerce

Author: Grzegorz Rogoziński

Just a few years ago, to create an online store, you had to have advanced programming knowledge. Nowadays, you can build a simple ecommerce in just a couple of hours thanks to CMS (Content Management System) platforms, such as Magento, Shopify, PrestaShop, or dedicated tools that can be added to your CMS, like WooCommerce or VirtueMart. What's more, most of these solutions allow you to expand the functions of your website with special plugins, which, depending on the platform you use, come in free or paid forms. Let's see what plugins will help you expand an online store built on WordPress and WooCommerce.

From this article, you'll learn

- how plugins can help you expand an online store built on WordPress and WooCommerce,
- why WordPress and WooCommerce are the best solution to build an ecommerce,
- what are the essential plugins from the perspective of business growth,
- what plugins can help you effectively communicate with your clients,
- how to improve the usability of your ecommerce using plugins.

Why WordPress and WooCommerce?



WordPress and WooCommerce are definitely the best option if you need a simple and intuitive CMS store, and if you don't want to invest a lot of money in its development. As wordpress.org states, **WooCommerce** has been downloaded over 4 million times. According to the BuiltWith report from February 2018, it is used by 0,6% of websites from all around the world, and by 3,7% of the top million web services.

The platform's success comes from thorough documentation, frequent updates, and a large community of developers engaged in publishing their own plugins. The combination of these three factors gives you stability and enables you to create a fully personalized ecommerce store.

If you want to develop and expand your online store, you have to consider the following factors: aesthetics, communication with clients, functions available for users, SEO (Search Engine Optimization), the speed with which the service works, and the ease of use of the administration panel. All these elements cannot be omitted because they contribute to the success of your store.

Improve your Business Efficiency in a Quick and Simple Way

Let's begin with the most essential plugin from the perspective of business growth. I cannot imagine running an ecommerce without an expansion that allows you to measure and analyze the customers' behavior on your shop.



With the **Enhanced Ecommerce Google Analytics Plugin for WooCommerce**, you can connect your ecommerce with Google Analytics in a simple way. Without the need to have any programming knowledge, the plugin allows you to monitor, among others: the number of subpage views of given categories and products, the volume of sales, and the status of the clients' shopping carts. Thanks to this knowledge, you can plan promotion actions in a more effective way and adjust the product assortment to the needs of your customers.



Because of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and Google's requirements to have SSL certificates, the **Really Simple SSL** plugin may turn out to be very useful. After just one click, it encrypts Internet connections on your website (on the condition that your hosting enables such a service). Not without a reason, the plugin has been downloaded over 1 million times. It quickly deals with the problem of mixed content. So, your website address will never lose its green padlock – the icon that informs users that your page is safe.

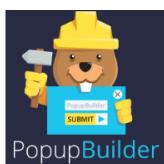


Another must-have plugin is **Yoast SEO**. It expands Wordpress' basic function connected to the management of subpage, post, and product metadata. Thanks to this plugin, you can configure OpenGraph information that will be displayed after you post a link to your store on social media channels. This will attract more customers who search for products using Internet browsers.

Effectively Communicate with Clients



A newsletter is an essential channel of communication in ecommerce. **Mailchimp** is one of the most popular solutions. The WooCommerce MailChimp plugin allows users to subscribe to your newsletter through a customized form. The only condition is that you need to have an active account on the MailChimp platform. The customers can subscribe to your newsletter during the purchase or after they have created an account on your store.



Messages about presents or discounts, displayed in a given moment of the client's visit, are equally important. On the basis of different sources, this form of communication increases sales conversion from 7% to even 12%.

Popup Builder – Responsive WordPress Pop up – Subscription &

Newsletter is a great plugin with which you can create your own pop-ups. In this type of communication, you can give your client a special offer, a discount, or ask him to leave his personal data for your newsletter. The plugin is also available in a premium version, so even the most demanding will be satisfied with its expanded features.



Another useful plugin is the WooCommerce **Product Slider**. It is simple in use and, at the same time, it is an advanced tool that allows you to create a slideshow containing your products. You can place it anywhere you want and personalize its visual style, harmonizing it with the layout of your store and improving your image in the customers' eyes.

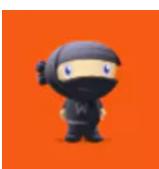
Improve the Usability of Your Ecommerce



With **YITH WooCommerce Social Login**, your customer can create an account and log into your store through one of the most popular social media channels: Facebook, Twitter or G+. Just one click and the system collects the buyer's data, allowing him to save time and improving his satisfaction. This plugin is a great solution not only because people prefer social logins to registration forms, but also because it automatically validates who stands behind a given account.



One of the best ways to improve the user's comfort is to install **Advanced AJAX Product Filters**. The plugin allows you to create dynamic search filters. With its free version, you can set filters for: the price, product category and its chosen characteristics. A major advantage of this tool is that it generates results in real time, so the page doesn't have to reload and the user doesn't have to waste his time on waiting.



The basic version of WooCommerce has an already preinstalled coupon system. If you want to go a step further and encourage your clients to return to your store, offer them a customer loyalty scheme. **SUMO Reward Points - WooCommerce Reward System** provides you with a system, where users can collect points and exchange them for discounts and products from your special offer. Points can be collected not only through a standard purchase but also if the user recommends your store to other people, likes your products, or writes a customer review. After logging into his account, the user can check the history of the collected and spent points and generate a referral link he can use to recommend your site.



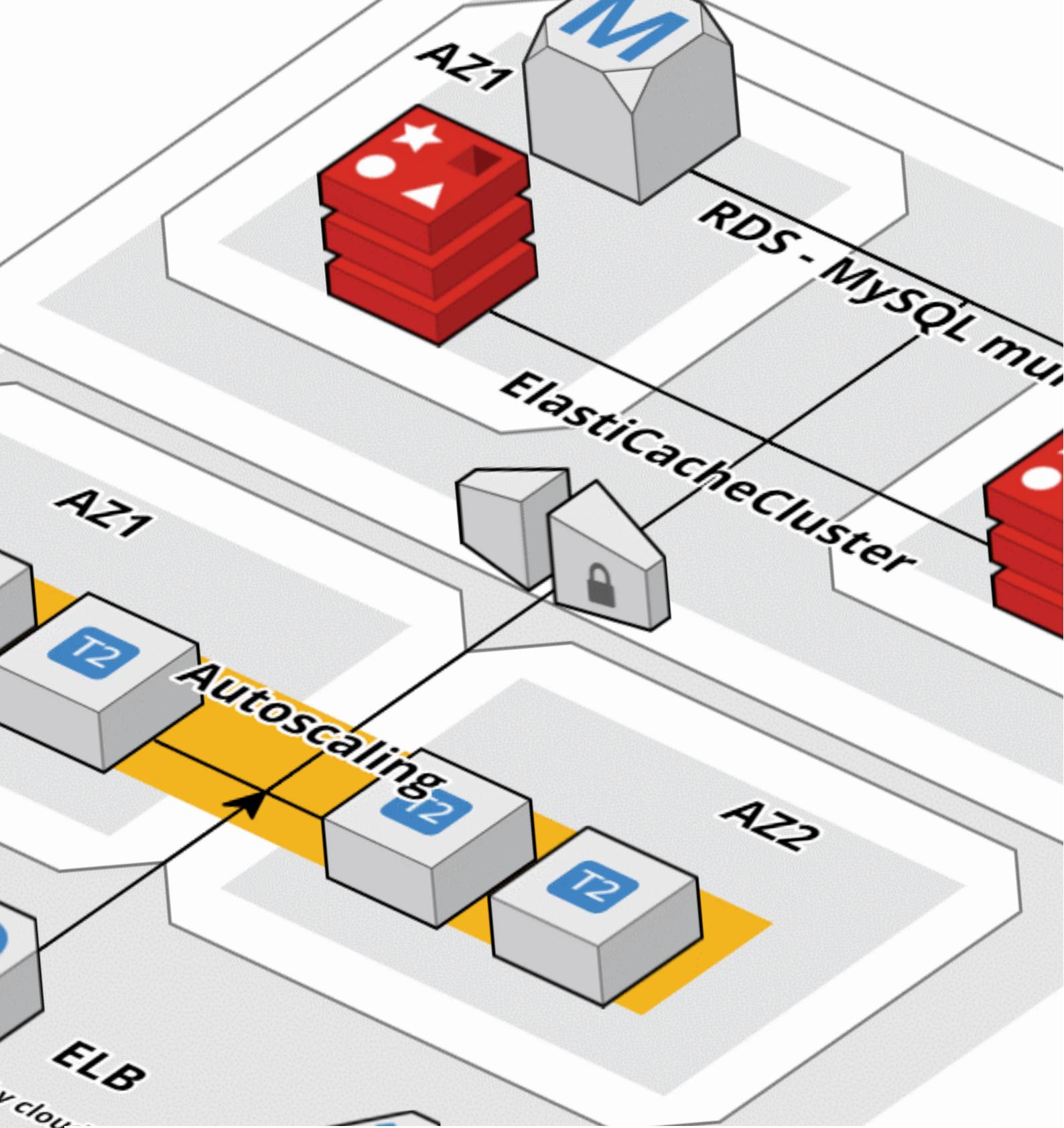
Another item that has to be on our list is a plugin designed for quick online payments, a must-have tool for any ecommerce. With **WooCommerce PayPal Gateway**, you can easily add PayPal payment options to your website and receive real time order status updates.



// **Grzegorz Rogoziński** – CEO of Cut2Code

The CEO of Cut2Code, a company that specializes in web development based on CMS platforms. He is a specialist with over 8 years of experience in digital business, and an expert in Magento and WordPress. He has worked with such agencies as Global4Net, Lemon Sky and JWT Poland.

mail: grzegorz@cut2code.com



How to Move an Online Store to AWS Cloud in 10 Steps

Author: Tomasz Dwornicki

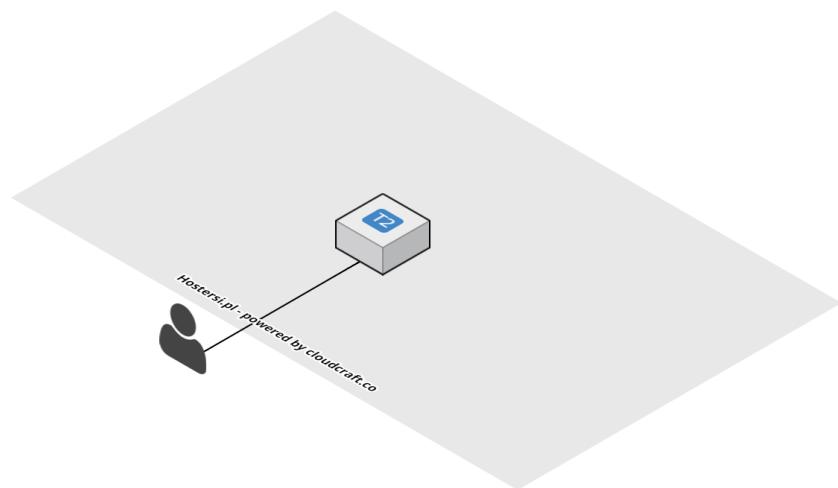
From this article, you'll learn

- how the cloud shrinks and grows to meet your needs,
- how to build a cloud infrastructure for an ecommerce,
- how your infrastructure can evolve on Amazon Web Services as your business grows,
- how much does it cost to move an online store to a cloud.

If you take your ecommerce business seriously, you have to keep in mind that any element of your infrastructure can fail. The promises of your service provider will always be empty if you don't completely secure yourself. Start with duplicating every element of your shop and keep your website backup in a different location than the original, so that it's ready to launch in case of a sudden malfunction. Another question is how to adapt your infrastructure to the server load, which is different for every shop. Thanks to cloud services, you can minimize business risks and, at the same time, flexibly optimize your resources on favorable terms.

You can start with limited resources and, as your business grows (or if you're ready to adapt your store to a cloud), add further elements. Thanks to this, your platform will be flexible, highly scalable, and secure from malfunctions. Let me illustrate this on the basis of one of the biggest IaaS cloud providers – Amazon Web Services.

