

PROFESSIONAL DIGITAL LITERACY

1. HOW TO EFFICIENTLY USE THE INTERNET FOR MARKETING PURPOSES

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- Google SEO
- Keywords for business
- Business online presence: definitions & tips

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- Good tips in using the social media

1. HOW TO EFFICIENTLY USE THE INTERNET FOR MARKETING PURPOSES

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1. Online research and reputation logic

Our online searches are sorted through the use of so-called search engines, namely Google, Yahoo, Bing!, Just to name the most important, intended at user level. If you think in general, in Italy 95% of searches are made through Google (Ziero 2017), while in the world they are almost 87% (Statista 2020), so understanding how "the results appear" in the engine research means understanding how to make our project, company, organization appear.

In other words, this chapter aims to illustrate how to build content and plan your online presence in order to facilitate user research and try to appear on the first page of the results.

If we think about it for a second, the contents on the Internet do not have a real order, but are ordered in front of the search question we make with a tool, the search engine, in fact. When we "go to Google" and write a sequence of words, we are basically asking an algorithm to bring up a series of results that come closest to our need, whether it's to read, understand, get somewhere or solve a problem.

Clearly, there is a kind of relationship of trust between us and the search engine, that is: if the search engine gives results, we hope that these results will be useful to satisfy our request. Thus, if the search engine gives us useless results, we will think that it is not reliable, while the search engine wants to renew this trust and will give us results that are useful thanks to the concept of the reputation of the pages, that is linked to their degree of reliability.

As you can easily imagine, the sooner you appear on this results page (SERP or Search Engine Results Page), the sooner you are searched, also because if you "quit earlier" it means that "you will be more reliable" and "closer to my needs" .

An example of a SERP:

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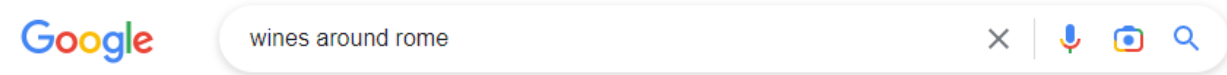
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Figure 1. SERP example.

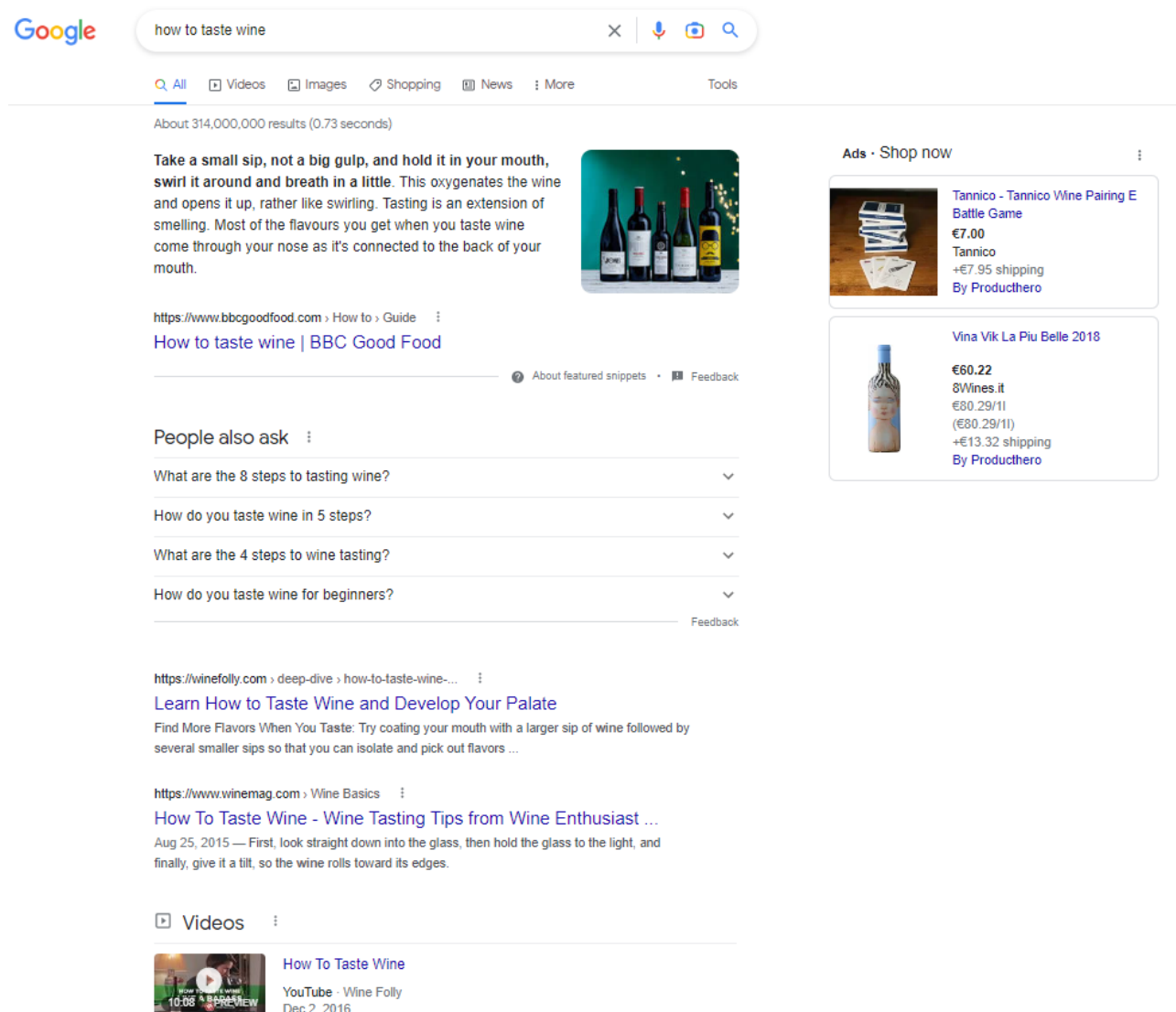


Figure 2. SERP example.

But who defines reliability?

Here, this is the beginning of the so-called optimization for search on a search engine, that is all those actions to create the conditions for a website to be more visible among the organic results of a search engine: SEO (Search Engine Optimization , i.e. Search Engine Optimization). Since, as

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we said, the vast majority of searches happen on Google, we will focus on Google SEO, although for simplicity we will call SEO, implying that it is for Google.

So what we want to understand is how to get “first in the rankings” of the results page.

To do this, it would be necessary to understand which algorithm is used by Google (and similarly to any other search engine). The only problem is that we don't know.

What is certainly known is that if SEO was a set of only technical operations to improve sites, currently Google refers to much more "human" parameters.

Online reputation is the result of the set of technical operations and content that an organization plans in order to intercept the needs of those who surf online and influence the decision-making process relating to a request for information, purchase, etc. stimulating a specific action. You can monitor it.

Therefore, the technical component is always there, but it has evolved. We are talking about content quality, synthesis and effectiveness, use of keywords that answer research questions, simplicity and navigability of sites, time spent on pages and so on, gradually evolving as an important branch of digital marketing.

Basically, investing in digital positioning, or in SEO, allows you to have more opportunities to place yourself halfway between supply and demand.

To understand this concept, let's go to the next paragraph.

1.1 Google SEO and the customer journey

Understanding how to improve SEO means understanding why people search online and what they need. In other words, we must understand the intent with which people are looking for us, an element that is at the heart of optimizing the contents of our site.

For example, if I make an organic wine, I will have to think about why and how people will have to look for me. In this sense, I will have to make my website not just a site that illustrates my cellar, but I will have to give advice on how to recognize organic wines, various interventions by bloggers / journalists who are experts in wine, give interviews on other sites that have the link of my cellar, have an e-commerce that leads to the purchase, have simple information on how to find the nearest organic cellar and so on.

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In this way, if we understand the reasons for the search for people, we will be able to orient our online presence.

Clearly, as entrepreneurs, we don't necessarily have time to write content, but at the same time we need to be able to dialogue with digital marketing specialists to work together and build content that leads to our site and build conversions, that is, purchases on our e-commerce (if you still have doubts, we give advice in the next part).

Surely, the question that arises is: but if I am a small company or little known project, how can I be found? Nobody is looking for me!

We lack the notoriety of our website, and therefore we have not yet created the ecosystem to increase the likelihood of being found by those who use the search engine.

Therefore, before accusing Google of not having helped us, we must think of a double plan: the editorial one, that is, how to make our work known at the level of needs of those who surf, and the social one, not only online, but also in terms of public relations, networking, being hosted on other pages, on other blogs, magazines, newspapers, etc. All this will lead to a series of visits that are not resolved solely in the search in a search engine, but are based on uniquely human factors that make our site stronger.

Once these conditions are met, it makes sense to talk about SEO. But not only that: talking about SEO means above all reasoning about the so-called customer journey, that is the path that a customer takes before reaching the purchase decision.

But why ask all these questions about Google? Wouldn't it be enough to click on a site, enter, buy and close it there? If you think about it, it never happens in everyday life, especially for all purchases that have a certain economic content.

For example, if we have to buy a mobile phone, we will be guided by online reviews, we will look for friends who have already tried it, we will try to understand through YouTube videos if it is worth it, we will make comparisons between various stores in order to compare prices and offers and etc.

According to [The Marketing Freaks](#): "customer journey means the itinerary that the customer travels when establishing a relationship with a company over time and in the various contact environments", both offline and online. So we can say that it represents the "story of the" customer-company "link.

Having excellent search engine optimization means responding, therefore, to people's needs. So, returning to the winery example, you cannot limit yourself to promoting your organic wine on social media pages or through Google advertising or just waiting for someone to find you sooner or later.

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Companies should therefore go beyond the search terms commonly related to their product. Always with our cellar, we cannot expect that writing “organic table wine” will be enough to bring people to our site to click and buy. Also and because there is a lot of competition on search words, or on the ability of organizations to appear compared to these typed words. We need to do more, think about cultivating our audience, our identity and it can only happen through organic work between our company / organization and specialists in marketing and online presence.

