

Localize and Influence:
7 tips to Conquer
Cross-Border Commerce





When your company begins to cross international borders and dip into global eCommerce, you may have to rethink current practices. The same approach that has helped your business become a significant presence within its own home market may not be flexible enough to cope with the complexities of selling around the world. Below are 7 tips to help you conquer Cross-Border Commerce.

1. Have a Plan

Considering the high financial stakes of any international business venture, your company can't improvise a cross-border strategy as it goes along. The preexisting plan should address multiple aspects of the new market, from the unique demands of customers in the region to language preferences, transaction standards and cultural factors that may impact buying patterns.

As no two countries are the same, even those that are geographically close, your organization should have a separate and detailed plan for each new market it intends to enter. From marketing to sales, customer care to shipping and logistics, every variable must be accounted for in these multiple plans.

2. Know Your Target Customers

Cross-Border success starts with knowing your market, something many retailers struggle with. You have to know who they are, where they are, and what they want to hear.

Customer expectations are key to creating the type of eCommerce experience that will encourage loyalty and repeat business. Unless your organization has access to accurate and localized consumer data, it may have trouble aligning its offerings with norms around the world, and this could, in turn, destabilize multiple parts of the experience.

Expectations will determine everything from appropriate shipping options to preferred payment methods. Some

countries largely operate on cash-on-delivery models, while others have become almost entirely payment-card based. Logistics matters, both in terms of delivery and returns, are also subject to a wide variety of assumptions and baselines around the world.

3. Localize Where Possible

Your company has a consistent brand that should be maintained no matter where in the world it operates. Some elements, however, must change to suit conditions in your chosen markets. Currency is an especially important factor. As Multichannel Merchant contributor Michael Bilotta indicated, 25 percent of shoppers leave immediately if they can't make a payment in their own currency.

On your eCommerce site, transparency and clarity are extremely valuable. Performing a late currency conversion may negatively surprise consumers at a key part of the transaction, convincing them to give up on a purchase. Any sorts of hidden fees based on cross-border taxes or duties may also cause concern. When your international shoppers know what they'll have to pay as early as possible, in their own currency, they'll have less reason to leave.

Every possible aspect of a cross-border commerce should have specialized offerings for each relevant country. This extends to quality control and transaction auditing. If your business doesn't have visibility into its own operations at a local level, problems with a new market may be going largely unaddressed.



4. Know the Rules for Compliance

Some parts of the commerce experience are too complex and essential to take on without specialists. Teams of experts should be brought in to ensure organizations are in line with tax rules, credit card usage regulations and customs practices. When any one of these areas is neglected, shipments may have trouble reaching their destinations, weakening the customer experience and trust in a retailer.

This is one of the areas where a third-party eCommerce partner may be most helpful to your organization, as top companies in this space have existing expertise that spans the globe. Your business gains access to this experience when it joins a partnership.



5. Leverage Marketplaces Intelligently

Opening your own eCommerce storefront in a new market may not be the ideal first step into that region. Instead, it may be preferable to work with a marketplace site such as Amazon or Lazada that already has web and logistics infrastructure in the country in question. Using a third-party commerce partner to interact with these web portals can keep your offerings consistent and quality high.

When you're interested in testing a market or making a low-risk step into that area, the value of marketplaces is especially high. If sales on a marketplace grow sustainably and local shoppers are receptive to your company's offerings, you can open a dedicated and localized eCommerce website to continue your expansion in the territory.



6. Pick the Right Partner

Following the best practices of international eCommerce is easier and more effective when you have a partner organization on your side. This third party shouldn't be just any company, however. Sticking with established and experienced organizations that consistently meet service level agreements is a way to ensure this link in the chain doesn't break down.

Companies that understand multiple local markets, with offerings that span from customer care and marketing to logistics and transaction processing can give you the customized end-to-end service you need. Going it alone into international commerce can leave your business more vulnerable than it will be when it finds a qualified partner.



7. Seize the Cross-Border Opportunity

Despite the many challenges of expanding a company across international borders, the potential for return on investment is too great to ignore. The promise of eCommerce, since the beginning of the medium, has included the ability to reach a huge potential audience around the world. This won't be possible without extra effort, however. Following the best practices of cross-border commerce helps your organization reach its potential.