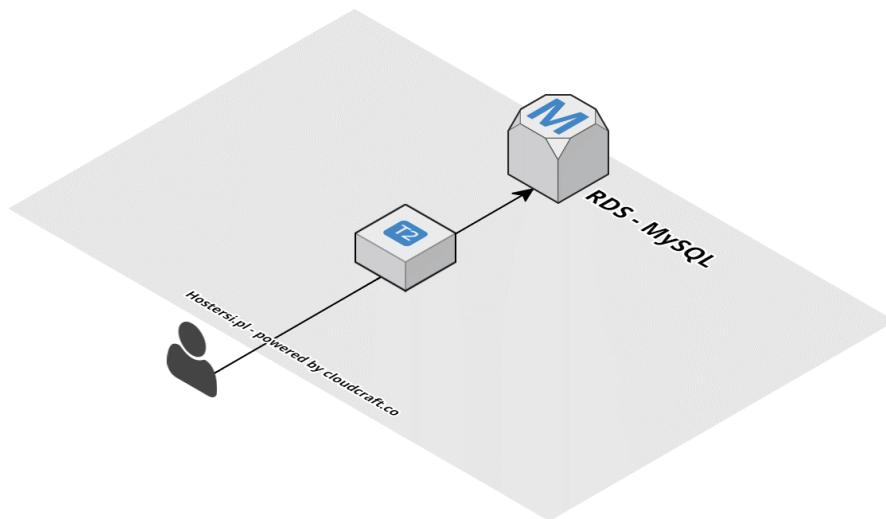
A Single AWS Instance – Step 1



An infrastructure is a reflection of one server or VPS (Virtual Private Server). With a single instance, you can benefit from moving your shop hosting to a cloud. At any moment, you can expand the resources of your instance, add more CPUs, cores, memory, or increase

your hard drive capacity. Your store won't be available for users for a couple of minutes, but you won't have to migrate, move, or copy anything, and you won't have to ask anybody for help. You'll save time and money because you can make changes any time you want, and you'll pay only for the resources you actually use.

A Single AWS Instance and a Database on RDS – Step 2

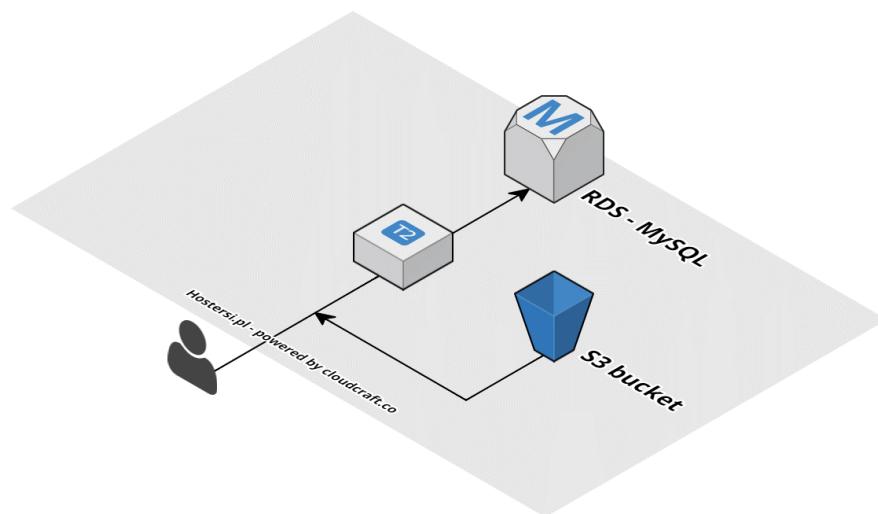


This is where you can really benefit from the advantages of cloud computing. To your single instance, add a database, which is available from Amazon RDS (Relational Database Service). You don't have to install MySQL, Postgres, or any other database system (like Amazon Aurora, Oracle, MSSQL, MariaDB). Pay attention to the database storage rate and data transfer, as RDS allows you to choose appropriate resources and scale them if necessary. What's more, you can easily make automatic backups and save them in a different location of your S3 bucket (a cloud storage for your files and folders). Only you have access to this bucket, so you don't have to worry that someone deletes your data.

The single instance acts as a server, connecting to the database via RDS, and together with a store app (for example, Magento or Prestashop), it provides functionality to your website.

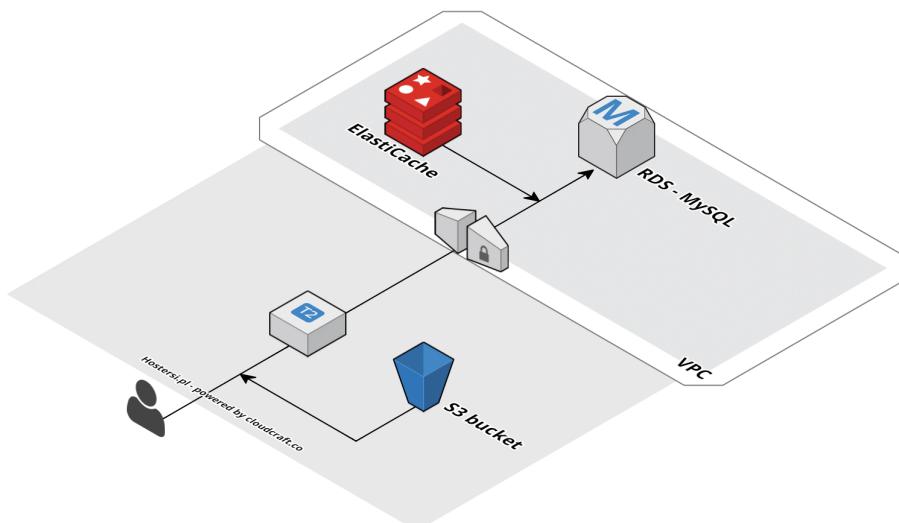
The database is like the busiest street on your online store, so you're able not only to divide the traffic into two places but also to diagnose problems, the server load, etc. Similarly, you can change your resources – separately for the EC2 instance (a virtual server for running applications) and for the RDS. So when you expect to have higher traffic in a specific period of time, you simply buy larger resources. You don't have to worry about paying for the infrastructure, even if it doesn't work for most of the year.

A Single AWS Instance, RDS, and Static Assets Stored in S3 – Step 3



If you save important data in more locations than a single instance, your store will be more scalable and you'll have more room to make changes in the infrastructure. You can accomplish this by moving your shop files to S3 (Amazon Simple Storage Service). This is the very essence of Amazon Web Services, the first ever service on a cloud, a place for your files that is easy to maintain and has no size and space limits. Besides its scalability, S3 is also characterized by exceptional redundancy and security. What's more, you don't have to make any reservations and worry about limits. The only things you pay for are the amount of data, data transfer, and the number of read/write files. AWS guarantees 99.9% file accessibility. On S3, you can save such files, as images and photos, while on the RDS database, you can store data connected to your shop, clients, and their purchase history. Your instance stores only your shop's code files, which can be uploaded anew at any time. If you reach the third step, scaling your web service on a cloud stands wide open.

A Single AWS Instance, RDS, Static Assets Stored in S3, and Amazon ElastiCache Sessions – Step 4



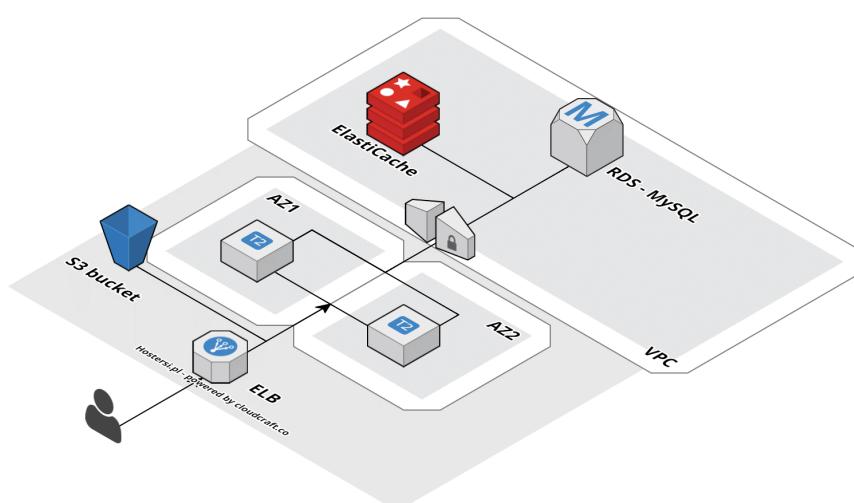
Let me introduce you to a stateless app, where, just like in the above example, data is stored in the database, files in S3, and user sessions...yeah, what about them? No web service can function without session data. Saving it on S3 is not necessarily a good choice if you care about your website performance. The perfect place is Redis (Remote Dictionary Server). But what if you lose data, change an instance, or reboot it? Well, the sessions disappear. The answer to this problem is Elasticache – something like an RDS, but with a Redis. Don't worry about resources, functionality, and accessibility. There is no server – you simply save your files on a given address and that's it!

We have truly reached perfection. Every element works independently within a given instance, that is, our server. And every element can be scaled and analyzed separately. A single AWS instance, an RDS, and static assets stored in S3 – it's like a VPC (Virtual Private Cloud) integrated with a VPN (Virtual Private Network).

Strengthening Security – Step 5

Now it's time to strengthen security. If we have all the data stored in AWS and only our instance has access to this data, it would be good if nothing besides the instance would have a public IP address directly accessible from the Internet. To access data, you have to connect to your instance. In this case, AWS offers a helpful solution: VPC (Virtual Private Cloud). It is a logically isolated section of the AWS Cloud, where our services work, including routing, private IP addresses (for example, the famous 192.168.x.x or 10..x.x.x), and subnetworks. All the services receive a private IP address, so you can access the infrastructure only through a VPN (Virtual Private Network). Don't worry, connecting to a VPN gateway isn't difficult, so your developer will definitely be able to access your data and work on developing your online store.

HA – Two Instances, an RDS Database, Files Stored in S3 – Step 6

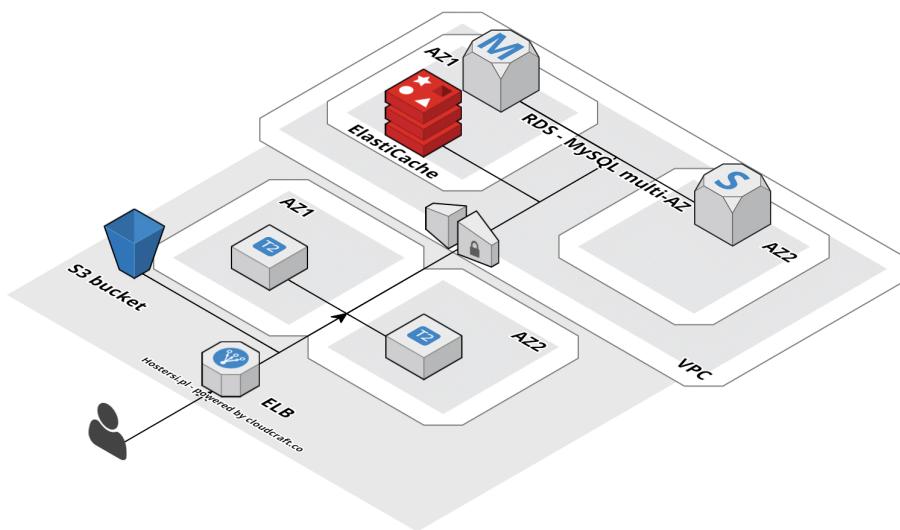


Everything is stateless and the VPN is secured. Your store works, sometimes you had to increase your resources permanently, sometimes only during a shopping frenzy. Now's the moment when we can truly appreciate the advantages of Amazon Web Services for ecommerce cloud hosting.

But it's also time to create a widely accessible environment and to increase the number of instances. This is usually the moment when new obstacles emerge. However, thanks to the stateless app, you can scale any element you want without making changes in the sole application.

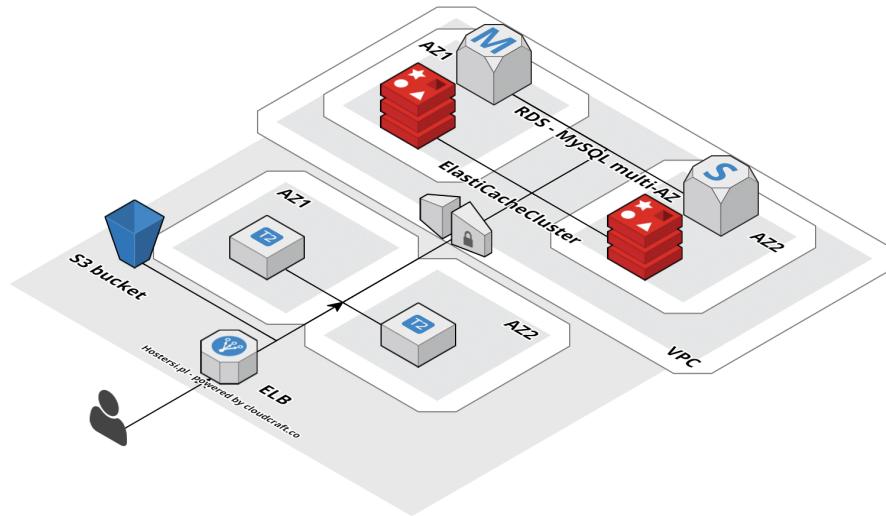
In all its geographic regions, AWS has at least two Availability Zones – data centers that are located far away from each other, have their own infrastructure and power but are connected together by a super-high-speed Internet connection. We can divide all Amazon Web Services between these (two or three) zones. Some services can be located manually, but some, like for example S3 or ELB (Elastic Load Balancing) are located this way by default. So, we add a second instance to our web service, and in its foreground, we have an ELB (or ALB) that handles your application traffic. By the way, we reach a higher level of security because now your instances don't have to have public IP addresses, only ELB has this obligation. Without access to the VPN, you can't even access an instance. No third parties pose danger to your business.