In this sense, the dimension of structural reflection that SEO requires is to accompany our potential customers or reference group to satisfy their needs through our contents and services, so we must extensively analyze what our project represents and how it can complement a series of questions people might ask to find us online.

1.2 The customer journey and the online decision model

The extreme diffusion of smartphones and the collapse of prices in terms of digital connection have accustomed people to the constant presence of the Internet in our pockets, so it has become very easy and above all immediate to do research. In this way, we have incorporated the presence of search engines into our lives by continually researching, for whatever comes to our mind. Finding an answer on the Internet is therefore a crucial moment to appear, be found, introduce yourself. The immediate answer "here and now" is then a fundamental aspect in structuring contents in order to be found on maps, know timetables, acquire information, availability and so on.

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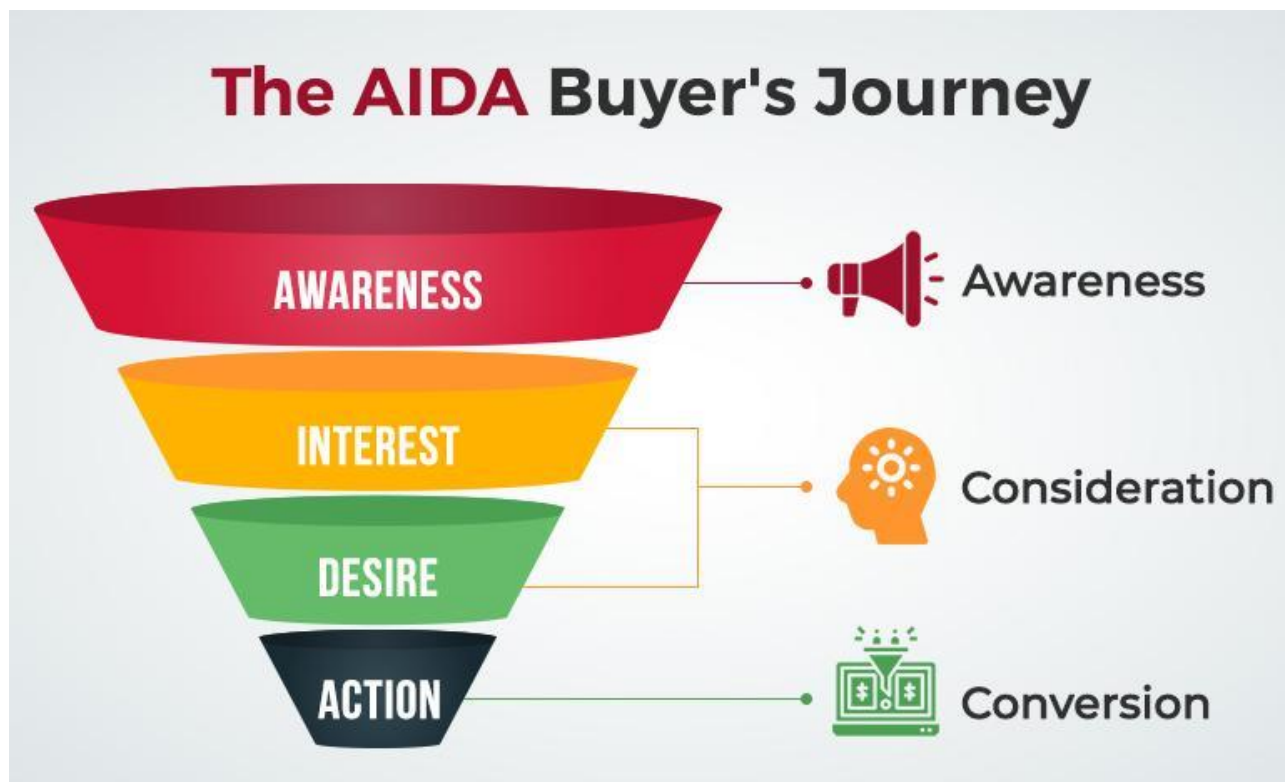


Figure 3. The AID funnel. Source: [StratoServe](#)

What does this picture mean? This: if I look for things online, it doesn't mean at all that I will buy them, subscribe to newsletters, or it doesn't mean that I will join all the promotions and so on. For this reason, there is talk of a dispersion in research. Therefore, only a minority of those who search will actually find themselves acting and doing something on our pages (in terms of marketing we speak of an event).

Well, picking up the concept, it's like there's a conversion funnel or funnel. As you progress along these stages, it is normal for some to decide at some point to stop in order not to continue.

To sum up: if the contents are well written, if our site is referenced and meets the needs, it will be more likely to appear during this research path and, in this way, to acquire data or win people's trust.

1.2 Intent and keywords

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As defined, online searches can be defined as intentions, i.e. successive steps to search for something until the answer is obtained. In the "Business Ethics" module, we referred to 4 micro-moments that summarize the entirety of the research topics we carry out online:



Figure 4. Reworking by the author of Google's micro-moments

The strength of an organization / business at an online level lies in the ability to produce content and to position itself on multiple points of the search funnel and on multiple points of the consumer's decision. In this sense, the strength of marketing also lies in answering a series of questions that are complementary to those that merely concern the search for a product.

Let's go back to the example of the cellar and wine. It is true that we are looking for "organic table wine", but let's say that our intention, for now, is not to buy it, as an average winery would think, but rather to understand what characteristics it should have and more generally information on organic.

A forward-looking company can develop a nice guide to tasting and understanding the characteristics of organic wine, free and accessible, in exchange for registering the user's e-mail. An interested user can consider this exchange congruous, so he will arrive on the winery website, leave his address and download the guide.

From there, as a company, we can begin to explore the different areas of the funnel, in order to encourage the person to read other articles, view our e-commerce and so on. In this way, the

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company will be able to count on a potential customer who, probably, will not manifest itself immediately, but perhaps after two months or a year, yet he is a person who can talk about us, can make references, can turn around the our newsletter to another data subject, and so on.

All these complementary needs are nothing more than further research that the user can do, for example:

"How to understand if a wine is organic"

"What characteristics does an organic wine have"

"How to best taste an organic wine"

and so on.

These phrases are what a marketing specialist will call keywords.

In this sense, my every intention is a list of keywords on which to start building my SEO, to make sure that my company / project page answers first of all questions, then needs.

Therefore, an important part of SEO lies in the study of keywords and semantic fields.

To continue the example of wine and the cellar, obviously, we can also think of complementary fields such as "use of recyclable materials for wine" and "gifts with wine for birthdays" etc.

How to do this keyword analysis? We explain this in the next chapter.

1.3. Keywords for your organization

Now, the point is how to build an online presence geared to people's needs and not to simply promote what you do. What does it mean? We need to understand what people are looking for, what questions they ask and how to put them back on our site so that we can actually answer the questions. Remember, then, that building content with the answers to questions that are asked usually also means cutting time with respect to customer care (that is, the relationship with customers), as well as increasing the reputation of our organization as an example of transparency and clarity. .

In other words, if all the emails or calls you receive are about certain topics, why not think of an FAQ section where you exactly repeat the questions people have asked you about your products?

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But if we are a new business project, what should we do?

We need to analyze the keywords.

Communication is everything and one of the cornerstones for a business is being able to "be found". Clearly, these topics are of concern to that group of people who are web specialists, but understanding how to think at the organizational presentation level also means giving precise indications to those who will take care of our business project and, above all, being aware of what is happening with respect to online.

Above all, it means giving substantial importance to the use of the internet and the important consequences it can give us at an organizational level.

Furthermore, it is possible that in a small business there are those who deal directly with the website, Facebook and Instagram pages, so it is important that there is awareness of the processes of the online presence.

Therefore, having a site means responding to needs, answering "research questions" and feeding it with a series of articles that can satisfy both the product and the complementary needs.

2. SMART WORK STRATEGIES

- How to plan a smart work strategy in a business: steps
- Examples of smart work

1. Smart work: what it means and what the conditions are

Covid-19 has put a strain on European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which represent 99% of the EU's social and economic fabric (Eurostat 2017), and of this group, 93% are micro-enterprises (with less than 10 employees).

SMEs have progressively implemented digital services, but are largely lagging behind in adopting more advanced digital technologies, especially in rural areas.

In particular, micro-SMEs are still unaware of future coming digital needs and/or are not able to update their services or product design and supply through effective use of digital technologies (EPALE 2019) – the covid19 has even made the scenario worse, putting all micro-SMEs in an extremely volatile situation where any decision is even more complicated without effective digital strategies.

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During the so-called lock down, micro-SMEs have been hit hardest, as only 1 in 4 have a cloud management system in place and remote work/team management (this can differ a lot from country to country, Eurostat 2018). This has meant that much work has not been possible, resulting in a loss of many billions across the continent. Before covid, only 9.9% of SME workers normally adopted smart working or smart working, with several advantages: 1. Better balance between professional life and private life and free time 2. Less expenses and work oriented to objects 3. More advanced digital skills.

But what is smart working? Also referred to as home working, agile working, flexible working etc., smart working describes the practice and methods that help employers (and organisations) move away from a rigid view of how and when people can work effectively. With flexible working practices, businesses/organisations can have more opportunities to:

- Attracting and retaining personnel, managing to respond to personal needs.
- Intercepting a wider pool of talent, so people can be hired even if they are not in the area immediately adjacent to the company.
- Reduce time spent on travel and meetings

In general, the smart work philosophy is not only linked to a different digital organization of the company, but to a different conception of work based on trust, flexibility, autonomy, individual responsibility, collaboration and optimization of the technologies and tools available .

1.2 What it means to have a smart work strategy

Introducing smart working in the company means building a plan that has various sectors of a company or organization in mind. It is a complex change process that must start from a careful analysis of the objectives, of the company priorities, of which technologies are necessary and, above all, how to move from an organizational culture point of view.

