

E-COMMERCE:

Taking the step to globalisation

Cristina Coelho is CEO of Ship4you, a company which has been operating in the market for five years. However, it already has two decades of experience in the complex world of integrated logistics for distance selling and direct marketing. With a solid team including several people who have worked with Cristina Coelho for almost 20 years, Ship4you is a 100%-Portuguese multilingual, multichannel and multiservice company particularly focused on all aspects of distance selling and marketing today.

“We take care of everything for you, from enveloping to storage, direct marketing to e-commerce, your database to your company’s integrated management systems. We cover the whole of Europe and can provide our partners with systems that speak their language. We speak, write and personalise in a wide variety of languages. We plan your campaigns by mail, SMS and email.” This is Ship4you’s slogan. And on e-commerce and direct marketing, Cristina Coelho begins by explaining that anyone who has been in distance selling through direct marketing for a while is easily hooked.

And anyone who moves into e-commerce due to lack of investment, in principle soon realises that it is a much more complex process than it appears at first sight. So what is e-commerce and what should a company do and know before creating an online shop?

Electronic commerce, or e-commerce, is the buying and selling of goods and services through electronic channels. And it is today one of the most important and fastest-growing phenomena on the Internet and a step that any company has to take if it wants to reach the global market and internationalise.

Buying from home is an increasingly ingrained and frequent habit amongst the Portuguese, who it is predicted will spend €2.665 billion in online shopping in 2017. It’s a new generation and a different attitude. But an organisation’s move into e-commerce must be well thought through and structured.

Let’s look at each point in turn. There are two extremes in e-commerce: exceptional online sales success and failure. Let’s look at the reasons why.



CRISTINA COELHO



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Digital marketing is immediate, whereas direct marketing, with its mailings, newsletters, database and contact networks, can be analysed over time. Digital marketing therefore requires that everything be done and analysed “instantly”. When a certain firm launches a campaign or advertising banner, it has to know immediately what its impact is and what it should do differently so as not to lose money. Then there’s the matter of knowing how to run an online shop, which is more complex than it seems.



ÉQUIPE SHIP4YOU

For large companies which have a big enough structure to go down the route of online selling with some confidence and stability, it is in principle an easy process. They already exist and have storage, physical shops and distributors.

The internet is just one more shop and they just have to learn how to run it. If a company doesn't know how to implement the new technology mechanisms based on a good strategy, it can ruin the image it has already built.

When we talk about managing an online shop, we are talking about things as simple, but highly important, as taking care with launching promotional campaigns, stock management, order shipping speed and shipping companies. It needs to be remembered that in online selling, retailers are working with global customers.

Then there's the kind of e-commerce by private individuals who have a job but create a small business for distance selling from home. In the beginning, sales may go well, but afterwards, without a structure, sufficient knowledge or investment to develop, the home business doesn't "leave home". Or the opposite may happen: sales go well and increase substantially, but then the structure can't cope with the boom in sales due to the simple lack of physical space for the management of stock or the lack of a shipping company.

One thing is certain: everything has to be very fast in e-commerce. People who buy online always want to receive their orders the next day. So just opening an online shop is not enough. And that's where Ship4you comes in.

SERVICE FROM A TO Z

Ship4you provides customers with a full package of e-commerce and direct marketing services. With regard to direct marketing, services range from receiving mail, registering orders, storage and shipping which, for most customers, has to be done the day after the order is received. It is an A to Z service which also includes after-sales back-up. A series of computer tools are provided to the customer through a highly specialised system dedicated to this type of business in which they have access to statistics and data so they can conduct analysis and decide what campaigns to launch later during the process.

With very important partners, Ship4you also provides data solutions for efficient and reliable database management and a computer platform using ERP/CRM systems allowing cohesive and smooth management of Portuguese and international company processes and data.

Ship4you has different types of e-commerce clients. "For some companies, we handle customer services

and everything related to their online business; for others, we have access to the back office of their websites and we handle everything, from stock management to the shipping of orders. In other cases, we take care of the whole package from A to Z, from creating the website and maintaining the database to direct integration with our own system, taking full responsibility for the whole process,” Cristina Coelho explains.

Cristina Coelho stresses the importance of digital marketing for any company. It’s expensive, but it’s vital. As an example, she mentions a shop in Rossio where there’s constant footfall. But if that shop moves to a more out-of-the-way street, it has to make itself stand out. It has to invest in a very good system of advertising to draw people into the shop. Exactly the same applies online. It has to stand out; it has to be appealing and to make people click on its website. It has to know how to show that its products are good and are there because there is a range of possibilities for people shopping online to analyse and compare products. They are normally informed purchases.

Alongside this, companies have to learn how to take advantage of home-based shopping and how to reach all market niches, all age groups, the most and least technologically minded, all social classes and, above all, global customers. We are in the digital era and things change from year to year. Today, we can buy practically everything on the internet, even groceries from the supermarket.

E-COMMERCE IS HERE TO STAY AND WILL BE INCREASINGLY GLOBALGLOBAL

SHIP4YOU - A 100%-Portuguese company, Ship4you provides firms with guidance to realise that a good online structure implies a good physical structure and vice-versa so that organisations can perform well and achieve consolidated growth.

E-COMMERCE - E-commerce has arrived, is here to stay and has a long way to grow. If Portugal is still a little backwards when it comes to online shopping, in other countries it is a totally different story, where distance selling has been well established for years. Companies will have to readapt constantly to deal with the demands of customers who will be increasingly global. The Portuguese, for example, according to a study, are those most likely to shop abroad, with the United

Kingdom (42% of international shopping), China (41%) and Spain (38%) being the preferred choices.

RULES - There are golden rules to selling via e-commerce and Cristina Coelho advises retailers to keep things as simple as possible. The simpler it is, the greater the success. People who shop online are looking for convenience, speed and efficiency. “If someone wants to buy online and the process is slow and involves lots of steps, they won’t bother,” our interviewee explains.

Companies have to be aware that “it’s not enough to have a good product. They have to study the business and make a good business plan. They have to know exactly what they need to get an online shop up and running. They have to find the right partners in the various areas and realise that they need to make a big investment. Finally, it has to be a simple process. Simple and transparent,” Cristina Coelho concludes.



For some companies, we handle customer services and everything related to their online business; for others, we have access to the back office of their websites and we handle everything, from stock management to the shipping of orders. In other cases, we take care of the whole package from A to Z, from creating the website and maintaining the database to direct integration with our own system, taking full responsibility for the whole process.”