HA – Two Instances, RDS Multi A-Z, Files Stored in S3 – Step 7



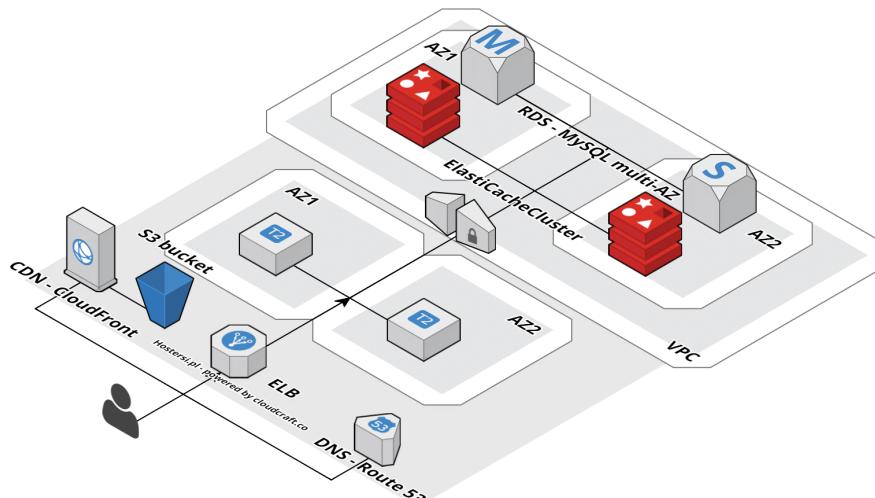
In the previous version, we gained server redundancy. Let's take care of the database. The RDS service is also available in a Multi A-Z deployment, which means that it can have its own copy in a second availability zone. This will not only save us from malfunctions, but it will also allow us to change RDS resources without causing our web service to stop working.

HA – Two Instances, RDS Multi A-Z, Files Stored in S3, Amazon ElastiCache Sessions with HA – Step 8



We're reaching the last step before HA (High Availability). The last thing we have to add to our stateless infrastructure are AWS ElastiCache sessions. This service is also available in a Multi A-Z version. After we configure the Redis cluster, we can freely scale ElastiCache without affecting the web service. Server redundancy not only protects you from malfunctions, but it also allows to update services, make changes in the configuration and resources without interfering in your ecommerce. From now on, you can sleep soundly. There is a low chance that your income source, that is, your online store, will stop working because of hosting problems.

Route 53 and Amazon CloudFront, a Content Delivery Network – Step 9

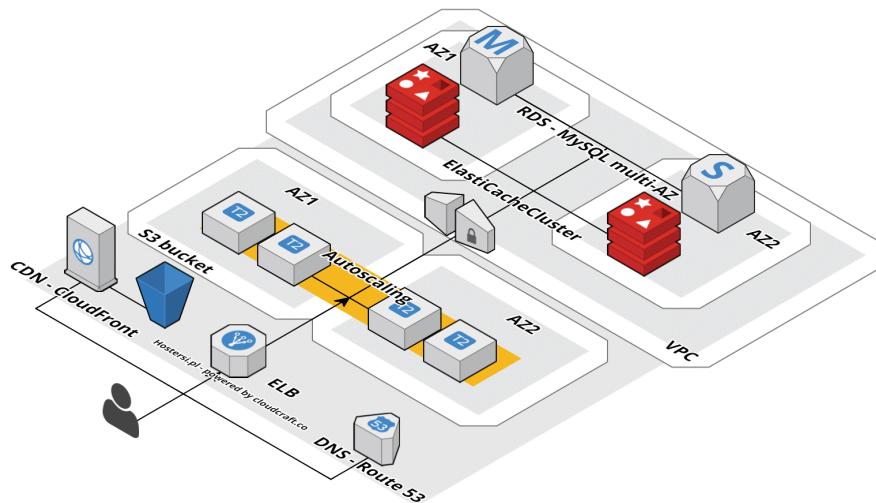


The infrastructure is very secure. There's very small chance that something will catch you off guard. But sometimes, web service failures may happen to appear where noone has

expected. Your clients will be able to connect to your server only on the condition that your DNS (Domain Name System) responds to their requests. Unfortunately, you won't be able to prevent DNS errors. In order to avoid this problem, I advise you to use Amazon Route 53. Not only can you entirely rely on your DNS, but you can also reduce the DNS server response time by locating the servers closer to your clients.

CloudFront, the second element, is intended to relieve the web service infrastructure and to make static assets load faster. The more your clients are scattered around the world, the more useful this tool will be. CloudFront is a content delivery network (CDN), something like a cache, which stores your active data or files and enables you to access them from its memory at a higher speed, without having to download the data from servers. Thanks to CloudFront, you'll be able to save time and money.

Let's Launch Autoscaling – Step 10



The server load fluctuates, depending on your website traffic. Normally, we buy hosting services where servers are "bored" for most of the time. But with your highly scalable infrastructure, this will never happen. AWS has special mechanisms that, on the basis of instance load, allow you to take specific actions. For the last 5 minutes, the server load reached over 65%. Run another server and connect it to a load balancer. That's not enough? Run another one. If you know that everyday between 6 and 11 PM the traffic is higher, add next instances in order to run them during this time period. You'll pay only for these 5 hours. If you're planning a special promotion for the upcoming week, run several additional instances manually. With a properly built stateless app and infrastructure based on AWS, the possibilities are endless.

What's more, you can often completely get rid of server resources and use only AWS. This allows you to build a serverless architecture.

How Much Does it Cost to Move an Online Store to a Cloud?

It all depends on the store. Assuming that you have 50GB of data, a 10GB database, and 100GB of data transfer, find out how much it will cost you to be safe from worries. For a larger infrastructure, I assume that you have 100GB of data, 500GB of data transfer, and a 25GB database.

Infrastructure variant	Monthly costs for a small shop	Monthly costs for a medium shop
A single AWS instance (c5)	\$63	\$152
A single AWS instance and a database on RDS	\$82	\$240
A single AWS instance, RDS, and static assets stored in S3	\$88	\$242
A single AWS instance, RDS, S3, and Amazon ElastiCache sessions	\$114	\$295
A single instance, RDS, S3 - VPC with a VPN	\$151	\$330
HA - two instances, RDS database, files stored in S3	\$225	\$365
HA - two instances, RDS Multi A-Z database, files stored in S3	\$249	\$453
HA - two instances, RDS Multi A-Z, S3, ElastiCache with HA	\$275	\$506

This is only an estimation because you can choose and combine different components. Sometimes the resources will be smaller, sometimes bigger. There are also plenty of methods used to reduce the costs of cloud computing (for example, the reservation of resources – using outside services such as CloudFlare, paid annually). But that's a topic for a whole other article.

 // **Tomasz Dwornicki** – CEO of Hostersi Sp. z o.o. (LLC)

A specialist with more than 10 years of experience in the field of web service and ecommerce performance, cloud migrations, and server architecture design. He created the first most popular Social Web websites, among others, fotosik.pl and sms.pl. Currently, he is in charge of Hostersi, a company that belongs to the “Top 15+ Cloud Computing Consultants in Poland” according to an analytics platform The Manifest, an Advanced Consulting Partner of Amazon Web Service.

mail: t.dwornicki@hostersi.pl



**Would you like to launch
your ecommerce store on
WooCommerce?
Let's do it together!**





poznaj nas

SOLIŚCI

How to Implement a Challenging Project Using WooCommerce – Solisci.pl Case Study

Author: Grzegorz Rogoziński

Solisci is a team of passionate travelers who organize tours to the furthest corners of the world. We prepared a new version of their website to meet a range of personalized requirements. The website was supposed to enable the owners to sell tours and, at the same time, manage processes related to travel organization inside their company. Up to now, the web service consisted of an informational page built on WordPress, which displayed travel offers and directed clients to an external form.

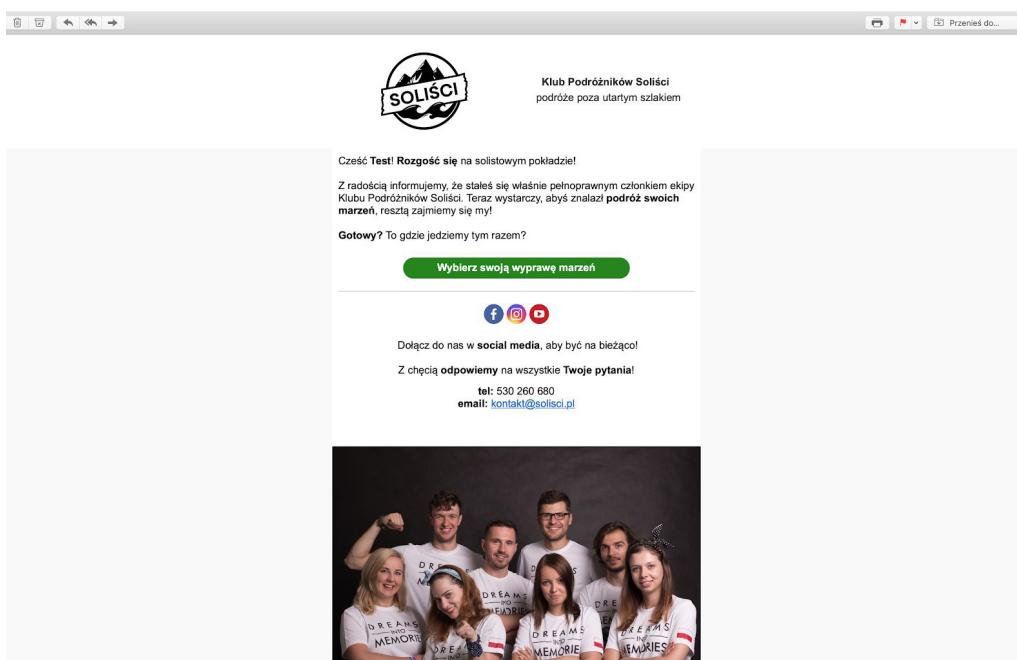
From this article, you'll learn

- what were the expectations of our client,
- what custom functionalities we had to implement,
- what we have used to meet the individual needs of our client.

New Website Requirements – The Details

To make it easy for users to buy tours, the new website had to have an ecommerce module and an option to pay by installments. It also had to provide customer service support to facilitate back-office work. Another goal was to automate processes that take place after users buy a tour – the collection of personal data to buy airline tickets, the generation of participant lists for tour leaders, and customer satisfaction surveys.

After an in-depth analysis of the technical specifications provided by our client, we decided to use WordPress expanded by the WooCommerce module, as both systems are very flexible and have ready-to-use components. It's also worth mentioning that the website graphics were created by a designer with whom our client collaborated.



Website Specifications – Different Types of Offered Products

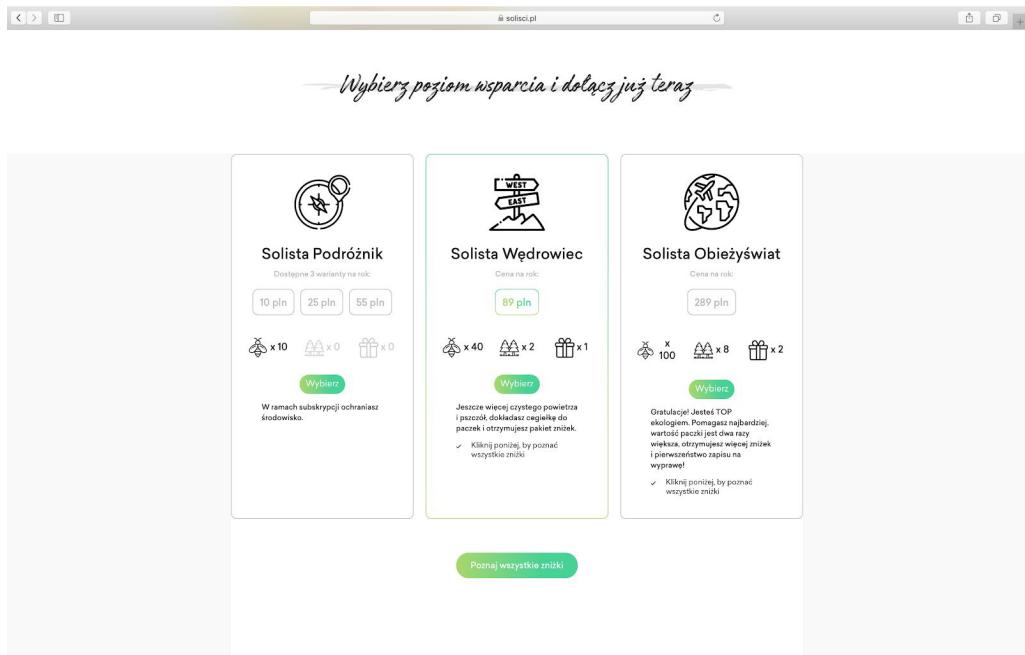
The web service offers 5 types of products, which, in different ways, influence the purchase process and the further operations that take place inside the system. On the online store, you can buy:

- a trip to an interesting destination;

- an airline ticket for the chosen tour – it's shown together with the tour price, yet, when your shopping cart is displayed, you can decide not to buy it. The number of installments and the overall price of the tour depends on whether you decide to purchase the airline ticket;
- various gadgets useful during excursions, e.g. sweatshirts, metal cups – standard products but in different colors, materials, or size variants;
- activities to enrich your travel, e.g. a diving course or glacier climbing – users can't buy them separately because they're additional options offered during specific tours;
- a club membership to join other travelers and support various social initiatives organized by Solisci.pl.