Smart working has as its ultimate and ultimate goal the closer integration between people, technologies, data and time in order to increase productivity, make costs more efficient, innovate the creative process and to achieve results and make collaboration between people more effective and working groups.

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The covid19 has led many companies and organizations to create internal changes in a short time, but without a real plan, with consequent difficulties in various areas, from data management, to the lack of a real balance between private life

3. CLOUD

- Main cloud advantages
- Practical tips how to assess cloud needs of a rural business
- How to integrate cloud technology in a rural business

1. What is cloud (computing)

The cloud, or more precisely cloud computing (“cloud”, literally), is a service offered by a set of computers (servers, to be precise) that can also be spread around the world, with a series of distributed architectures, predefined and customizable, and that allows simultaneous operations of work, analysis and data storage, having instant updates through the exclusive use of the Internet. Something that, in the past, was made available by machines located in the same physical place, while today it is given by suppliers everywhere. This evolution has been possible thanks to the incredible improvement of the network infrastructure, which today can rely on fiber optic and technologies unimaginable until a decade ago.

The “computer cloud” was born to exploit the potential of the new infrastructure of the Internet in combination with the ability of servers to work at the same time, providing an enormous computing capacity. Here, therefore, the creation of the most disparate services based on this technology, able to overcome the limits of a single machine, especially in relation to the scope of data processing and, even more, physical space. For this reason, when it comes to cloud, it is good to refer to three types: storage, processing and transmission of data.

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In this article we will focus above all on the most widespread type of cloud, namely that of data storage. It is precisely in this area, in fact, that large hi-tech companies have decided to expand, offering some services that have become popular worldwide. Many services like Google Drive, One Drive (and Microsoft Teams), DropBox, WeTransfer, etc. have been the basis of many organisations' remote work, allowing what until a decade ago was complicated or impossible. Above all, we talk not only about data sharing, but also about the possibility of speaking, calling oneself, writing in real time.

1.1. Why the cloud is born

Thanks to tablets, computers, laptops etc. we have the Internet always at hand. Clearly, one of the problems with this is not having, for example, the same document in the same device. For this reason, many people have overcome the use of USB pens, but as it happens there are often more copies of the same file and we do not even remember which of the versions is the most valid. What if your device doesn't work anymore? If we lost all the copies, why did we accidentally delete them? It is clear that this mode, although there are advantages, brings inconvenient, especially in the daily frenzy.

To solve this problem, digital infrastructures are born that allow data to be saved in a personal storage space that is always available, regardless of your device. This space, then, allows you to access a history, to see who is accessed, and so on, so as to allow an efficient synchronisation of your files and data.

Cloud storage or cloud computing, simply cloud, therefore, does nothing but synchronise all your favourite files in one place, with the consequent advantage of redownloading, modifying, erasing and/or updating them, without therefore having the need to carry external

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hard drives, USB pen drives, or anything else that is normally possible to lose or forget. In addition, you can save passwords and save entire copies of your PC.

Clearly, cloud services go well beyond this basic use, with very advanced services of data analytics, automation, and so on, but in this unit we only place ourselves in this function of the cloud.

1.2 How to get a cloud space

To access a cloud space, simply create an email address with some of the companies like Google, Microsoft or Apple.

These are the main ones, and the values indicated are the basic *free* ones:

- [Dropbox](#) (2 GB)
- [Amazon Cloud Drive](#) (5 GB)
- [iCloud](#) (5 GB, for iPhone, iPad and all Apple devices in general)
- [Mega](#) (50 GB)
- [Degoo](#) (100 GB)
- [Google Drive](#) (15 GB)
- [One Drive](#) (5 GB)

A social for cloud work no longer free in the basic version is [Facebook Workspace](#) (unlimited — it's very different from Facebook as you know it!)

1.3 The main benefits of the cloud

As we explained, having access to the cloud for an organisation means having a number of benefits.

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- Reorganise paper documentation according to digital processes: clearly, it can be a lengthy and laborious process, but it can be adopted from some point on various points of administration.
- Reduction of expenses in terms of collaboration and travel: keep track of notes at all times and avoid unnecessary movements
- Ability to hold virtual meetings: with the use of the cloud there is the possibility to hold business meetings online.
- Online management tools: with the cloud there are several information sharing tools that optimise all the work of the work team.
- Safety is essential: the cloud makes all business information secure and inaccessible by unauthorised people.
- Backup (recovery files) of important files: with the cloud, you can back up all your files in case of any type of computer problem.
- Access to information anywhere via free systems (see above)

Scalability: with the use of the cloud, the company can organise its resources according to its job request. If, for example, there is an increase in the volume of work, the company can adapt and operate in the same way, with the same quality, looking for solutions more suited to its needs.

2. Have a cloud strategy

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It often happens that within an organisation, there is an impromptu transition to the cloud, as “everyone uses it”. But the point is how to make it efficient and understand what points in your organisation can be placed in the cloud and what it means.

In fact, defining a cloud strategy for an organisation means making a number of considerations on the following points:

- **Cultural and educational readiness**

The acceptance of the cloud by your organisation’s staff, in the most general sense, is an important measurement element. Acceptance has generally spread in recent years, thanks to the use of the cloud in everyday life, both for personal and commercial purposes.

In this way, accessing training in usage is an important step. Learning how to use services like Google, Microsoft, Dropbox and many more is easy, thanks to the presence of many free digital resources and in multiple languages.

- **Assessment of needs**

Not all areas of an organisation need cloud, or not all people are willing to use the cloud. This allows you to plan the first users, or those people who can act as an example so that they can show others how the cloud works. Showing value in advance is a great way for organisations to show the strength of the cloud, especially in those business sectors that can benefit most.

- **Technical analysis**

A methodical approach for an organisation is to make a pattern of the current state of adoption of technologies: which internet contract, which e-mails you use, how your data is

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saved, and so on. In this sense, perhaps with digitalisation experts, it is possible to understand what technical needs can be for us.

- **Budget analysis**

Understanding the level of investment is crucial. At a basic level, you can access many free tools and allow you to have investments according to your needs.

- **Awareness and risk management**

Basically, it means having a data protection and management strategy. In the unit on “GDPR for Rural” we will give a series of guidance on data protection and which points to consider regarding privacy management, personal data, information and so on. In this sense, a revision of the legal terms of data management is mandatory: this has seen the birth of the Data Management Manager (DPO), as we will deepen later.

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4. HOW TO USE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS FOR BUSINESS

- Emails
- WhatsApp
- Telegram
- Call software

1. The communication channels of an organisation

Communication channels are means used by organisations to contact and build a relationship with their target group and customers. In general, support channels for an organisation can help you understand products, have information, allow disclosure, make the relational approach a powerful marketing and information tool.

In this chapter, we focus on the use of mobile apps, the ones we usually use for communication reasons, also having an eye on how to use them from the point of view of marketing. We critically reason about emails, WhatsApp Business, Telegram and the use of internal videos and as a customer relationship tool.

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If you want to connect your organisation with potential stakeholders, you need to focus and pay attention to communication channels, as they allow you to define relationships that can impersonate and better define the image and spirit of your organisation.

Communication channels should be seen as the hot voice of an organisation, not a simple microphone or monologue, but a channel of interaction, so it is played at the level of mutual attention and sharing of the same values, between organisation and people who interact with it.

In this sense, it is not enough to contact people when you want something from them, i.e., a click, a subscription, a purchase, rather you have to have connection with people in order to update on the state of the work, on plans, on what is happening, thus allowing the progressive definition of a digital identity and increasing data traffic.

Clearly, the point is not only to get to many “likes” or newsletter subscribers, but to understand what is the level of interaction in terms of content on the main platform of your organisation, whether it is an e-learning platform, an e-commerce or an informative blog.

Therefore, an organisation needs to think organically about its communication channels, to find for each of this a goal, a tone to be adopted: for example, you can't think of using a social as you would use a newsletter or how you would communicate on WhatsApp. In addition, one must think of communication channels as multi-exit roads, that is, not to think of them solely for one purpose.

As we have defined in other units, WhatsApp, for example, can be both used as an internal communication tool within an organisation, and can be used as an edu-information tool, i.e., creating regular content to learn something while trying to promote something else. If, for example, there is a group of wine & related networks that is part of our company, in addition to giving information about news and so on, you can also send regular updates to let you

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learn a specific topic and re-direct to your company site. This function, then, is very simple and immediate on Telegram, so as to expand the digital presence of an organisation and make it varied.

1.1. The use of digital communication channels

It can be said, in an elementary way, that all forms of interaction between consumer and organisation go through the channels of communication.

Some of the features of the communication channels are:

- Respond to requests, answer questions and transmit important information to customers;
- Provide support for the use of products and services in the after-sales;
- Request feedback and suggestions from your customers about the company's services and solutions, or direct with respect to already developed content that can help people read the material;
- Make room for complaints and resolve each case with due care;
- Share content and materials that add value and help retain customers;
- Promote special offers, promotions, discounts and benefits for those who are subscribed to a certain channel;
- Inform about the news of the organisation, market trends, information that might interest those who follow us. In this sense, an organisation may think of its own expansion of its role,

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for example, not only of selling or offering in relation to a certain activity, but of all the complementary elements, which can range from information on new laws, incentives and so on;

- Invite to events, webinars and product testing that, otherwise, could be paid, always in exchange for benefits, whether they are training or future discounts;
- Introduce first-hand new products and services, with so-called première functions, so that communication channels can be interpreted as a privileged form of interaction, especially at the level of newsletters or other private channels, such as Telegram channels or other applications;

Conduct surveys and/or questionnaires with the aim of getting to know your audience better;

- Conduct immediately a questionnaire on the sales process;
- Management of particular orders and with business partners;

Schedule visits, meetings and presentations.

