

11 Tips to Prep Your Brand for Growth in 2020

For Brands that Want to Give Back



“Oh great, another top 10 list,” you might be thinking...

First of all, this list has 11 items.

But joking aside, I’m sure you’ve seen a list similar to this before. Once you dive in, though, you’ll realize this one different. In this lineup, we walk through some lesser-known strategies that can help sustainable eCommerce brands their revenue goals at lightning speed.

More and more, we’re seeing how conscious brands see higher customer loyalty and turn one-time buyers into frequent shoppers.



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1 Don't Fall for the Silver Bullet Fallacy

A common myth is that there's ONE thing—just a single tactic waiting to be sniffed out—that will revolutionize your business performance.

For example, two years ago, everyone in eCommerce was talking about Facebook ads as some one-size-fits-all business savior. That throwing \$5,000 per month at them would solve all your problems.

The harsh reality: Nope! One single tactic, no matter how effective it seems, isn't going to take your business from average to outstanding.

Focus on crafting and refining a strong marketing mix. Get a little better every month. Find all the right pieces and put the puzzle together to build the bigger picture.

2 Find Out What's Holding You Back

Do you ever hear crickets? Like where the business is quiet—too quiet.

If so, the first thing you need to do is get real with yourself and be honest about what you think is suppressing your success.

Humans are naturally horrible at evaluating ourselves and finding (not to mention acknowledging) our weaknesses. The same goes for reflecting on our own businesses.

So when you get stuck, look outside yourself. Look at your reviews, see what people are saying on social media and ask customers for feedback through surveys and interviews.

Customers will give you the best, most unfiltered insight into your business. They have no problem calling out any weaknesses they see. Nothing is more eye-opening than unbiased commentary from a loyal shopper.

3 Develop—and Share!—a Clear Mission

Anyone can start an eCommerce store...literally! If you don't have a compelling story—and make the effort to weave it into everything you do—customers won't care about anything other than price. You become a commodity.

As a brand, you need to convince people why your company is better than the hundreds of other options available. Don't just spend 6 minutes on your "About Us" page and call it a day. You need to use professional photography and hire a copywriter. A buyer has a 100 unconscious reasons not to buy, and you have to overcome those objections before they'll purchase.

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Having a more-than-money mission is a great way to differentiate an eCommerce brand. And sharing that mission is integral to a strong marketing strategy. Find something you're passionate about—like sustainability—and bring it into your business. Then talk about on your website, in emails, on social media. Consumers love businesses that stand for something...that rally around a cause they believe in.

4 Dominate Content Documentation (Not Creation)

To stay top of mind in a fast-paced retail world, brands have to put out new content frequently. It can feel overwhelming because the platforms are endless—your website, email and of course the burgeoning list of social media platforms. So find your two best marketing channels and create consistent written, video and visual content.

Pro Tip: Use a “document don't create” approach. Determine 5 rotating topics and build content around those areas. When you're a mission-driven brand, your content should tell the story of your mission: What do you believe in? Why? What are you doing to help?

Content Tips

- Set a posting schedule and stick to it
- Get comfortable in front of the camera
- Film weekly so you have a lot of content
- Break up content into easily consumable bite-size pieces
- End each post with a question or call to action
- Engage with others' content
- Periodically analyze which of your posts perform best

5 When in Doubt, Start With Email

Email marketing is your friend. The oft-overlooked communication platform is actually the most profitable way to communicate with current and potential customers. It's a long-game strategy and requires a good deal of time and effort, but it's something we prioritize for most brands.

We could spend weeks talking about how to build a successful email marketing strategy for your eCommerce business.

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Instead, here are a few lesser-known tips:

1. Focus on email list growth. If your list isn't growing, test a new pop-up or A/B test your subscription incentive.
2. Nail the subject line. Nobody will see your content if they don't open the email. Test, test and test again when it comes to email subject lines.
3. Create simple emails (we're fans of text-only messages). Companies waste too much time on creative.
4. Have the email come from you or another employee, instead of from your company name. This is more personal, which is of the utmost importance in email marketing.
5. Examine your email list and test your automation every 3 months. We've seen it too many times where customers aren't sent emails because the systems weren't connected correctly and oops, 25% of the list isn't being sent to!
6. Prioritize your highest-ROI messages: Cart abandonment, browse abandon, post purchase emails and your welcome series.