The relations between products are predefined, for example, you can buy a tour only if you have a club membership, and you can buy an airline ticket and additional activities only when you buy a tour because they're sold in a package.

All products are displayed on the website in different ways. This required building a complex hierarchy of product categories and coding additional templates to present products in a uniform graphic design.



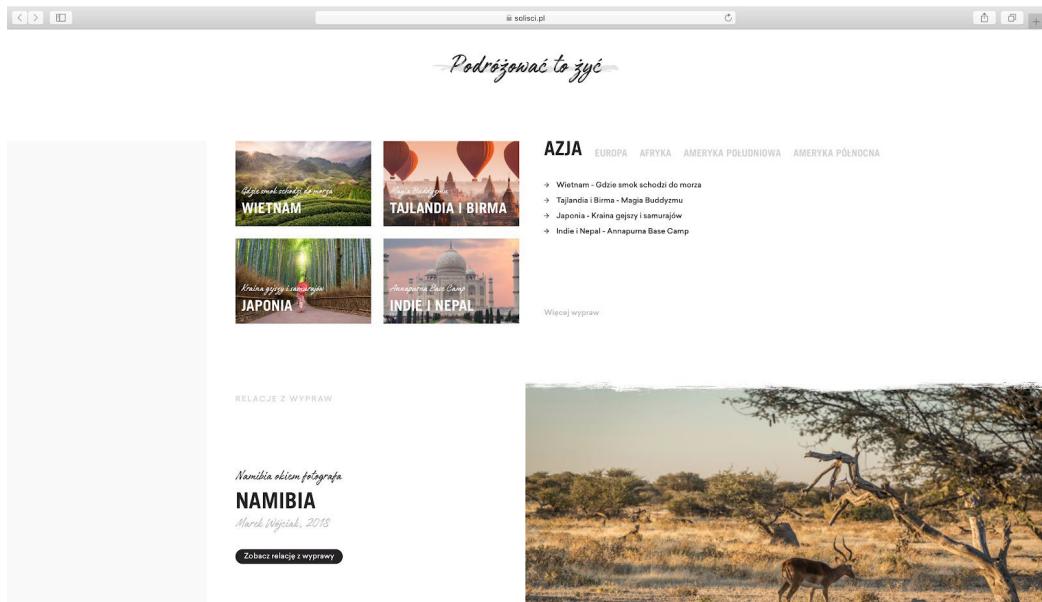
Fast Payments and The System of Installments

Fast online payments are a standard when it comes to shopping sites, but integrating a system of fast payments, having regard to payment by installments, is a whole different story :)

We connected Solisci.pl with a payment processor called tpay. The moment the user's payment is accounted, the website automatically informs the transaction system, which processes the payment and changes the user's order status. The installments, excluding

the tour price, depend on the time when the tour was purchased – the closer is the departure day, the higher is the price users have to pay in advance.

The tour operator offers maximum three payments and minimum one. If users buy in advance, they pay only for airline tickets and the next terms of payment are calculated based on the departure date.

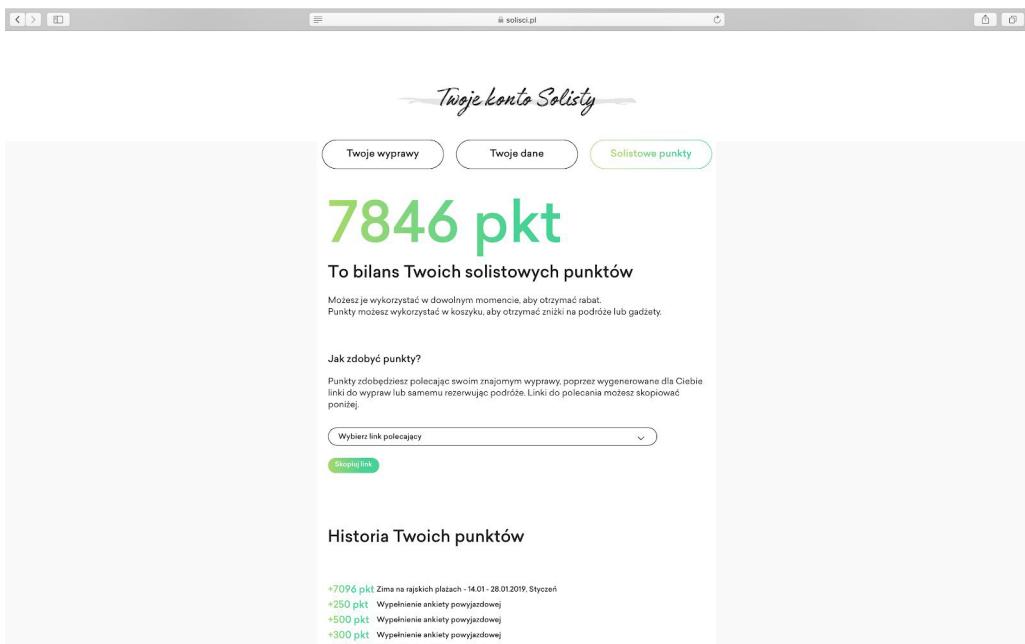


Additionally, tour agents can generate links for a surcharge at the request of clients, e.g. when they want a higher accommodation standard or are planning to take larger luggage. A few days before the flight, the system verifies whether all the payments have been made – including basic as well as additional payments. Only after all the payments have been credited to the account, the order is marked as “paid in full”, and the user can go on the trip of his lifetime.

Loyalty Program and Shopping Points

Solisci.pl also offers a loyalty program, thanks to which users can collect points for the tours, gadgets, and activities they purchase. The more users pay, the more points they gather. During their next shopping, users can exchange points for zlotys and thereby lower the price they need to pay. What's more, the website also enables travelers to become club ambassadors and earn points for their dream trip by using dedicated recommendation links.

Users can earn extra points for additional activities they carry out on the website, like filling out post-travel surveys. The time within a person signs up for a tour through a recommendation link, to the benefit of the person who sent that link, is one week. We use standard Transients API provided by the WordPress CMS platform to store data about tour offers and people who sent recommendation links.



Automatic Email Messages

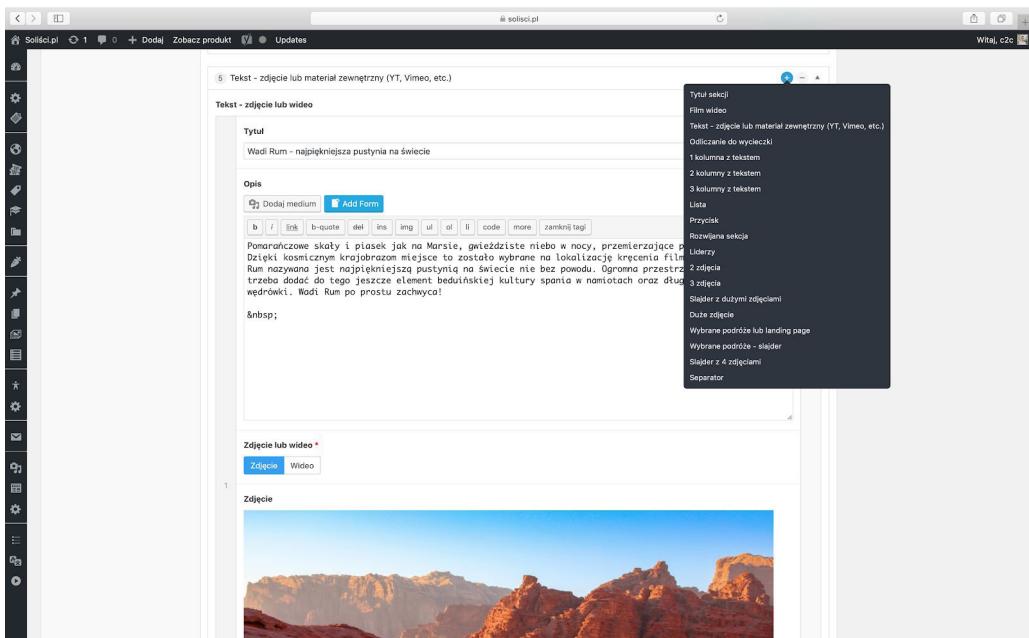
This was a nonstandard solution. We completely turned off sending email messages from the website's server and moved them to an external CRM, which is responsible for storing user data, analyzing activity on the website, sending marketing campaigns and customized personal messages.

On the basis of events the website sends through its API, email messages are automatically generated – they notify users about changes in their order status, when they're added to the list of participants, or remind about upcoming payment deadlines. The website "feeds" the CRM system with the necessary information, which, after conversion, is used in email templates.

Thanks to this, users can easily find payment links, the tour leader's surname, or even information on the amount of cash that will be needed during the trip. The integration also enables the automatic exchange of data about newly registered website users.

Modular Page Design System

With the help of ACF tools (Advanced Custom Fields, which let you easily create and manage your meta fields), we built a system that enables the modular design of content and product web pages. With a rich array of over 20 different components, the website administrator can create eye-catching subpages without having to stick to predefined templates.



Thanks to this, the company gained the possibility to add standard text blocks in various column variants, photo galleries, carousels with photos of tour leaders, blog posts, a travel route, a module that suggests other travel destinations, and much more. Another advantage of this solution is a limited amount of code as well as libraries and assets used to build subpages, which increases the web service loading speed. This gives a massive advantage over commonly used page builders that increase system load and generate deeply nested code.

A Customizable Generator of Contracts

Because of the formal requirements imposed on operators of group tours, we needed to create an automatic contract generator based on the personal data provided by users and the details of the tour they chose.

During the purchase process, appropriate documents are generated twice and then sent to users in an email. Of course, the files are encrypted and secured with a strong password. What's interesting is that the data used to generate these documents varies depending on the purchased tour. We made this possible by using custom meta fields and additional taxonomies.

The Solisci team has full control over the content and design of the contract and over the data that is downloaded from the system. The admin panel has a special section with a WYSIWYG (What You See is What You Get) editor, with which it's possible to modify content and use dynamic variables that reflect actual data during the generation of pdf. files.

Integration With a Flight Search Engine – SkyScanner

The people responsible for preparing tour offers and purchasing flight tickets gained access to a tool that lets them track the price and availability of plane tickets on chosen flight routes.

Without having to leave the WordPress admin panel, they can set alerts on specific flights, which will activate the moment they fulfill the price criteria. The current prices of tickets can be imported to a tour offer with just a single click. Thanks to CRON (which is used to schedule jobs to run periodically at fixed times) and the integration with SkyScanner through the website API, Solisci can save a lot of time on everyday travel planning.

Automatic Notifications System – Increased Conversion

Just like in the case of other travel and accommodation websites, one of the most important interface elements that attract customers are all sorts of notifications that pop on the corner of your screen and tell you how many people are currently viewing an offer or how many bookings have been made in the past 24 h. Not only do such statistics make the offer more attractive but also add an element of urgency that effectively encourages hesitant people to make quicker decisions.



Users who decide to add a trip to the shopping cart but don't move on to the payment system are tagged as "abandoned shopping carts". In the course of the next few days, the system will automatically send them an email to encourage them to complete their purchase.

Those who didn't manage to sign up for a trip before it has reached the maximum number of available spots, can sign up for a reserve list and receive automatic notifications whenever someone resigns or when the registration opens again.