A study conducted in 2019 by [DMA Insight](#), on the information and promotions of companies based in Brazil and the United Kingdom, reveals what are the usage preferences of these customers in relation to communication channels:

- Pre-sale: 57 % prefer to receive emails, 15 % prefer online ads, and 14 % prefer blog posts and social media.
- After-sales: 57 % prefer to receive emails, 27 % choose text messages and 9 % want a face-to-face contact;
- Customer service: 48 % want to receive an email response, 25 % via text messages and 20 % by phone.

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The numbers presented in this study are just a reference to reflect together on how your organisation, possible enterprise or enterprise you work with interfaces with the target audience. This applies, therefore, both in the profit and non-profit sector.

Another area of reflection is to understand how to differentiate the channels of communication depending on the audience you target, so the use of Tik Tok or Instagram is more for a young audience, while the use of WhatsApp is for a more transversal audience of adults. Newsletters are read more by specialist publics or interested in a certain topic, etc.

1.2 Digital marketing through mobile communication channels

Digital marketing channels are platforms that you can use to reach your target audience with information about your brand, product, or service. But why do we focus only on mobile in this section?

Because the majority of online purchases now take place by phone and not having a presence that is easy and accessible even by phone means getting out of the market. What do you mean? Basically, it means having an optimal presence for mobile, with updated sites, so-called “responsive”. So, mobile marketing is sharing a brand or business in a way optimised for smartphones and other mobile devices through apps, social media channels, and websites.

As a marketing strategy, mobile marketing enables a company to reach a wider audience than it would by focusing solely on desktop digital marketing processes.

In this sense, when you ask for advice from a tech company, you don't have to stop to see how a site, an e-commerce or the pages work at the “home computer” level (desktop), how to understand how it behaves at the mobile level and how to best interact with mobile.

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2. E-mails in an organisation

E-mails are a powerful organizational tool in a company, both for the purpose of exchange between people, and in terms of relations with the people interested in our activities.

At the same time, emails allow you to stay in touch with customers, so you need to have emails that are versatile on this point as well. Therefore, choosing how to manage corporate emails is never just an internal factor, but also external in terms of communication.

2.1 How to choose internal email management structure

What we recommend is to have a single platform, so you have a single management system, using cloud services. An easy way for an organisation to start with is to use a Microsoft or Gmail system and define a set of emails and a space to move around, a common drive, at no upfront cost.

Generally, the purchase of a domain can be done with the prospect of using cloud services, for example, Google or Microsoft, basically, so you have nome.cognome@nomeimpresa.it. For small profit organisations, you have to understand exactly what the needs of exchange between people are, that is, if there is a lot of traffic expected (for example, to respond to customers or to organise the work), if there are many emails and how to save them daily.

What we recommend when thinking structurally about your online space is:

- Emails are not just emails, but should be the keys to accessing a sharing space. Often, from our experience, especially in micro-enterprises, we tend to start with low-quality servers thinking only about costs, without thinking about what is actually

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necessary. In this way, you create the e-mails nome@nomeimpresa.it, but then you realise that you do not know “where” to put the files, so you create an e-mail nomeimpresa@gmail.com. At some point, it happens that the email nome@nomeimpresa.it is not enough or versatile, so you get to use nomeimpresa@gmail.com which, however, seems unprofessional. So, what to do?

- E-mails alone do very little: they need effective and secure dialogue tools to bring together more services.
- Some services seem inexpensive, as they give many emails, but the space granted is a Gigabyte, which is more or less the space they occupy emails for a year. Then what is to be done? Delete e-mails? Do continuous backups (i.e., saves) and then? If you need to see content again, how do we do it?

Of course, the key point in choosing email and setting is deciding 1. What unique way can you identify that of your company 2. A space that everyone can access and where they can sort files according to a data storage scheme. 3. What collaboration tools we need.

In this sense, we return to the cloud strategy we have already talked about in Unit 3.

There is no unique way to respond to organizational needs, but you must definitely compare what possible budget you can invest and which solutions are currently present in the market.

One of the classic examples of email management, at least in Italy, is the use of Aruba that allows, with a relative low investment, to have a domain and hosting. This is a space for a basic site and some email addresses depending on the options, however generally with a space that stands at 1Gb per email account, but you must be careful that these emails are not connected through a sharing space, as they have limits regarding their use of sending

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data. In addition, as usually happens, you have to install a management program to be able to access comfortably from your computer or phone (Mozilla Thunderbird is an effective and free program that helps to do this).

Many companies, to overcome this, use Google's G Suite services that allow a personalisation of accounts and at the same time maintain the name @nomeimpresa.it, the use of Google services and a 30 Gigabytes starting space (video call, calendar, use of Drive spaces for easy and simple storage of files, even for those who do not have confidence, as well as the use of YouTube and Google Maps for the enterprise and much more), but how? Combining email management with Google and site management with Aruba. Clearly, this is an example.

We propose below a comparative table, just to give an idea, compared to the services existing between various email service companies (and much more) at the minimum possible level of cost.

Feature	G Suite	Zoho	Office 365 Business	Yandex
Custom Domains (@nomeimpresa.it)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
24/7 support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Filter Spam	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

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Start price/user	EUR 4.68 (as a first year launch offer)	EUR 0.90/user (up to 5 users is free forever)	EUR 4.20 (standard)	EUR 0
User space	30Gb	5Gb	1Tb (storage) and 50Gb (email folder)	10Gb
N. people video calls	150	—	300	—
Annexes	25Mb	250Mb	20Mb	25Mb
Complementary services	Gmail, Drive, Meet, Calendar, Chat, Docs, Sheets, Slides, Keep, Sites, Forms, Currents	eWidget, Developer Space, Tasks, Notes and Bookmarks, Calendars, Drive,	Outlook, Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote, Microsoft Teams, OneDrive	Wiki (maximum of 100 pages), Calendar
minimum N. account	1	1	1	1

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Max N. account	500	300	300	1000
For desktop	Windows, MacOS, Linux	Windows, MacOS, Linux	Web version only (available in higher versions)	Web version only
For telephones	Android, iOS	Android, iOS	Android, iOS	Android, iOS
Third-party app integrations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, but limited

Table 1. Compare cheaper plans of some customizable email companies. Data as of January 2021.

To go deeper.

G Suite: <https://workspace.google.it/intl/it/pricing.html>

Microsoft: <https://www.microsoft.com/it-it/microsoft-365/business?market=it>

Zoho: <https://www.zoho.com/it/mail/zohomail-pricing.html>

Yandex: <https://connect.yandex.com/pricing/connect>

2.2 How to use emails to maintain relationships with the target group

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An intelligent way of working with *free* massive email sending services is the use of [Mailchimp](#) and [PhpList](#), both in terms of acquisition, newsletter and after-sales relationship, for example, with e-commerce.

Both these email marketing service platforms allow you to group contacts according to logic (e.g. “suppliers”, “customers”, “employees”, “friends of the organisation”, “volunteers” etc.) and allow you to create attractive emails according to formats already created or customizable without knowing code, but according to a block construction.

They can be used for:

- Define updates within an organisation, for year-end wishes, to explain what has been done, to update on objectives;
- Launch products or send offers in terms of testing new products or services;
- Define a regular newsletter service
- Thank you in the after-sales phase of products, to ask for opinion or to add product reviews on a site. Generally, through e-commerce (let’s talk about it in the next unit) it is possible to generate coupons or discounts to encourage people to interact and re-purchase, thus honing the knowledge of customers or people who frequent our spaces.

3. WhatsApp Business

One tool that is underestimated by organisations to sell or explain what kind of services they can offer, whether for profit or not, is WhatsApp for Business. It allows, unlike the ordinary WhatsApp app, to show the catalog of what they do and to share it with the people who interact with our entity. It is free as ordinary WhatsApp and flanks an entity with additional functions.

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Specifically, it allows:

- The creation of short links: it allows new customers to easily connect with you. Share the automatically generated short link with new customers to allow them to send messages to your business.
- Messaging tools: you can use WhatsApp messaging templates to create key conversations in advance, such as automatic greeting messages to interact with new customers.
- You can set absence messages to let customers know when you're coming back or create quick answers to answer the most frequently asked questions. For more information about messaging tools, simply look for the WhatsApp Business guidelines.
- Labels: you can sort conversations with customers into useful categories, such as “New Customers” or “Pending Orders”.

The limits of WhatsApp Business:

1. Promotional, advertising or marketing communications may not be sent. You are only allowed to respond to a person who contacts the Company as a result of an advertisement placed outside of a chat.
2. Does not allow automatic messages: in this sense, you can't rely on WB to remember billing deadlines, for example. You'll have to write by hand. However, there are possible simplifications.

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3. You can use WhatsApp Business APIs to automate responses, though, it has an average cost of 3 cents per message (via official vendors). It is a cost that only large organisations can afford. In this sense, it is easier to do the following: synchronise on a calendar of expiry dates to wish, solicit etc. and prepare on an online document also accessible from mobile (just a document on Google Docx or Microsoft Teams).
4. You cannot send massive messages, except through the use of the “broadcast” tool, which works similarly to the hidden copy of emails. The maximum number of broadcasts is 256. The further limit is that if the user has not saved your number, he will not receive your message at all. The use of third-party services that violate these terms, there is blocking or removal from WhatsApp Business.
5. Using WhatsApp Business, you can't save contacts on multiple points, but only on your business phone. In fact, WB aims to maintain security with respect to the privacy of users and to avoid abuses in the use of personal data.

In general, WhatsApp Business allows you to easily manage questions and offers for a customer who *is already interested*, but it is not a direct marketing tool, i.e. it is not possible to send promotions to people. The use of WhatsApp certainly has the advantage, then, of being the leading messaging app, so you can reach many people.

Many micro-enterprises, to avoid the limits of WhatsApp Business at the level of contact with potentially interested people, create interest groups to stay in touch with customers. They animate such groups in this way with offers, coupons, information and so on.

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Otherwise, simple WhatsApp can be a useful tool for the broadcast, that is, the massive message on your contacts address book, especially when you have an affectionate clientele or at the time of departure of an organisation.