*“For every \$1 spent, email marketing generates \$44 in ROI.”
- Campaign Monitor*

6 Become a Magnet: Network, Network, Network

Business leaders need to network, period. The more friends you have in the business, the easier it is to get sound advice, find reputable providers and learn faster.

You hear the stories about brands that get massive venture capital investments and grow, grow, grow. Well, venture capital is really just another form of business networking. (We're not saying you'll land a huge VC agreement, but it's a poignant example.)

Allocate time each week to 1) meet new contacts and 2) deepen the relationships you already have.

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In our programs, we execute something called #100conversations. When you create time to add 100 deep connections into your network, you walk away with 100 more advocates for your business.

7 Purposeful Social Proof

Customer reviews and testimonials are the backbone to any store's success. Have you ever gone to an Amazon product page with zero product reviews? Did you purchase that product?

Social proof is insanely important. Don't just wait for someone to do a product review on your website—ask for it! To get reviews, you need an email script and way to pursue reviews. There are great tools like **Stamped.io** that help brands acquire more customer reviews.

Build your social proof from various sources, including customer service conversations, review apps, social media and customer surveys.

8 Find New Markets

While we mostly talk about brands from an eCommerce perspective, we preach the need for retail brands to build a multi-channel selling strategy. Consumers shop in so many different ways, so limiting yourself just to selling just on your own website reduces your exposure to shoppers.

Look for other sales outlets that align with your brand: wholesale, other online stores and marketplaces, physical pop-up shops and multi-brand collaborations. You'll increase your presence and find new buyers.

*Despite all the hoopla, ecommerce make up only 11% of all retail sales.
- U.S. Census Bureau*

9 Build an “Unboxing” Experience

Packaging makes a huge impression on your customers and can impact whether or not they purchase from you again.

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Many consumers hate excessive packaging. This is a relatively new expectation and comes along with the trends in sustainability. Wasteful packaging is a major turnoff and can stop environmentally conscious consumers from buying again.

Take Action: Head to your store right now and send yourself a test order. When it arrives, see how the products and order are packaged by the warehouse.

If part of your company's mission relates to the environment in any way, shape or form, you absolutely must remove wasteful packaging. Customers will appreciate your consciousness, and you can talk about (and show!) your green efforts.

Since this is a big deal right now, there are companies like **No Issue** that are creating compostable mailers and 100% recyclable packaging. There are also options to make your delivery carbon-neutral through offsets. **Etsy** recently launched an offset program that costs them less than one penny per package to offset all carbon emissions from their business. Their customers loved this!

10 Extend Your Product's Lifespan

These days, there's a conscious commerce movement that encourages higher quality over disposability. Fast fashion isn't a positive term anymore—many consumers are willing to pay more for things that last.

Fashion brands such as **Eileen Fisher** and **Patagonia** have found success offering repairs and "take back" programs. Consumers appreciate knowing the products aren't going into a landfill when they're done with them.

Think about what your product's "second life" could be. Finding new uses for your existing products essentially gives your brand another product to sell.

Second hand has become a huge business. Find out where your product goes after its "first life" and develop relationships with second-hand resellers.

Build Your Own Brain Trust

11 You don't have to go it alone.

The eCommerce retail world is a litany of moving targets. Skip the costly rookie mistakes and jump right to implementing tried-and-true strategies.

Smart brands develop partnerships with experts so they're always making informed decisions and making the best use of time and resources. Utilize your business network and LinkedIn to create an ad-hoc advisory board.

Brands are at various stages in the process. Some hire full-service agencies while others utilize a strategic advisor like Needle Movement to bring their in-house team up to speed and affordably navigate the wild world of eCommerce.

HAVE FUN STORMING THE CASTLE

Do you want to actually take action on these growth tips and start seeing the benefits?

Learn from, partner with and work with Needle Movement to avoid costly mistakes and skip right to the big marketing wins. Our packages are designed for businesses of many different sizes.

Schedule a Growth Session with Needle Movement:

www.needlemovement.com/lets-talk-1