The screenshot shows a travel booking interface. At the top, a sidebar lists packages: "Jordan Pass ok. 380 zł", "Wyżywienia (oprócz śniadani i sylwestrowej kolacji, które są w cenie)", and "Atrakcji fakultatywnych: nurkowanie lub snorkeling w Akabie". The main area features a banner "Wybierz termin i leć z nami!". Below it, a section titled "LOT: WILNO" lists four packages with the following details:

Od	Do	Lider	Cena wycieczki	Cena lotu
27 XII 2019	03 I 2020	Solistowy Lider	3400 pln	900 pln
OPCJA: 8 DNI				
27 XII 2019	03 I 2020	Marek Wójciak	3400 pln	700 pln
Brak miejsc zaloguj się, aby dołączyć do listy rezerwowej				
27 XII 2019	03 I 2020	Marcin Gładala	3400 pln	700 pln
Brak miejsc zaloguj się, aby dołączyć do listy rezerwowej				
27 XII 2019	03 I 2020	Agnieszka Zalewska	3400 pln	700 pln
Brak miejsc zaloguj się, aby dołączyć do listy rezerwowej				
27 XII 2019	03 I 2020	Kamil Skoczyński	3400 pln	700 pln
Brak miejsc zaloguj się, aby dołączyć do listy rezerwowej				
LOT: WILNO				
30 XII 2019	06 I 2020	Solistowy Lider	3400 pln	900 pln
LOT: KRAKÓW				
30 XII 2019	06 I 2020	Solistowy Lider	3400 pln	1100 pln
LOT: WARSZAWA				
30 XII 2019	06 I 2020	Ewa Jarzewska	3400 pln	1100 pln
Brak miejsc zaloguj się, aby dołączyć do listy rezerwowej				
Zapisz się				

Solisci.pl – Successfully Completed Project

To sum up, the new version of Solisci.pl was entirely built based on WordPress and WooCommerce, with numerous modifications and customized solutions.

We also created a content section to provide articles on interesting travel destinations and stories from previous travels. The main part of the website is the platform dedicated to selling tours, additional activities, and gadgets.

Thanks to partial automation, travel management processes are faster and less involving for tour operators. Our implementation proves that WordPress and WooCommerce are very flexible tools that allow building complex ecommerce platforms and that the only limits can be set by the designer's imagination and the client's budget.

// Grzegorz Rogoziński – CEO of Cut2Code

The CEO of Cut2Code, a company that specializes in web development based on CMS platforms. He is a specialist with over 8 years of experience in digital business, and an expert in Magento and WordPress. He has worked with such agencies as Global4Net, Lemon Sky and JWT Poland.

mail: grzegorz@cut2code.com





Google Analytics for Ecommerce – Get to Know Your Customer

Author: Hexe Data

During the last week, my website was visited by 17 thousand people, generating 20 thousand sessions and 92 thousand pageviews. The average session duration was 3 minutes... But what does that mean? Keeping statistics is essential for running an online business, however, the key to success is how you use this information to generate profit. This is where Google Analytics comes into play. But do you really know how to use this tool to grow your ecommerce business? We'll show you what you should pay attention to when it comes to customer statistics and obtaining valuable information for your company.

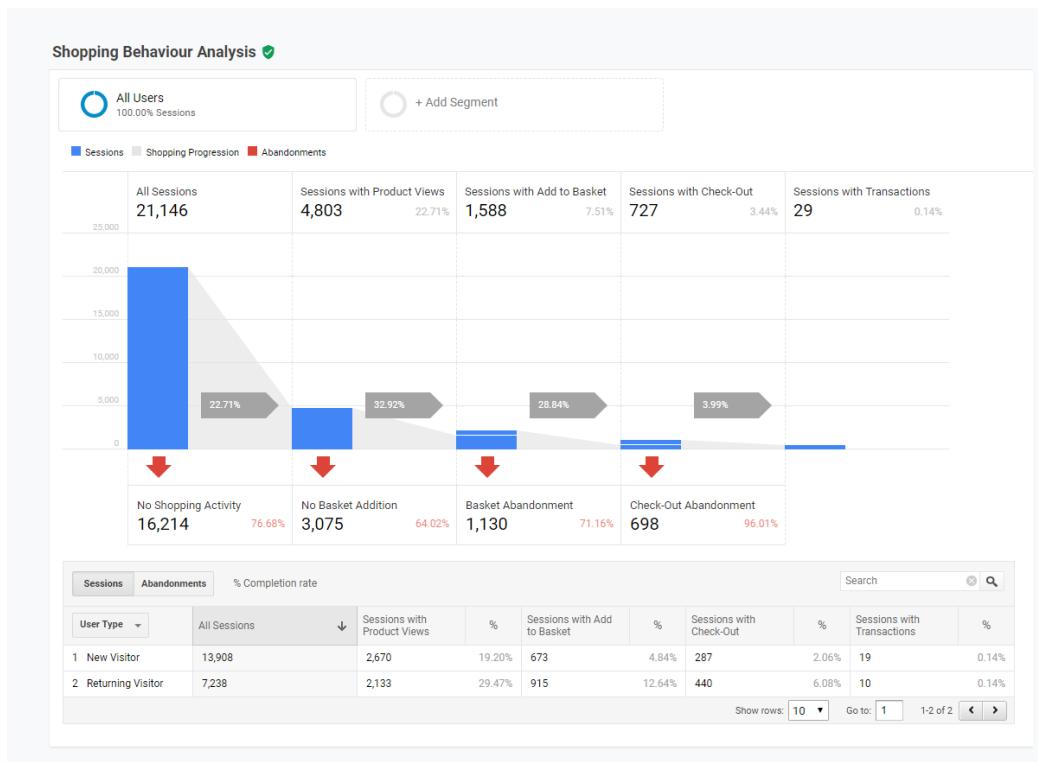
From this article, you'll learn

- how to implement Enhanced Ecommerce and why you should do it,
- how you can conduct a Shopping Behaviour Analysis for your service,
- what to pay attention to while analyzing product performance,
- how multi-channel funnels can help you determine what ad campaigns contributed to your sales and conversions.

Google responds to the expectations of the ecommerce industry. It provides you with Enhanced Ecommerce tools that allow you to learn about your customers. To make full use of Google Analytics, you have to know how to implement it. With WooCommerce, the implementation is much easier than in the case of other platforms. Basically, all you need to do is to install a dedicated WooCommerce plugin and activate the “Enhanced Ecommerce” option.

Behavior Analysis – How do Clients Behave on My Website?

Where does the treasure trove of information hide? Go to the Google Analytics Dashboard, click on “Conversions”, then “Ecommerce”, and finally, go to “Shopping Behaviour Analysis”. Google will show you, in a simple graphic form, how your customers behave on your website during different stages of the transaction process and, most importantly, how often they abandon your page.



“Shopping Behaviour Analysis”.

Source: Google Analytics, Google Merchandise Store (Public Data Set), Nov. 27, 2018.

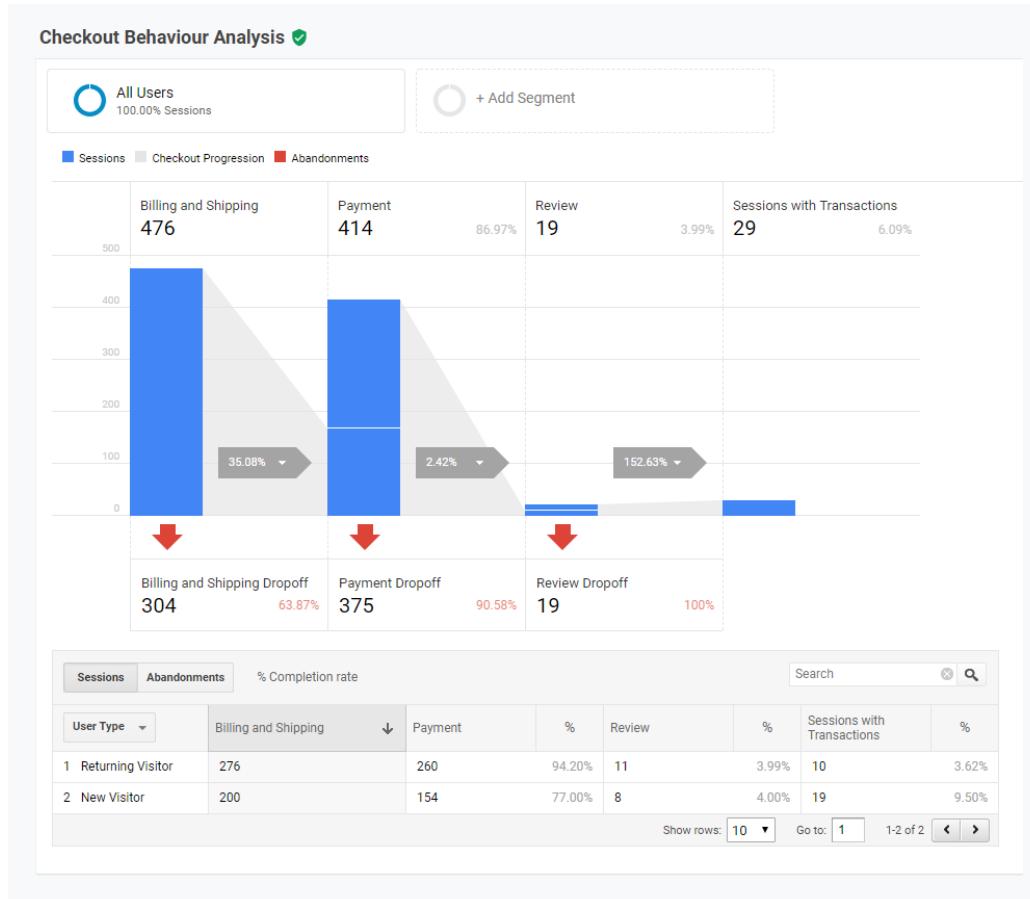
★ ADVICE

Remember that you define specific checkout stages by yourself. This allows you to personalize the Google Analytics report and adjust it to the structure of your website. Also, I advise you to segment your clients because you'll be able to compare different customer groups and their behavior.

Pay attention to the number of clients you lose during specific transaction stages and find out what causes page abandonment. Consider answering the following questions:

- **Why did ¾ of your clients' sessions end without product views?** Maybe it's because of low-quality photos or unconvincing product descriptions. It may also be the fault of improper ad campaign configuration, since the traffic you have generated is of low quality, meaning that your clients have no purchase intention.
- **Why did only 4% of Check-Out sessions end with a purchase?** Maybe there are errors or the Check-Out process doesn't follow the basic UX principles? Also, find out if the payment methods, delivery options, etc. are convenient for your clients.

If your checkout process consists of different stages, use "Checkout Behaviour Analysis" and, in line with the example above, find out why customers behave the way they do.



"Checkout Behaviour Analysis"

Source: Google Analytics, Google Merchandise Store (Public Data Set), Nov. 27, 2018.

Remember that you define specific checkout stages by yourself. This allows you to personalize the Google Analytics report and adjust it to the structure of your website. Also, I advise you to segment your clients because you'll be able to compare different customer groups and their behavior.

Product Performance – Does My Product Generate Profits?

You already know how clients behave during different stages of the purchase path. Thanks to this, you're able to find out how to improve the structure of your online store.

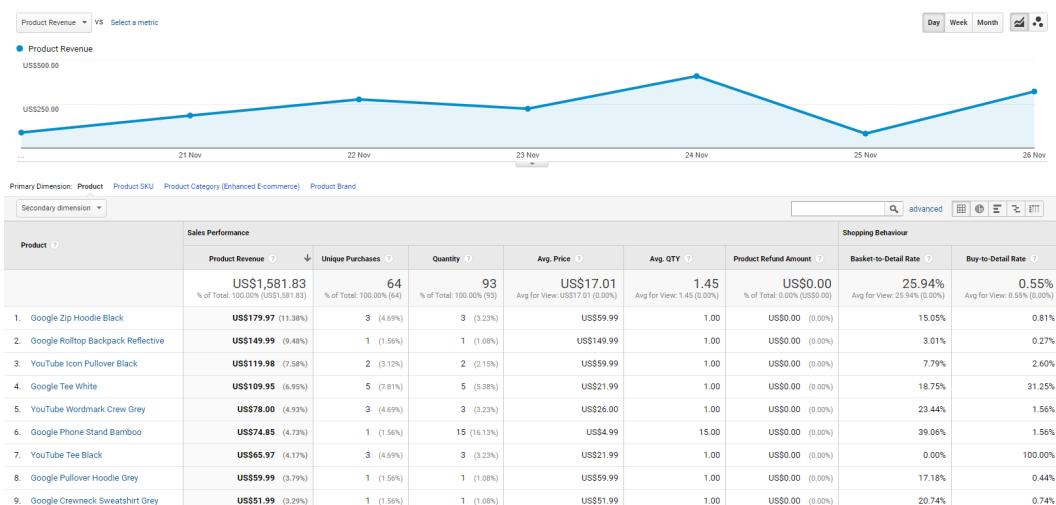
However, the foundation of your business is not the store itself, but the products you offer. With the help of advanced ecommerce analytics, you can monitor what products are popular, sold the most, and which ones don't generate profits.

Product Performance is a valuable tool because it shows how much income a specific product generates and, most importantly, how popular it is amongst site visitors.