It is not to be underestimated, then, especially in the promotion of events and in generating word of mouth.

4. Telegram for organisations

Telegram doesn't have a dedicated area for an organisation, but it can be an interesting tool for organisations.

Telegram allows the creation of groups of up to 200,000 users, but it is not recommended to use at the business level in terms of users, instead it can be very useful if it is used as an internal communication group.

In fact, the real strength of Telegram is in the channels, that is, communication one-to-many: the administrator can only send messages, while users can only receive. The channels can be public or private and there is no limit on subscription to a channel. Telegram, then, has no limits of channel creation.

How to search for a channel? You can search on Telegram (the app that is available for desktop and mobile), so it is important to identify the name of the channel with the name of the organisation.

The channels are identified through links, with the form t.me/nomeimpresa and the fundamental concern is to be able to register people in the same. How do you do that? By linking the link to the organisation's newsletter, proposing it several times in Facebook posts, Instagram sponsorships, via invitation messages on WhatsApp, in confirmation emails etc.

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Clearly, the question we need to answer as an organisation is: why should a person sign up for the channel we offer? What's the advantage?

Let's make a list:

1. Telegram is easily integrated with WordPress, so people no longer need to go and check our site to see updates, but can comfortably receive it from the app.
2. Questionnaires can be entered directly within the channel to ask questions about the satisfaction of certain products.
3. Special content can be sent to those who are subscribed to the channel, as well as discounts, in order to increase the number of possible subscribers to the channel.
4. Micro-blogging can be favored, for example, with the use of tools such as <https://telegra.ph>

The beauty of a Telegram channel lies in having a group of people who are *already selected*, so one can think of a sort of “protected space” in which the recipient is part of a certain universe.

The limits to having a channel are:

1. The limits regarding the appearance of subscription to the channel: it is not easy and easy for people to register.
2. It is not possible to have contacts of people who are subscribed to the channel. In this sense, it is important to create content that is attractive and that people can click on in order to leave their contacts. For example, the discount we talked about before, must be released in the form of a *landing page*, i.e. a single page on which you can download a discount in exchange for the release of your data.

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The channels are very useful especially for business communication, for example, to give organizational messages and so on, of course, you will have to ask the people who work with us to download Telegram!

Telegram's strength is to create so-called BOTs, i.e. simple artificial intelligences that answer questions in a precompiled manner. Clearly, to do so, small investments are required, but in any case it is necessary to understand if it is worth it. There are, however, strategies to do it for free by following the Telegram manuals.

Telegram still has only 400 million users (WhatsApp boasts 2 billion) and many organisations still don't consider it very attractive from an investment point of view and results.

5. Messenger

Facebook allows, then, through the developer *tools*, that is for the IT consultants in charge, to build a small chat box directly on its site. It can be, in fact, an excellent tool to better interact with its customers and not only: even people simply interested in having more information about your products and services.

6. Tools for video calls, such as Zoom/Skype/Google Meet

Within an organisation, especially during the lockdown period, the use of video apps is crucial. That's why choosing one means weighing limits and qualities. Compared to video apps, if you use Google and Microsoft services, they already have internal video-chat applications.

The use of video calls must be privileged to solve more complicated situations and according to specific needs. In the course of "Organizational Ethics" we talked about how to best use videos in a thoughtful way.

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But how else to use videos for external organizational communication purposes?

The use of video can be very interesting in streaming and video support to explain new products, services, enterprise communications and so on. It is very useful and, above all, interesting for the people who follow our organisation and who identify with the brand.

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5. E-COMMERCE

- How to plan an e-commerce
- How to set up an e-commerce: platforms and digital payments
- Security of payments (SSL certificates)
- How to promote an e-commerce

1. What is an e-commerce

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E-commerce is often exchanged for a simple digital store, i.e. a showcase that allows commercial, consulting, or non-profit activities to be able to *sell* its own products, materials or intangibles. In fact, an e-commerce is much more and needs a real strategy that needs study, preparation, because an e-commerce is not a simple “being online”, like a real store is not a simple “have products to sell”.

Already at the end of the 1990s, the first studies on e-commerce (Kare-Silver 2000; Kumar 1999) indicated a direction: e-commerce was not just another way of selling, but it would change the same organizational structure as a company.

Building an e-commerce is different from having a simple website, as it requires the secure exchange of data between user and business/organisation, a privacy policy, that is, the user *must* know how their data will be used and how much. In addition, an e-commerce means production of content, management of orders and offers, relationship with the customer, being able to manage above all the logistics part, then the planning of shipments, contracts with couriers, billing, and so on.

In addition, having an e-commerce is choosing which platform to use to develop it, and for each platform you need a digital IT consultancy to personalise it better than the needs and image of the organisation.

1.1 E-commerce or marketplace?

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Let's take a first consideration to understand the difference between your own online sales space, e-commerce, and a presence on established platforms such as Amazon, e-Bay or Shopify. What exactly are we talking about?

An e-commerce is a space completely managed by your organisation, in which there is customisation and complete control of the steps, from the choice of payment buttons, to customer management etc. While a marketplace is a space run by large operators where you can place some of your products. In this case, if you have the advantage of already having a system set up, you will incur percentages on the sale (i.e., a percentage increase that will increase the price of your products), and in a space where you have limited means to make your business image appear.

It can be a tool, clearly, important for an organisation that looks for multiple sales channels, trying to make the most of the communication tools within the same marketplace. For example, Amazon allows, thanks to its size, to have internal marketing and advertising payment tools, in order to be discovered.

In this sense, the choice of one or the other is strategic with respect to what you want to do and achieve, and what and how many resources you want to invest.

Let's take a concrete example: if you are a small hardware store, it makes little sense to have your own e-commerce system, but it will make more sense to create your own e-commerce page within eBay or Amazon because they are environments that attract the most for electronics components, households etc at low cost, so it can be a great showcase with an already defined audience. Of course, we must take into account the committees asking for both giants, which range between 10 and 15 %.

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But if you are a wine producer, it will make little sense to put your wines, both for commissions, and for consistency with your own image, the so-called brand, which we talk about shortly.

It is good to continue reading to understand what are the opportunities of an e-commerce and how to align them with your organisation and goals.

1.1. Planning an e-commerce

The creation of an e-commerce is defined through a series of steps that is essential to take into account.

- Strategy
- Brand
- Products
- Cost planning
- Marketing and communication
- What technology
- What content
- Customer management
- Logistics

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- Payment systems
- Legal and security aspects
- Your final vision

In this sense, when you ask an e-commerce consultant, you do not talk, therefore, about “putting on a digital store”, but it is about making a broader reflection on the strategy to be implemented, which content, which marketing will support our digital action. Relying solely on technology for the success of your e-commerce is like attributing the success of your store to the walls that support it. In other words, just because you are online or just because you have a certain system, or apps, etc. does not mean selling. Clearly, the choice of technology is functional, it's crucial, but you can't think it's a substitute for strategy, so your message.

Therefore, when you ask for advice on the development of an e-commerce you have to make a plan first, understand exactly why you need it, who could access it, how to make it visible. In fact, if it is true that e-commerce technology allows us to sell, the real asset of an organisation is the message it gives, the value of the products, the relationship it has with its audience, whether they are consumers, or that they are not.

1.2 Strategy

Each organisation has different goals and its online strategy means being able to understand what you want to do: for example, discovering the profile of certain customers,

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understanding what words people are looking for online compared to our product, finding new ones, or establishing simpler and more direct relationships with our potential customers.

In this sense, it is essential to ask yourself the question: *why exactly do you want to be online?*

Let's imagine for a second that you are a winery that wants not only to have a physical store, but to open a digital one. What are your goals in going online?

We might think:

- 1) Sell more single bottles in multiple countries;
- 2) Sell packages selection of bottles.

But before selling, you have to consider another simple fact. We must first exist online and allow more ways that can lead to our page.

In this sense, it is important:

- a. Register on local maps, such as Google My Business maps.
- b. Take care of the best social pages where our regular customers can be (Facebook, for example)
- c. Have a website or have a presence on multiple specialist blogs

Therefore, as soon as we have a sufficient online audience, and that we can analyse through convenient tools such as Google Analytics, we can think of structuring as a goal to try to turn visitors into potential consumers.

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Clearly, those goals can grow and can redefine themselves depending on the growth of your organisation. You will then have to prioritise according to your growth, your situation, and in this sense measure our online presence is essential to understand who, how much, and how people read what we have, and if they do not, why and what solutions to define.

To summarise, a strategy refers, therefore, to the online presence. Selling is the last degree within a digital system. The structuring of an e-commerce must therefore be linked to the question: how do we want people to find us to actually buy what we want? In short, to return to the example of the winery, they can see photos of the company, videos of the collection and methods used, or an interview with current members of the management, the map to arrive, offers, can write and ask for information or visit the social pages linked to your site, then, they will see reviews, customer contributions etc.

For more information about online presence, go to Unit #1 on the online reputation of businesses.

1.3 Brand

An e-commerce must be functional to the brand and positioning of the organisation. In other words, an e-commerce must contribute to the reputation of a company and its products,

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what in jargon is called brand strategy. The brand, the name of an organisation, is what makes it recognizable, what sets it apart from the rest, and that avoids price competition.

As you can imagine, it is not the product that makes the difference, or rather, not only, but it is the set of values and stories that are around an organisation.

Having a brand clearly expressed in our e-commerce is the first factor of trust. In other words, if I don't know you and I can't trust you, I will hardly go buy on your page.

Therefore, we do not talk about cybersecurity (that we see later), but of general confidence that is given by the site, history, content, how others talk about it. The human aspect remains crucial in building a corporate image.

Some basic points.

- Is the mission on your e-commerce clear?
- Can you tell you what your product is responding to?
- Do you see clearly on the page what your customers think?
- What standards and values do you want your customers to associate with you?

If your company has existed for some time, you will be able to quickly answer these questions through what will later be a “philosophy and values” page (about us, who we are or what you want to call it) to explain exactly the brand that defends. It is essential, then, to understand what customers expect, to do market research in order to better define your brand and on which parts to work the most.

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A fundamental part of branding is to thank, it is to make customers feel close and part of the mission of your store, something that until a few decades ago was only thinkable by the biggest brands: now it is possible and feasible thanks to digital tools, often free and, in any case, now at extremely advantageous costs.

Clearly, the initial phase of studying an e-commerce is in building a strategy and how to 'stack' various aspects, and it has the aspect of a business in the business (if you are a company already active in the sale).

Therefore, defining an e-commerce means facing a new entrepreneurial enterprise, and not a simple complementary system to the main organisation, with investments, precautions, strategies and choices that can really lead to growth and not just be an offshoot of your company.

1.4 Products

Presenting the products in the best way means making recognizable what we do, and from the graphic point of view, from the point of view of the story, from the point of view of what customers can expect and from the point of view of sales.

In this sense, it is necessary to simplify the accessibility of a site, making it easy to consult and acquire products. At the same time, it is important to understand the added value of the products sold.

How to best present your products:

- Have captivating photos and videos on your e-commerce;

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- Have a writing calibrated for the web (it is called SEO-oriented writing, i.e. the optimisation of the search mechanism. Let's talk about it in Unit #1 of this course)
- Being able to have a uniform presence on Facebook, Google My Business, WhatsApp Business: this means that products must also be promoted on social media with a uniform approach, with consistent information, and so on;
- Having recurring offers, the possibility of having refunds, clear FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) are strong points that strengthen and give value to the image of an organisation's products.

Finally, last consideration: having an e-commerce does not necessarily mean selling all the products, but it can also refer to a certain type of products (if we go back to the example of the cellar, maybe we will make the choice not to include all the products, but to have only a certain range of products based on the potential audience and based on the online presence strategy that you want to have).

1.5 Cost planning

One of the classic questions you ask a consultant for the development of an e-commerce is: how much does it cost?

First it is necessary to do a mapping of the actions that move around an e-commerce that concern not only the aspect of digital development, but also content development, maintenance, customer relationships, marketing, order management, payment systems (PayPal, Google Pay, etc.), automation of a series of processes (automatic electronic

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billing? Automatic Thanks? Etc.), contracts with logistics platforms, people who will work concretely in putting together the products (if we refer to the example of the cellar) and what packaging (we must be sure that our products will not break, for example), the legal system that protects consumer data, but also guarantees for the correct delivery of products (e.g. delivery, reimbursement, claims, etc.).

Therefore, the answer to what it costs, we can say: it depends. Exactly, it depends on the various aspects that you need in a platform and that refer to a number of features that we try to summarise in the following scheme.

Digital development of the platform

Sales analysis and stock planning

Analysis of data and visits

Content analysis and customer relationship optimisation

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Data protection

Privacy and data management

Terms and conditions of sale

Generic ecommerce planning scheme

Digital development of the platform:

- Hosting and domain (if you don't already have a site)
- Choice of e-commerce development environment and definition of spending
- N. of products to load and level of page customisation
- Choice of payment system (PayPal, credit card, etc.)

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- Choice of languages (one account is having products in a language, one account is having two or three. This also influences the chosen hosting criteria, i.e. the ability of the virtual machine to support operations)
- Maintenance and revisions of the e-commerce platform

Communication:

- SEO-oriented content development for the site (texts, photos, videos)
- Social media posts (texts, photos, videos)
- Analysis of visit indicators
- Periodic Reports
- A/B testing of products and content

Customer report:

- Order monitoring
- Stock Monitoring
- Management of returns/recesses/
- Chat and maintain relationships (to this end tools such as Messenger developed on the site or WhatsApp Business)

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Shop

- Product catalog management
- Planning of promotions and discounts
- Packaging & Boxes
- Sales analysis

Initial investments:

development of the site (if you have none), license costs e-commerce tool (for example, if you use WooCommerce, it is free, while others are licensed), logistic facilities (if necessary), legal adjustment costs (privacy, terms and conditions of sale, VAT number and registration Cam. of Commerce) etc.

Fixed and variable costs of management:

personnel, licenses, payment gateways, possible activation of shipping plans (you need to identify tariffs), privacy plans/sales conditions (in terms of legal/commercial advice) etc.

Costs (investments) marketing and communication: search engines, email marketing, social media

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Revenues: Orders, average receipt, conversion rate (how much I sold based on what I invested)

An element that requires separate reasoning is that of logistics on which it is fundamental to reflect to set in motion the e-commerce: remember, in fact, that the sending of physical products is subject to the presence of a logistics, from which to calculate the shipping costs, packaging, packaging, etc. that will affect the final cost of the shipping products. To these, as we will see, must also be added the costs of the payment system (PayPal and credit card) because they apply percentages on sales.

Finally, if you are a new business, you have to put into account the legal aspects of e-commerce, from a VAT number, to the various authorisations, steps with the accountant, etc.

To make a summary

In the basic costs of an e-commerce, it is necessary that the digital base, i.e. loading products and platform, and the logistics base are in order. From the point of view of the production of online content, from the basic point of view, only the basic information of its products is sufficient. Finally, maintenance, hosting and site costs are inevitable initial and recurring costs.

Compared to having an online strategy, this must be functional to the goals that an organisation wants to give.

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The other legal aspects of tax formalisation are also costs to be taken into account at the beginning of the development of an e-commerce.

1.6 Marketing and communication

Compared to online presence, one has to think about one thing. The level of organic visits, that is, of people who can independently find and visit, increases with time, while paid traffic, what you get by paying online advertising, tends to stabilise and make less difference. Clearly, this is a rough speech.

Compared to marketing and communication, we have already addressed the issue extensively in Unit 4. Just to summarise the possibilities of finding customers and being able to channel traffic into our e-commerce, these are the sources:

- Organic Research (SEO)
- Paid Search (Google ADWords)
- Posts on social networks
- Paid posts on social media
- Email marketing
- Content & Blog
- References via links from other sites

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Therefore, as an organisation, we must keep in mind that an e-commerce does not sell the products itself, but requires constancy, commitment, promotion, dedication, presence. At an early stage it might be useful to be flanked by figures who can develop ad-hoc content to test products, to develop editorial plans, to do training on how to make the best use of the tools available.

1.7 What technology

Defining what e-commerce technology is essentially depends on how you want to deal with the target group of customers, whether to focus more on products than their description, for example, whether to bet on larger numbers or on a more 'trustful' relationship.

Let's make a summary of the main existing e-commerce platforms. Our advice, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises in the primary sector, is to build a relationship with their customers and, above all, with potential ones, so that it is not the price that makes us competitive, but the quality and stories of the organisation we are leading.

In general, an e-commerce, from a technical point of view, is not a simple site, but requires management, as we have seen, of several aspects: warehouse management, order management, customer relations, invoicing, definition of price/logistics rules. So, you need a focus to figure out which platforms are currently most popular.

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WooCommerce

WooCommerce is one of the most popular ecommerce platforms. WooCommerce provides the entire management for those who want to sell products online. It is free from a technical point of view. It requires, of course, computer work to make it customizable and upgradable.

The real strength of WooCommerce is that it is a WordPress plugin, the most well-known “site building” platform, as it is open and open source. The plugin is a non-autonomous program that interacts with the main program to expand its functions and make it versatile in multiple fields. In other words, most WordPress plugins or themes are compatible with WooCommerce (clearly, at the time of site definition, be sure that the theme chosen for your site is compatible).

To make WordPress work best with WooCommerce you need a good hosting plan and a security certificate (SSL) that makes your platform secure. Clearly, this must be predicted at an early stage of e-commerce development.

Main features

- WooCommerce-specific plugins and extensions with an assortment of e-commerce features, both free and paid.
- Unlimited products.
- Easy integration with the rest of the site

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- Technically free (the license has no cost), but you still have to pay for hosting. Digital work lies in its personalisation.
- WordPress community support.
- Supports both international and regional variants of payment systems

Pros

- The data is managed directly by the organisation, so it is not entrusted to third parties.
- You have complete control of the sales chain.
- It is scalable and versatile.
- It has no loading limits, nor are there percentages to pay on the use of the software.
- It has a good online community of reference.

Against

- Hosting is not included. In this sense, the support of an IT consultant is needed.
- Small learning curve for WordPress if you want to try your hand at using it. In this sense, there are many online tutorials that patiently guide you step by step in development.

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Recommended for

- Any type of business, from small to large.
- Who wants to have control and personalisation over their company.

Shopify

Shopify is an ecommerce platform that has become very popular for convenience, simplicity and the ability for anyone to create their own store without prior computer knowledge. On the other hand, Shopify does not give customisation and does not allow special graphics. Shopify is ideal for those who don't want to dwell too much on design, or branding. It is definitely functional, safe, easy to navigate. You can choose the theme, but most of the aspects get stuck. For example, you can only customise the Initial Page of your store and make a few other choices, also has limits on variants of the same product (think, for example, of the same oil that has multiple sales formats).

Shopify is the ideal tool for those who focus more on sales, thanks also to the integrated rating system (product evaluation).

It supports major payment systems, but in the case of third-party payment tools, Shopify charges percentages on products.

Finally, unlike WooCommerce, it requires a basic monthly payment.

Main features

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- Easy-to-use interface.
- The style of your store is based on templates (schemes)
- App store for extra features.

Prices

- Shopify Lite: \$9 a month.
- Basic Shopify: \$29 a month.
- Shopify: \$79 a month.
- Advanced Shopify: \$299 a month.
- Shopify Plus: \$2,000-40,000 a month.

Pros

- Extreme ease of use to create a store in a few steps.
- No technical and design skills are required.
- Easy to integrate with social media.
- Adaptable to small and large stores, both *physical* and digital.
- Ability to purchase domain directly in Shopify.