Remember that the profit is estimated by multiplying the average product price by the number of sold products. It's important that you pay special attention to these statistics:

- Cart to detail rate – how many times clients see a given product and add it to a cart,
- Buy to detail rate – how many times clients see a given product and buy it.

Again, the numbers themselves won't give you much information. Just as in the case of "Shopping Behaviour Analysis", look at those numbers that don't satisfy you. Find the causes of poor product performance and improve your offer. A low Basket to detail rate can tell you, for example, that the product price is too high or that you offer too little product colors or sizes.



"Product Performance"

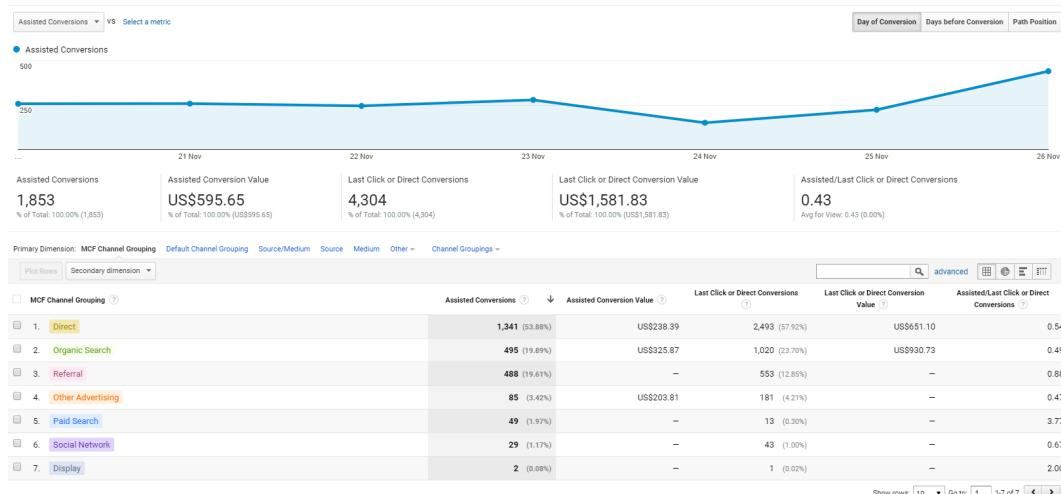
Source: Google Analytics, Google Merchandise Store (Public Data Set), Nov. 27, 2018.

You can not only analyze the performance of specific products but also different product categories. Thanks to this, you can check summary statistics and find how they correlate with the current market trends, year season, or specific marketing campaign.

Multi-Channel Funnels – What Ad Campaigns Contribute to My Sales?

Running an online store usually requires being active on social media and managing email campaigns. Therefore, your client may visit your store by clicking on a Facebook link, email link, or he may also go to your website directly. When did he make a purchase? Let's assume that during his third visit, that is, by clicking on an email link. Did just your email campaign lead to the client's purchase? The answer is no. The client had looked at your products before.

Thanks to Multi-Channel Funnels, you're able to determine what ad campaigns have contributed to your sales and conversions. You can see what channels initiated (in our example, this would be Facebook), assisted (direct visit), and completed conversions (clicking on the email link). Look closely at the channels that raise customer brand awareness because they lead to sales. This knowledge will help you optimize your ad campaigns and focus on channels that have true potential.



“Assisted Conversions”

Source: Google Analytics, Google Merchandise Store (Public Data Set), Nov. 27, 2018.

You'll also find valuable information in “Top Paths” that show you what paths (e.g. organic search, paid search, social media, email newsletters) lead clients to the goal conversion. This is an amazing tool when it comes to measuring the effectiveness of marketing activities. For example, you can see at what point of the conversion path your client clicked on a display ad. Thanks to this, you'll learn how many times a given banner ad is displayed but doesn't generate clicks and lead to conversion. Does the ad play an important role in encouraging your client to buy your product? If no, then maybe you should focus on other channels that have the potential of generating more profits?

Multi-Channel Funnels “Time Lag Reports” tell you how many days it took a site visitor to convert, while “Path Length” reports on how many times a user interacted with a given channel prior to completing a transaction (converting). This will help you measure not only the effectiveness of your online campaigns but also how fast they lead to conversions. If your store is new and your goal is to raise brand awareness, then the amount of time it takes for a customer to make a purchase will naturally be longer. Notice that there is a positive correlation between “Time Lag Reports” and “Path Length”, which means that the quicker it takes a client from an initial interaction to conversion, the shorter is the conversion path.

Always Strive for More

Implementing the Extended Ecommerce module is, in the case of most platforms, quite complicated. Fortunately, it's not so difficult when you use WordPress together with WooCommerce – installing appropriate plugins allows you to integrate Google Analytics with the ecommerce module. The combination of these tools takes analytics to a whole new level. If you configure them properly, they will help you understand your customers and find the weaknesses of your store. Spend some time on analyzing Google Analytics reports and you'll notice recurring statistical patterns. This, in turn, will allow you to optimize your marketing strategy and, consequently, increase revenue. Who knows, maybe this will turn out to be your most profitable investment?

Remember that you're not alone – in the case of any doubts or problems, you can contact companies that specialize in data analytics. They will not only ensure comprehensive implementation but also teach you how to unlock the full potential of Google Analytics. You'll save time, avoid mistakes, and frustrating situations. Of course, it's always worth using Google Analytics on your own but if you don't have time to do that, ask a professional agency for help. This may turn out to be the right decision, especially if you want to attract more clients and grow your business.

Hexe Data

Hexe Data exists to help you push your business forward and improve its performance. We implement analytical solutions and provide reliable data analysis and data visualizations. Our mission is to show you how to extract real value from your data. We believe that knowledge based on real-time and easily understandable data is the basis for making strategic decisions. We point the way and enhance development, so that you could see solutions through the prism of data.

mail: hello@hexedata.com



5 Steps to Creating Effective Banner Ads in Ecommerce

Author: Anna Świątkowska

Display ads are one of the most popular selling tools in ecommerce. If you want them to be effective, knowing basic design rules won't be enough. How to create web banners that not only get a lot of clicks but also generate profits?

From this article, you'll learn

- how does the display advertising market look like,
- how to make an effective banner ad step-by-step,
- what is the F-Shaped Reading Pattern,
- why it's worth using a heatmap.

Meet the Market Demands

Even though the past year was challenging for traditional banner ads, the expenditure on display advertising is not going down [AG1]. On the one hand, marketing specialists are looking for a safe environment for their brands.

On the other hand, the Coalition for Better Ads (an international coalition between companies and trade associations involved in online advertising, including such a big name as Google, the owner of the Chrome Web Browser) has introduced a list of banned display formats. The list includes the so-called “intrusive forms”, that is, prestitial (covering the whole website screen) countdown ads as well as some mobile ads.

The formed coalition, or rather a “fear” that the Chrome browser will start blocking the banned formats, forced publishers to make changes in their offers. From February 2018, no longer can they use display formats from the blacklist.

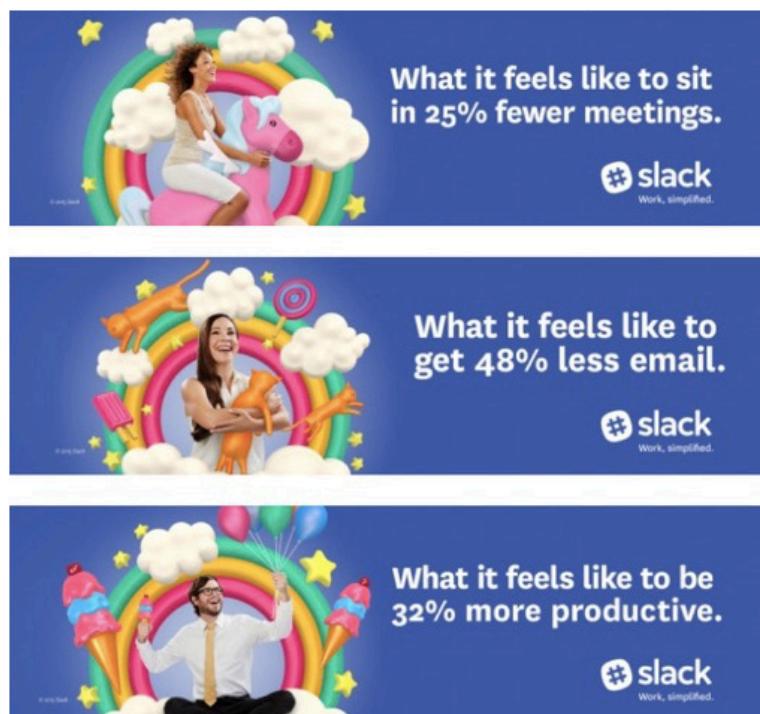


Figure 1. Slack B2B banners

Source: slack.com

The goal of these changes is to improve adblocking and the customers' experience with online advertising. Thanks to the introduction of new display standards, marketers also have new issues to discuss. For example, the new payment method called viewabilling (paying for seeing a displayed ad, that is, it's viewability). Specialists talk a lot about this measurement method, listing the best places (placements) to make your ad stand out. However, this begs the question if you can achieve results and increase your conversion rate just by booking an ad space? The answer is not clear.

The time users spend to absorb information from the Internet constantly changes. Not so long ago, marketers had 8 seconds to catch the recipients' attention. But now, in the case of mobile users, it's only 2 seconds. The situation gets more serious when we also consider the phenomenon of banner blindness. That's why we advise you to design a communication strategy that will grab the users' attention, make them interested in your offer and, consequently, prompt their response.

What Should You Remember About?

1. Work Out the Details of Your Project

Decide on the maximum file size, preferably before you even start your design. Check the technical specifications and file size limits of different publishers.

★ ADVICE

Google Display Network allows to upload even 150 Kb files, however, most web services don't accept such large sizes. Always make sure to check the file size parameters at the beginning of your work. Otherwise, after compressing your image to the proper size, you risk that your design will lose its pixel-perfect quality and won't meet the publisher's technical specifications.

It's also worth deciding on the format of your image – whether it will be static (.jpg, .png) or dynamic (html). The first version of your design will be displayed in one unanimated version. But if we're talking about html, there is room for more possibilities because your image automatically changes. Of course, if you choose such a format, don't exaggerate with animation effects and create maximum two different display versions of your dynamic banner.

2. Pay Attention to Composition

Thanks to the creation of a master banner, mastering composition is a piece of cake. A master banner is an output format that offers a wide variety of elements used in sales communication: a graphic or photo, your message, slogan, and call to action (Figure 2.). It serves as the basis for other banner resizes. The most commonly used master banner comes in a horizontal layout and the size of 750×200 pixels.



Figure 2. Master banner anatomy – the model banner ad design
Source: DOTPartners.pl

When you work on your composition, that is, the way texts and images are arranged on your banner, it's worth implementing the F-Shaped Pattern of Reading (Figure 3.). This rule states that the user's eyes move in an F-shaped pattern when they scan the content of your banner. If you arrange your layout according to this shape, you'll follow the user's natural scanning rhythm and be able to focus his attention on the key elements (e.g. headline) of your banner.



Figure 3. The F-Shaped Pattern on PayU's banner
Source: DOTpartners.pl

Use heatmaps to check if your banner is effective. They provide detailed information on how users behave on a given page and scan the content of your banner. For the best results, run heatmap tests before you publish your ads.

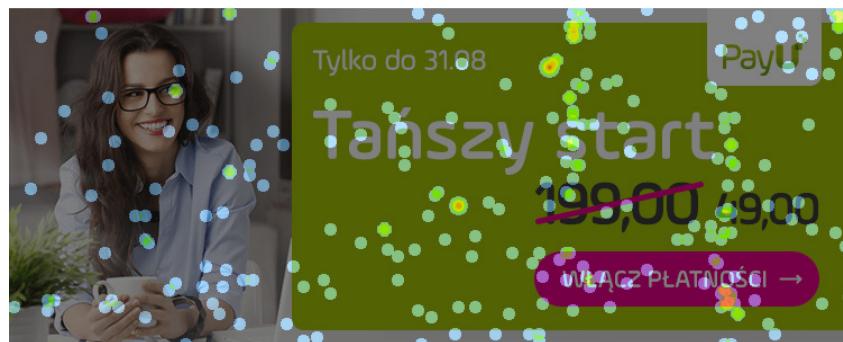


Figure 4. Heatmap test on PayU's banner

Source: payu.com

Heatmap tests are based on eye tracking – an eye movement measurement technique, which shows the user's points of gaze. Heatmaps allow you to check if the key elements of your graphic design (statistics, photo model who directs the user's eyes to your main message, brand logo, CTA) focus the user's attention the way they should.

REMEMBER

Today, consumers are well-aware of different marketing tricks and cannot be so easily fooled. They will automatically recognize your message as an advertisement and notice when you use stock photos. The same is with the quality of your graphic design. It has to be of high-resolution, preferably 300 DPI.