Against

- Limits of personalisation.

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- The Shopify Lite version does not include hosting (so you calculate \$9 per month + hosting costs).
- Fees for third-party transactions can become expensive.

Recommended for

Small businesses, retail stores or people who want to round up with a small complementary business.

Magento

It is the third most used platform in the world of e-commerce, open source and scalable, just like WooCommerce. It has a very wide spectrum of customisation and is especially suitable for those activities that have many products or that are located to manage, for example, multiple stores. It allows you to have a single account that can manage multiple online stores at once. You will not need to log out of one store to view the data of the other. In this way you can control the data of each store, such as orders, billing and inventory from the same control panel. In addition, it allows the analysis of visitor behavior and can be integrated with other plugins. Like WooCommerce, there is no hosting, so it will have to be planned from the start.

Pros

- Extreme Personalisation

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- Management of multiple stores, products and complete vision of all processes
- Scalable, versatile and integrated
- It has no monthly costs (except in the Enterprise version)
- Easy navigability for customers

Against

- there is no customer support to ask for help in implementing and troubleshooting.
- it requires high development skills, especially development skills.
- it requires a substantial investment in machine resources, due to the large number of functions.

Recommended for

- large shops and with the need to reach more customers.
- complex store management.

PrestaShop

Among the most interesting e-commerce software, there is certainly the open source platform Prestashop, easy, light and intuitive, especially suitable for small stores. It has easy accessibility even for those who do not have computer knowledge: it is ideal for those who want to sell online and do not have an excessively wide product catalog.

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Pros

- high degree of customisation (through digital work)
- can be integrated with your site (to be checked according to the plugins)
- it integrates all the functions of e-commerce: organisation and management of stocks, choice of shipping methods, management of legal aspects such as the adaptation of payment methods to European laws and the configuration of taxes according to the location; creation of offers, coupons and communications with customers; order and customer management, sales statistics and much more

Against

- Hosting is not included
- Requires advice from a programmer, just like Magento and WooCommerce
- If it's true that it's free in the basic version, extensions can cost, but they don't have annual costs. So, it's good to have an effective sales strategy.
- Not efficient at the level of duplicate content

Recommended for

- Small shops and commercial activities
- Small manufacturers who want to focus on expanding sales

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1.8 What content

When designing an e-commerce, you have to think about the internal contents that, in basic form, are:

— High quality photos: we generally talk about still life, that is, photos that can best capture the characteristics of a product.

— lyrics: the texts vary depending on what you want to represent and what you want to tell.

The content, then, must be built functionally to SEO: in fact, we often talk about copywriting, that is, web-oriented writing and that manages to work best by interfacing with search engines in order to be found.

Compared to content, they are often underestimated as a determinant of an e-commerce, in reality they are the real co-star of the IT structure. Therefore, clear, simple texts, directed to their audience and requests, captivating photos, pure, modern, professional make the real difference from the reliability perceived by a customer.

Asking professionals to write texts means evaluating the complexity, the time of collaboration, how much research is needed, the initial availability of texts and the support from the company, the optimisation of the text in SEO key to be able to introduce keywords, graphic clarity, etc. In this way, it is possible to establish that an average cost of development contained in Italian is around EUR 25 per 300 words, i.e. an article of medium complexity.

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Discourse aside requires translation, which is not easy to translate into the language, but requires adaptation to the characteristics of the language itself and the searches most done online.

Further issues then relate to articles, website animation, and so on.

In any case, when planning an e-commerce it is good to consider this aspect when asking for advice from a web agency.

1.9 Customer management

Customer care, or customer management, refers to the development of a strategy in order to predict all the criticalities, possible questions, clarifications, etc. that a person can have before, during and after an order, in order to explain in a clear and simple way the possibilities before which he or she might be. It is important, in fact, to provide already in the phase of realisation of an e-commerce area an FAQ area (that is, of frequently asked questions, from *English frequently asked questions*). Examples:

1. How do I place an order? Can I buy products that are no longer on the site?
2. How can you pay? Is the payment safe?
3. How long do the ordered products arrive? What are the shipping costs? What happens if I'm not at home when my package is delivered?

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4. Can I change my mind and return what I bought? How long do I have to return an item and how much does it cost me? What do I need to do to make the return? When do I get my refund?
5. Can I change a product because I want a different size or color? How do I make the change?
6. Is it mandatory to register to buy? How do I delete myself from the site?
7. Can I make a gift and have it sent to an address other than mine?
8. I forgot my username and/or password. How do you recover?

Having a specific policy for each of these questions is not pure formality, but it leads to an organic organisation around e-commerce and not only: it makes it a truly tool for the customer, not just for the organisation. Customer care, the ability to be reassuring, being present, solving technical problems, etc. are fundamental elements to build reputation, to make people *return* to our site, so what we do is really the brand we proclaim.

1.9 The logistics of an e-commerce

Clearly, this part refers especially to those who have physical products. There are 4 points to analyse: **1. Warehouse or drop-shipping; 2. Choose the courier and the right rate; 3. Packaging and Box 4. Terms and conditions of sale.**

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1.9.1 Warehouse or drop-shipping

The Warehouse: you only need them if you sell material products and especially if you plan to create a wide and varied catalog for your online customers. So you need a place with all the items in prompt delivery that you will indicate as “available” within your e-commerce. If you have a physical store, you already have this space. If you're starting from scratch, you have to plan it in your own costs or make arrangements with others who already have warehouses in your areas. In this space, you will have to enter all the goods purchased in advance and ready to sell. Stocking means also knowing how to balance the initial investment, so as not to find yourself with unsold goods in the warehouse that you will have to dispose of. To make that process more efficient, you can use your usual business management system or have a very simple cloud system like Google Sheets or Microsoft Excel online, so that everyone can update the change of incoming and outgoing goods.

If you want to manage food products, remember HCCP certification and related food maintenance rules.

An alternative solution is drop-shipping, i.e. the sending of products without warehouse. This greatly reduces the initial costs for those who want to start and avoid warehouse costs. It consists of selling a product online without having it physically in a storage warehouse, so the product remains in the hands of the supplier, and whose sending is coordinated by e-commerce. The items, therefore, are brokered by the seller on the basis of a commercial agreement between primary supplier and seller, with a view to common advantage.

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It is therefore not necessary to pay in advance the goods with the risk of indebtedness and unsold. It also saves in terms of inventory and packaging (packaging of products).

However, there are a number of critical elements: 1. It is necessary to identify in advance reliable suppliers who, for example, withhold money from customers and do not place the order; 2. Understand what the actual final cost is: in fact, you risk having a very low gain, due to the additional VAT and marketing costs or any returns etc.

In this sense, careful analysis must be made.

1.9.2 Choose the courier and the right rate

First, you need to understand in which areas to send in the world and to what kind of services to access. Therefore, it is essential to have a multiplicity of tariffs and to be able to understand what the differences are. Generally, one must have in mind where it is sent, what is the weight of the sending products and the characteristics of preservation of the same, i.e. if they are fragile or the way of preservation.

With respect to shipments, reference is made to the final weight of the sending package and in particular cases also to the calculation of the volumetric weight ratio, by means of sending coefficients defined by the shippers. Generally, the volumetric weight is obtained by multiplying the volume of the neck in cubic meters (achievable by multiplying width x length x height) with the weight/volume ratio coefficient (volume coefficient) of the courier.

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Couriers very often use volumetric weight instead of actual weight as aircraft, trucks and cargo containers fill up before reaching the maximum permissible weight and consequently the size alone is not enough to calculate the size of a neck.

(We have prepared for you an exercise on the calculation that you can find useful for shipments)

Including this value, it is possible to understand with which courier you can ship according to the sending area. In this way, if I have a final value volumetric weight of a total number, I will be able to understand how that total value is treated for each area to which we ship the products. Therefore, when we ask for advice for the development of e-commerce it also means doing this: we have to put it as one of the activities to do with the consultants we contacted.

1.9.3 Packaging and box

Choosing the packaging of the products, the one that contains them for sending, is a strategic choice: on the one hand for branding, on the other to ensure that they are not destroyed in the various steps. Therefore, it is necessary to do an analysis of the cartons, the arrangement of the products, as well as a number of complementary products that can cushion the stress of the journey, such as so-called chips or the like.

Surely, it is important to be able to combine elegance and practicality of the shipping packages, so as to affect as little as possible the final cost of the shipped products.

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The use of packaging and packaging material is then subject to the payment of a mandatory fee, as a compensation criterion for the additional costs of separate collection and recycling derived from online shipments, and to push more and more towards the use of sustainable material. Such a contribution depends on the material used, and each EU country has its own legislation.

1.9.4 Terms and conditions of sale

The construction phase of e-commerce also means planning the legal and sending aspects. What happens if a dispatch fails? If the product arrives broken? Do we refund or not? What happens with people's data? How do we allow contact with respect to problem solving?

In this sense, it is important to define all these aspects in a visible document that must necessarily be part of the work of e-commerce development.

1.10 Payment systems

Digital payment systems are generally those digital tools and technologies that allow online payments in complete security, traceability and immediacy thanks to the Internet.

Online payment is generally based on the concept of payment in advance: orders are paid in advance, as they are ordered by the customer and are then sent by the store upon receipt of the sum corresponding to the order. They can be carried out by bank transfer, credit card or prepaid card (rechargeable) or by means of tools that are intermediaries between customer and online store.

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The customer is protected by the terms and conditions of purchase and the reputation of the store. It is important, therefore, to understand if a site is reliable.

But what are the real online payment guarantees?

1.10.1 Payment gateways

Let's talk about the so-called payment gateways. A payment gateway is what keeps the payment ecosystem reliable, clear, secure, as it enables online payments for consumers and businesses. If you are an online store, you don't need to be a payment gateway expert, but it's worth understanding how an online payment starts from your customer to your bank account.

In this sense, when designing an e-commerce, it is essential to ask your consultant what type of gateway to install, and what is the right one for your company.

Payment **gateway is** the technology that acquires and transfers payment data from the customer to the buyer and then transfers acceptance or rejection of payment to the customer. A payment gateway validates the customer's card details, ensures that funds are available and ultimately allows successful payment if there are all the correct conditions in terms of the data provided. It acts as an interface between a merchant's website and its buyer. It encrypts sensitive credit card details, ensuring that information is transmitted securely from the customer to the buyer bank, via the online store.

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The payment gateway acts as an intermediary between the customer and the merchant, ensuring that the transaction is executed in a secure and timely manner. In this way, it not only protects the customer, but also protects those who sell that, otherwise, should verify first-hand the correctness of the data, which is unlikely and unverifiable. An online payment gateway simplifies the way to make payments and provides tools for those who develop e-commerce to implement it correctly within the online store. As an intermediary during payment processing, the gateway handles sensitive customer card data between the buyer and the merchant.

Why is it necessary to structure a payment gateway (we will soon see what types and technologies exist)? When you are online the customer card cannot be physically moved to a POS terminal, as you would normally do if you process the payment in a physical store. Therefore, you can only rely on the card information that the customer is entering on the payment page. But how can you be sure that the card used by the customer is their card? In card transactions not present, the risk of fraud is significantly higher and it is here that a payment gateway makes the real difference. In fact, beyond the risks of fraud, a payment gateway also protects against expired cards, insufficient funds, closed accounts or excess credit limits.

Therefore, the real work of a **payment gateway takes place behind the scenes, those that a customer does not see, but that allows double security, on the side of who sells and who buys.**

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To accept card payments and use a payment gateway to transmit online payment data, you must have an intermediary account, which is not to be confused with your organisation's bank account. This intermediate account, which is like a kind of deposit, can only be validated through simple banking operations that are already planned and guided by the chosen gateway system.

1.10.2 What are the main gateway systems

Gateway system	Commissions/costs
Payline	It has various calculation methods, depending on whether you have a card physically or virtually, based on volume and average transactions. Here is the link https://paylinedata.com/credit-card-processing-pricing/

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Stripe	1.4 % + EUR 0.25 for European cards 2.9 % + EUR 0.25 for non-European cards
Authorise.net	2.9 % + \$0.30 per transaction, For international payments: + 1.5 % compared to 2.9 %. \$49 initial license \$25 monthly payment
PayPal	3.4 % + EUR 0.4 per transaction To calculate transactions: https://www.onlinefeecalculator.com/
2Checkout	3.5 % + EUR 0.3 per transaction

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This table is the extreme summary of some of the most important payment gateways in existence. It is good to specify that there are many others and that they allow payments, even on a regional basis. Why would one prefer one to another? From an image point of view, you can also choose different ones, because our customers can be fond of one way of paying compared to another.

In this sense, we may also consider having Apple Pay, Google Pay, Amazon Pay or others, depending on how we want to allow payment and whether it suits from an economic point of view (each system has, clearly, its own rules of transaction, maintenance, etc.).

1.10.3 How to choose a payment gateway system

It depends.

Here we insert a series of questions to ask your consultant without going too technical on each one, so as to guide you on the choices to make, the questions to ask, how to think about the architecture of payments and what costs to take into account.

1. Which payment systems are supported by your e-commerce platform? If you have opted for one of the platforms listed above, rest assured that you can have all the possible options.
2. Do you want customers to enter payment details on your site?
3. Do you want to work with a single payment gateway or with different ones?

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4. What taxes are acceptable to you?
5. What kind of payment do you expect? For example: will you also work in foreign currency or accept only euros? Do you want to charge recurring payments? Useful if some of your products are subscription-based. Or maybe you want to act like a market and take payments on behalf of sellers who are listing their products on your site. Gateways can have limited functions, so it's important to understand your needs.
6. Do you support payment methods that are preferred by your target market? For example, if you're referring to a high-end audience, they're likely to have Apple and Mac, so maybe they're already used to the Apple Pay payment system.
7. What industry do you have of reference? There are, in fact, those sectors at greatest risk, so certain gateways do not work with this type of activity.

1.11 Legal and security aspects

When defining an e-commerce, you must have clarity on all aspects of buying and selling, browsing, revocation of data. In this regard, you should check the main laws on electronic commerce and consumers code, as well as the dispositions following the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, Reg. UE 2016/679).

Therefore, having a clear document indicating how the products are delivered, what are the steps for the return, what are the forms for complaints, etc. is crucial. The GDPR also intervenes (let's talk about it in the next unit) to define the use of data that is done once a customer has registered, but also while browsing the site. Of course, why it is necessary to

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clearly indicate which automation systems are used and what types of data are being processed.

For this reason, virtually all e-commerce sites have a window that appears when we connect to the site that asks if we agree with the use of data. We talk about cookies, that is, the digital traces that we release and that the sites use to allow us to navigate the sites.

It is the right of consumers to refuse the use of third-party cookies, such as data analysis systems, if they want to remain somehow “unmonitored”. On the other hand, it’s important for e-commerce to be clear about the data they use, how they use it, how long they will be used and for what ends. This will certainly contribute to the corporate image and reputation.

Necessary pages on an e-commerce site are:

- Privacy and data policy: you need to detail how the data will be used and what systems you will use to monitor people (for example, if you have a Google Analytics or Facebook Pixel monitoring system, you will need to make it clear).
- Terms & Conditions of Purchase: generally, this document is drafted or reviewed by a lawyer, otherwise, you can find many digital on which to build the work base and integrate it with the normal management systems that you already use if you have a physical store. When you make a purchase, pay attention!
- An FAQ section is not a mandatory element, but strongly recommended to improve clarity with its customers and also as a working protocol that is also useful for couriers, employees etc.

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Another fundamental fact at the level of laws to be respected to make an e-commerce compatible with the regulations, is to do an in-depth research at the level of the traded product, at the level of competition with its resellers/trade agents, with export rules and with additional rules in terms of authorisations. So, if you trade food or perishable goods in general, it is mandatory to have HCCP certifications. If you export, you will need to do a country-by-country study in terms of export rules, if you need to have a warehouse, if you have to open a separate VAT number etc.

Finally, all those technical aspects, for the definition of e-commerce, in terms of VAT, electronic registers of the Revenue Agency, registration in the Chamber of Commerce, Digital Signature and PEC (certified electronic mail) that are elements to be placed in the calculation of initial expenses, in case you are about to start with an online business. These aspects, generally, should be entrusted to the expert guidance of an accountant, especially in the initial definition of the entire legal system, ATECO assignment and definition of the various tax aspects.

1.12 Vision on e-commerce

What we have defined so far are aspects on which we will have to reflect on to open an e-commerce and be able to have an organic system on strategies, the steps to put in line to have a mature and functioning digital store.

In terms of promotion of e-commerce, upstream, we should first do market studies comparing various sources, the various competitors, which template and what practices to

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implement, especially in order to be in line with a certain image, with a certain brand and that knows how to best represent its products, its lines, its business and work perspective.

Effective tools to move are market tests. In order to move with certainty, in order to avoid unnecessary investments, it is good to use landing pages, for example, single-page sites with a brand tied to a new product to understand whether or not it can be effective in terms of interest and sales. Otherwise, why not use incentives by email to our regular customers compared to the release of a new product? Planning these elements can lead to more than just e-commerce, but rather define a community of interests around your products and what our company expresses.

2. Promoting e-commerce and data analysis

Having an e-commerce means going through the aspects of the digital economy in a mature way, but it could be halfway if you think it's a sufficient factor.

In fact, there are additional elements to keep in mind so that an e-commerce does not become a double-edged weapon:

1. It must be thought that solving the criticalities/needs expressed by customers is an element of promotion of an e-commerce.
2. We must be able to quantify and qualify visits on our e-commerce.
3. It is necessary to define an investment in terms of online advertising.

These topics have already been dealt with separately in the other units of the course. To summarise them again:

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1. When defining an e-commerce, you must bear in mind that the relationship with the customer is crucial, that it is on social media, that it is in terms of reviews, that is in terms of relationship via email. It is unthinkable *not to give answers* to a customer: this can greatly affect your reputation, especially at a time when comments written on forums, pages, etc. are visible and readable by everyone. But what to do if a customer undeservedly gave a negative review? Right here we recommend both reviewing unit #3 on social management of module 2, as well as adopting a set of simple rules.

- a. Show yourself available in resolving the situation by referring to a private contact.
- b. Avoid publicly attacking your customers, especially not to endorse the customer's opinion or thesis, triggering further debate and reaction from any other customers.
- c. Refer to existing links and policies if these grievances concern clarified elements (e.g.: if a customer accuses you of not having received the refund, it is sufficient to refer to a link summarising the refund details, so as to support the argument that, once you have purchased a product and finished the test time, refunds are no longer eligible).

2. When planning an e-commerce it is important to ask your consultant about installing Google Analytics and having access to it. It is enough to have a Google account and connect to www.analytics.google.com and explore the various data of visits, time spent, exit pages, geolocation of people, average age (if any, if set by options), and click products by article and so on. Being a free tool and easily consulted even by non-experts, it is good to equip yourself with it. Along with this, it is also good to discuss the definition of other complementary tools, such as Google Search Console to understand what words people write to find us, which devices, which pages we appear on etc. Google Tag

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Manager is another tool that allows us to have further advanced analysis. What we recommend is to explore further in-depth pages in order to make our e-commerce a talking book to understand what data can be used to refine the shot, and get even more to our customers.

Clearly, having additional marketing tools means informing our visitors on the privacy & data pages.

3. As mentioned also in the initial planning of an e-commerce, especially if we are little known, it is important to invest in initial advertising. Not only: if e-commerce represents an organisation's new field of work, it is good to invest in promoting it and making our target audience aware of the new opportunity. The initial visits will be driven mainly by online ads, whether they are social or that are born from Google Ads. With time, organic visits, i.e. those not paid, will increase.

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