3. Call to Action Is the Icing on the Cake

This seemingly trivial design element is actually very important. Phrases, such as "Buy now", "Try free trial" are prompts that evoke a response leading to sales. A well designed CTA button complements your marketing communication.

But, most importantly, it informs the user about his next step and makes him click through to the page with your product. An effective CTA should be clear and straightforward, which means that if it says "Buy now", your client expects to be directed to your product, not the home page. Similarly, if a customer decides to "Fill out the form", he hopes to be directed to a page where he can leave his personal data.

ADVICE

Use directional cues, like shape and color. UX studies show that an effective CTA has to be 20% larger than your brand logo. This rule can be also applied to the whole banner design. The brand logo is an important design element, but in the case of performance marketing, its role is to make your message sound credible.

The CTA button should contrast with the rest of your design and stand out from other elements. Many brands use very colorful CTAs, including intense red, which, from the perspective of the psychology of color, is actually supposed to be associated with prohibition. But this assumption is wrong. Try experimenting with different colors to choose the one that fits best.

Another important element of your CTA is the copy. It works well when it's simple and straightforward (e.g. "Download the demo"). It's also worth emphasizing the benefits your client will have after clicking on the CTA, for example, "Sign up for free" or "Pay less".

 **REMEMBER**

There is no "perfect" place where you can put the CTA. Most often, it's placed on the right side of a banner. When you design dynamic banner ads, don't forget to put your CTA on each display version. If you're designing for mobile screens, remember about the design for fat fingers rule, which simply states that the button should be easy to press with a finger.

4. Less Is More

Focus on communicating one message that is consistent with your campaign strategy. Don't distract customers with announcements of, for example, upcoming product promotions. This is a mistake you should avoid making. Your sales communication will be effective if it concentrates on advertising a specific product or service, emphasizes benefits (maximum three), and doesn't use any "distractors". It should be honest and direct. Best if it's able to answer the customer when he asks "What's in it for me?", offers him benefits, and directs him to your product with the help of a CTA button.

5. Test, Test, Test

Carry out A/B tests to find out which design works best in practice. Otherwise, you defeat the purpose of your display campaign. Testing will help you determine if the communication you have designed is effective. Experiment with different banner versions in remarketing to increase brand awareness and remind customers to make a purchase.

Don't be afraid to ask publishers to let you change your designs. Usually, they don't have anything against it because this entails better sales statistics and more clients. What's more, they look favorably upon running sales performance tests and even encourage you to do them when you pay according to the P4P model (Pay-for-Performance). The payment model is profitable both for publishers and advertisers because the better performance banner ads deliver, the higher income they earn.

Effectiveness Is The Key

Each and every display banner, whose goal is to make your business more profitable, should be effective. If you follow the rules described above, you'll stand out from your competitors and increase the chance that customers notice your ads. And this, of course, translates to better performance and higher profits.

★ HOW TO CREATE AN EFFECTIVE BANNER AD STEP-BY-STEP?

1. Technical Specifications

- determine the maximum file size,
- choose the best format (static or dynamic).

2. Layout

- start with a master banner – the basis for other banner formats,
- use the F-Shaped Reading Pattern rule when you design the layout,
- make sure that the images and photos related to your company are credible and authentic.

3. Call to Action

- pay attention to shape and color,
- use contrasts,
- don't ignore the copy.

4. Less is More

- stick to minimalism,
- offer specific benefits (maximum three),
- don't use "distractors",
- remember that quality is over quantity.

5. Test Your Designs

- experiment with different designs,
- leave only those that have the best results.



// Anna Świątkowska – founder of DOT Partners

The company that specializes in effective sales communication that is based on an original Performance Web Design method; she has been working in online marketing for 10 years and has over 7 years of experience in working for the advertising department of Onet.pl; she has worked for such brands, as ITAKA, Ceneo, Travelplanet.pl, Fotojoker, or Santander Consumer Bank.

mail: anna@dotpartners.pl



**Having troubles with
WooCommerce platform?
Get in touch with us!**





6 Tips to Build a Positive Ecommerce Image in the Media

Author: Andrzej Gruszka

Ecommerce stubbornly fights to get noticed in the media. That's how it has been, is, and always will be. And nothing will change in this matter. Why? Because being present in the media improves the visibility of e-brands and, most importantly, builds their long-term credibility, allowing brand managers to sleep calmly at night. It may all sound pretty obvious. However, in reality, public relations needs major improvement.

From this article, you'll learn

- how to build a good relationship with the media,
- how to draw the attention of journalists to your brand,
- how to write a good press release that will stand the chance of being published,
- what are the characteristics of a perfect press release,
- what you should write about to make your brand stand out.

PR and media relations have dramatically changed. 10 years ago, you could contact a journalist via an email (containing a given press release), a phone call, or meet him face to face.

Today, we have an abundance of communication channels. The number of Internet users is constantly growing, leading to an enormous amount of content. That's why it's becoming increasingly difficult for brands to break through the communication noise. There is too much content with no quality and, to make matters worse, fake news is still popular. The conclusion is obvious: relevant and valuable information is now at a premium. That's why I advise you to implement the rules shown below. They will help you build a positive brand image in the media.

1. Avoid Mass Mailing

Do not, I repeat, do not establish relations with the media by sending mass emails. I've witnessed this myself when, some time ago, I have worked as editor in chief of an e-magazine devoted to marketing communication. I used to receive a lot of emails, which, from the perspective of my position at work and the subjects I wrote about, were completely irrelevant. I had to answer all of these emails, asking politely to remove my name from mailing lists.

Up to this day, I sometimes think about the recurring industry news about collaborations between company X and Y, or a promotion at work of Mr. Z. This is not the type of content we would publish in our online magazine. Of course, some editors would be interested in publishing such news, but their number is scarce.

Unfortunately, mass mailing is a common practice. If you choose this method, you won't establish good relations with the media, but create temporary contacts. A further issue is whether the information you send is attractive to the recipient, but more about that anon. What about follow-ups? I don't have anything against them. But if you contact a journalist

with a given topic, I presume that it is a “very specific matter”, not e.g. information about a product quality certificate that you have sent in mass emails.

 **REMEMBER**

Do not write general, low-quality news releases and carelessly send them to journalists. You'll make matters even worse if you'll call to make sure the recipients have received your text. Don't be surprised that they will treat you as a spammer and put you on the top of their pet peeve list. This is not the way to create a positive image of your brand in the media. Working in PR just like at an assembly line, with no established information strategy, is a huge mistake.

2. Focus on the Recipients' Needs

If you decide to avoid mass mailing, you're heading in the right direction. I cannot deny that it will consume a lot of your time but you'll make your communication much more precise. Quality requires time and in-depth research.

 **TIP**

Find out what journalists from your contact list need and what they write about. But don't take the easy way out, writing emails like “I have noticed that you wrote about this and I thought that...” This doesn't work anymore. Conduct a research on the journalist or editor just as if you were to interview them. Find out what they may be interested in, what communication channels they use, what they pay attention to when they write news, and so on.

PR specialists still rarely contact publishers to learn about their and the readers' needs. They ignore the fact that it's the basic requirement for creating a positive brand image. Unfortunately, they use catchy headlines and leads that are frequently used by brands to sell worthless content.

3. Provide Valuable Content

Implementing this rule is usually the most difficult. Because how can you explain to your client or boss that the information you have found will be positively received by the media?

4. Write Honestly

Treat press releases with respect because they are still primary communication tools. Without a reliable press release, you won't stand a chance to be successful in the media. Don't stretch the truth because you will be seen as untrustworthy. You can find out what characteristics a perfect news release should have from Figure 2.

★ CHARACTERISTICS OF A PERFECT PRESS RELEASE

1. *Honest. Don't base your press release on half-truths and understatements. Gather information carefully and check all the facts. Start with a draft. Plan the structure and content of your article. This step is frequently ignored, however, it will allow you to estimate your text's potential.*
2. *Interesting. Don't make the readers sleep. Journalists don't like dull texts. The secret lies in your choice of words.*
3. *Well-written. Get rid of passive voice, modal verbs, and nominalization. Instead, use verbs that illustrate action, emphasize emotions, highlight benefits, or introduce changes.*

Although it may seem that there are few rules to follow, remember that honesty pays off and, in the long run, comes back to you. So, be ready to reply to comments and answer journalists' questions about your articles.

★ HOW TO CREATE CONTENT THAT IS VALUABLE TO TARGET READERS?

1. *Find out what the journalists you want to contact need and what kind of topics they're interested in. Knowing this will increase the chance that your text will be published.*
2. *Carry out an in-depth research on the media channel you want to collaborate with. Try answering such questions as what are the most frequent topics, how often the texts are published, and in what form? This will help you create content that will suit the needs of a given publisher.*
3. *Find out what type of content gets popular at a given time and keep up with the industry trends. On the basis of this, you can plan a publication schedule and organize the content you want to sell.*
4. *Write only about things that are important from the perspective of the reader and media channel, not only from the company you work for. Remember that the proper places to publish information about rewards and promotions at work are your own media channels.*

5. Build Relationships!

This is one of the most important elements of your job. Establishing relationships, especially long-term ones, is a serious matter. Whenever it's possible, meet journalists in person. I'm surprised by how my younger colleagues ask me where they can meet media representatives. Well, the answer is during events, conferences, trade fairs, or face-to-face. It's that simple. However, not so obvious as it may seem. Nowadays, you can "meet" a journalist faster in the digital world than in real life. You can save your time by commenting, sharing, or talking via an Internet communicator. This is a good direction,

however, from my experience, I know that each Internet contact becomes more valuable when you meet the person directly. And this is extremely important if you want to establish long-term relationships.



6. Earn Links

Media relations is a perfect tool to earn links. They are one of the main search engine ranking factors. When you publish a text online, you hope that it will attract many readers. But if you have valuable links, you won't have to wait long for organic traffic.

Today, a valuable link is like a currency. Dofollow links are especially helpful because they tell the Internet bots to visit a given website and, at the same time, make it more credible. In the case of Internet publications, dofollow links are great because they allow you to measure the effectiveness of your PR activities and, consequently, monitor brand loyalty.

No Matter How As Long As They Talk?

Don't ignore the "how". If you follow the guidelines mentioned above, your relations with the media will be more successful. My guidelines will also help you build a positive image of your personal brand. I advise you to consider my tips. Unless you want to lose the trust of journalists or, even worse, spoil your reputation. The choice belongs to you.



// **Andrzej Gruszka** – Head of Communication at Hexe Capital

He has more than 10 years of experience in marketing communication but specializes in brand awareness activities like Public Relations, content marketing, and social media. His current position at Hexe Capital is centered around public relations and brand awareness activities.

mail: andrzej.gruszka@hexecapital.com



How to Automate Sales Processes with the Help of Chatbots

Author: Mariusz Pełechaty

Clients like when brands put emphasis on relationships, offer personalized products and experiences. Company owners pay attention to savings and the number of sold products, in brief – results. How to meet such extremely different needs? It's simple: automate sales processes with the help of chatbots. You'll achieve impressive results, avoid making mistakes, and make machines come to life.

From this article, you'll learn

- what kinds of selling processes can be automated thanks to chatbots,
- how chatbots can help you gather information about customers and how to apply this knowledge to sales and marketing,
- what mistakes to avoid in client-chatbot communication,
- what are the characteristics of a perfect chatbot.

The year 2016 witnessed a new and fully automated marketing communication channel. In 2017, Facebook had a Messenger platform with 100 thousand chatbots, whose number rose to 300 thousand in the following year. By the end of April, during the F8 conference, Facebook announced that augmented reality was available in its chatbots. The business giant also stated that it will implement more advanced Artificial Intelligence – not only with respect to data processing but also human-machine conversation. **Since chatbots effectively meet customers' needs, this shows enormous potential in the context of sales and marketing.**



Engage Customers to Build Relationships

Back in the old days, marketing specialists said that you can't be successful without building and maintaining customer relationships. The same applies to the digital age. Remarketing neither does surprise nor impress an average buyer. Emails or text messages your clients receive some time after abandoning their shopping cart often irritate and

have a negative impact on your conversion rate. To improve it, you decide to send more emails but, simultaneously, increase your expenses.

This is where chatbots come with help. One-sided push communication is not the only thing bots were designed for. They offer users much more and have many features that will improve your relationships with customers. **They allow you to gather a lot of qualitative data, segregate leads, and broaden knowledge about your clients. Chatbots are the online “eyes” and “ears” of your brand.**

Ecommerce Processes You Can Automate with the Help of a Chatbot

Sales	chatbots inform the user about his order status, track his packages, tell him if the product he wants to buy is available; the website displays a shopping cart preview and on the basis of this, chatbots send push communications reminding the user to, for example, complete his transaction
Customer service	FAQ: opening hours, shop location; additional services, such as payment by installments, delivery terms, etc.
User testing	you can test the introduction of new products to your assortment on a small number of people (your chatbot will store all the information about their behavior in its knowledge base); quick customer satisfaction surveys; collection of feedback
Customer segmentation	the Messenger chatbot allows you to follow your client's behavior when he logs into his account on your website. When he enters his personal data, you can assign him to a specific ID on your online shop. Thanks to this, you'll gather detailed information on his shopping habits as well as qualitative data connected to, for example, his expectations towards the quality of your products

The Customer Chat Plugin is a great example of using Messenger chatbots because it allows you to integrate the chatbot Messenger platform directly with your website. This gives you such benefits, as:

- catching the user's attention and engaging him in a conversation,
- segregating leads on the basis of a couple of simple questions and storing qualitative data about your customer in a knowledge base,
- improving the conversion rate and reducing the costs of customer service. You can provide service to many clients at the same time, without having to hire consultants,

- thanks to the information the Messenger chatbot gathers from a conversation with your client, you can upsell complementary products.

Installing the Customer Chat Plugin on your website may require the help of a programmer. However, it's not very difficult. You can follow Facebook's detailed installation guidelines from this page.

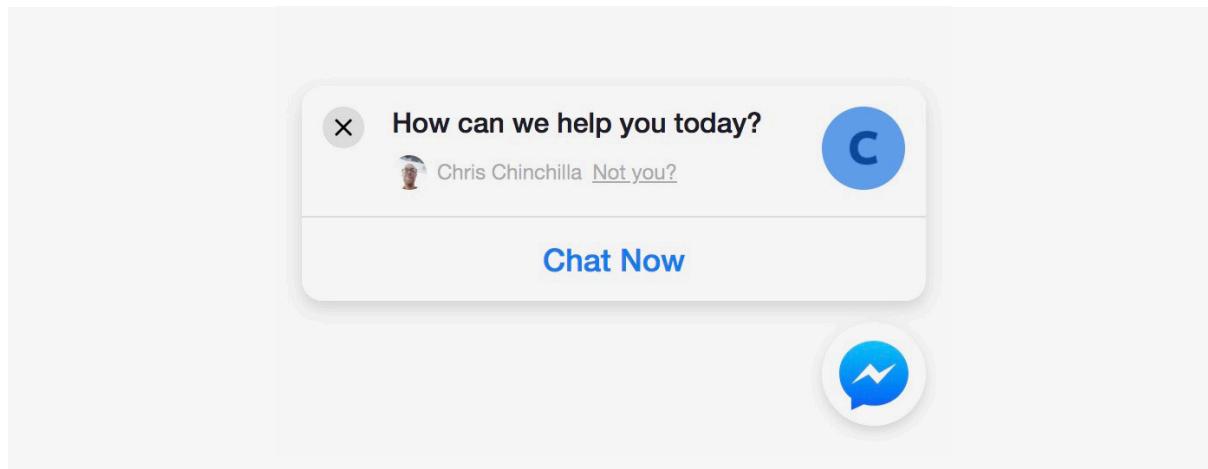


Fig. 1. The example of Customer Chat Plugin. Source: messengerdevelopers.com

Avoid Making Mistakes

Many brands with chatbots create marketing messages that put too much emphasis on selling. They believe that adding a call-to-action to the chatbot's scenario will be enough. However, as you may know from personal experience, Messenger is also a great communication channel where customers can voice their complaints. The package hasn't arrived, the Internet connection failed, the chicken was spoiled...

Looking from the perspective of my experience as a customer – to get a deeper understanding of target clients and uncover valuable insights – I have to admit that nothing puts me off more than when a company sends me an advertisement as a reply to my complaint. When disappointed with a product or service, the last thing I expect is that a seller recommends another purchase offer.

But you can design your chatbot to be an unobtrusive seller, a pleasant companion who tells jokes, apologizes for his mistakes, collects useful data, and, if properly guided – personalizes communication like no other marketing expert. This is the secret to success in conversational commerce. A great example is the InPost chatbot; it does make mistakes but apologizes for them with a smile, and that's why I like coming back to it.

What else Should You Avoid in Your Chatbot Communication?

Intrusive marketing	not only email marketing is notorious for spamming, so don't exaggerate with push notifications in your chatbot. Otherwise, the annoyed user will turn your chatbot off or completely delete it.
Chatbot that pretends to be human	there is no greater disappointment when you realize that you haven't been talking to a person, but a machine. US customer studies (eMarketer) show that the most valued chatbot communication is a simple conversation with a virtual assistant.
Don't stop the conversation	make the chatbot conversation sound natural, and make sure that your chatbot is able to react to any message or question from your client. Otherwise, he won't know what to do and assume that your chatbot is useless.
Lack of a clear goal	we always wonder what website elements to highlight and what will the user's journey look like on our page. The same is with chatbots. If you don't have a specific idea on how to automate selling processes with your bot, just stick to making your customer service excellent. Clients will definitely appreciate this.

Segment Your Customers

You have to know what a client needs in order to sell him your product. Well, that's easier said than done. If a pregnant woman enters a sports shop, the shop assistant won't greet her by telling about the current crossover bike sale. Rather, she'll be directed to the sections with comfy shoes, maternity gym wear, or recreational sports equipment.

How to avoid sending unattractive offers?

You can use your chatbot's native functions, such as:

- quizzes – „What is your skin type” is used by a Polish brand tołpa. After completing the quiz, users are rewarded with recommendations of beauty products suitable for their type of skin. All this information is stored in the database, so you can use this knowledge in the future to offer more personalized products.
- surveys – instead of making a survey (e.g. about customer service, product quality) on your website, you do it in your chatbot. But the main difference is that your respondent is a concrete person, not an anonymous user.
- contests – with your product as the main prize. Thanks to this, you'll learn what types

of clients would be interested in a given category of your products. Also, you'll gather qualitative data about their buying motives.

- offer forms and lead forms – to help you segregate leads or product recommendations, the user answers 1-5 closed questions about his budget, buying motive, expectations towards your product, etc.

All this helps you ask customers about their preferences. This information, in turn, allows you to distinguish variables, with which you can define specific groups from your client base. Tags like “favorite sport: running” open a wide range of product, service, event recommendations, or other marketing possibilities. Quizzes can be used to obtain tags. For example, the user may give the following answers: “favorite brand: Adidas”, “running style: half marathons”, etc. His answers are then assigned to his ID in your database (if that's how the chatbot developer configures it) and on the basis of these tags (which are assigned accordingly to your online store tags), you can automatically send your clients personalized offers.

The Beauty Player Case Study

Beauty Player is a cosmetic start-up from Taiwan, popular for its face masks. The brand's main problem was that it wasn't able to quickly answer to the growing number of customer questions, even though this was the key to educating clients about the advantages of Beauty Player's innovative product. So, the brand decided to use a chatbot to take control over this situation, respond to the customers, and distribute coupons for face masks. Those who used the coupons and bought the product were distinguished and described with tags.

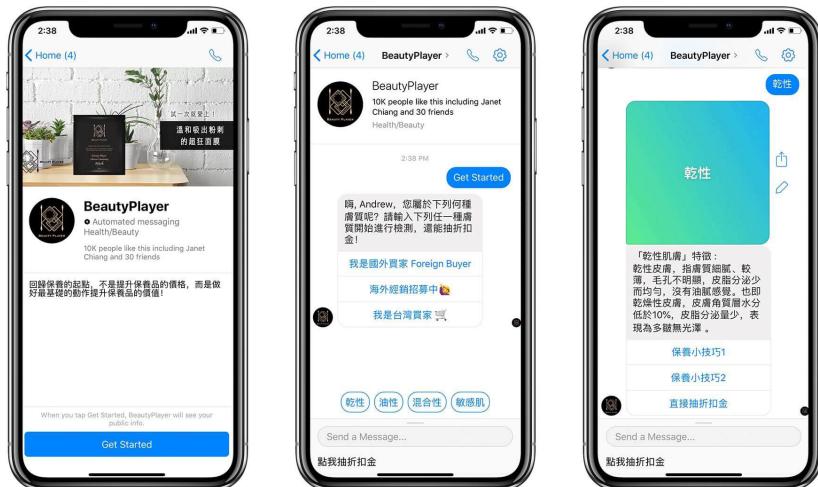


Fig. 2. The Beauty Player chatbot

The brand then used these tags for its Messenger campaign to segment customers using Facebook Ads Manager (lookalike audience). This strategy allowed the brand to lower its CPC from \$8.30 to \$4.06 and get a 10 times higher ROAS (Return On Advertising Spend).

In May 2018, the chatbot generated a \$250 000 income (that was 40% of revenue from all communication channels). What's more, thanks to raising customer brand awareness, the chatbot increased AOV (Average Order Value) by 10%.

Make Your Chatbot Human

Chatbots, just like real customer assistants, should have a personality, for example, they can formulate interesting responses that are based on a concrete persona. Your bot can give users unusual DIY tips like Adam Slodowy or acquire traits characteristic of a different person, for instance, it can hold conversations in the manner of a witty actress that is interested in fashion. It all depends on your target customers. Your chatbot mustn't talk in an emotionless way that is void of any expression – give it a personality and it will make clients come back to your brand.

You're able to define your chatbot's character, teach him to use its database to send personalized messages, address specific promotional offers to given clients, and even establish business cooperation with other companies. But your chatbot really gains in value when it offers useful content. It can tell your client his foot size in different units of measurement, suggest the best wine for a specific type of meat, or a tire size that fits the client's car model. Providing useful information is one of the most desirable features of a virtual assistant chatbot.

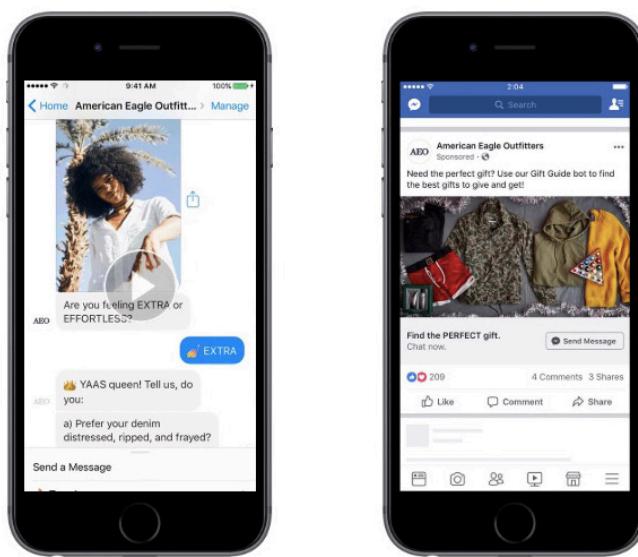


Fig. 3. The American Eagle Outfitters chatbot

The American Eagle Outfitters Case Study

American Eagle Outfitters is an American clothing brand whose goal was to deepen its relationships with the current customers and to gain new ones. To do so, it used two chatbots: AE and Aerie.

Why two? Because the brand wanted to communicate to different customer segments. So, the bots offered personalized content and behaved differently toward specific clients. American Eagle used its API (Application Programming Interface) to send product catalogs through chatbots. To better engage customers in the new channel of communication, the brand also played video ads on Facebook and Messenger, which showed how chatbots work and how they interact. The Aerie bot gained a lot of new clients, 75% of which were completely new leads for the brand.

Invest in Cross-selling and Upselling

After you have established a relationship with your client and learned about his buying habits, you can integrate your product base with the client's order history.

Thanks to this, you'll open up new possibilities to make a sale. By automating notifications together with a product catalog, you can remind your customer that he, for example, is running out of razor blades, his bike needs to be tuned up for spring, or that he'll need some outdoor equipment for his planned trip. Every time a chatbot sends such personalized offers, it gets an opportunity to collect feedback from the user. So, if you place simple buttons (like "I'm interested", "I'm not interested") under your product offer, you'll allow your chatbot to dynamically optimize product recommendations and learn more about its potential lead.

Let Chatbots Help You

Using chatbots in ecommerce can bring huge profits. However, you have to invest your time to formulate a perfect concept, set goals, and organize the implementation of your bot. A virtual assistant can significantly raise the quality of brand communication. However, if you don't come up with optimal solutions and if developers commit technical errors, your chatbot can actually hinder effective communication with clients. There's one more thing you should remember about – **create chatbots with human-like qualities, but prevent them from making human mistakes.** Sounds simple, doesn't it?

 **Mariusz Pełchaty** – CEO of KODA Bots



E-marketing & conversational commerce expert. A public speaker with 10+ years of experience in digital marketing. Over 25 presentations at conferences related to brand communication in social media. Co-author of the book „Emarketing in action” (2008). Trainer and academic teacher, an associate of the University of Wrocław, SWPS University, WSB Schools of Banking, Jagiellonian University Polish Research Centre in London, and many training companies. Since 2016, the co-owner of Hexe Capital - a group of companies focused on e-marketing solutions for business.

mail: mariusz@kodabots.com



www.cut2code.com

