

Comparison Shopping/Marketplaces Best Practices

1. ***The principles of managing your Comparison Shopping Engine (CSE) efforts are just like any other lead source.*** Define metrics, budgets and expectations early. Then, test often after launch, measure and adjust. This is not “submit it and forget it”. There are free and cost-based CSE’s.
2. ***Comparison shopping is not yet dominated by one or two major providers, so there are fewer standards.*** Be prepared to spend time setting up different formats for each network. This is a key value add benefit of CSE management providers.
3. ***Start by listing higher margin products first to determine how successful the medium can be for you.*** Before you invest the significant amount of time required to list lots of products, you want to prove to yourself you can do it profitably. You can refine your affiliate product feed to start.
4. ***Optimizing for CSEs is similar to optimizing for SEO.*** Titles are important for determining the rankings of your listings. Make sure they are succinct, without promotion verbiage, and that the order of product attributes is correct for the given CSE. Category names don’t perform as well as brand names. Complete and detailed information in the product description sections is also important.
5. ***Specify as many attributes as possible for your products.*** Your products will not display in related searches if your data feed does not explicitly call out attributes (color, sizes, variations etc.).
6. ***Adding and managing multiple online channels can be taxing for smaller online businesses.*** At around \$1 million in online sales, the scale becomes sufficient to aggressively invest in multiple channels.
7. ***Outsourcing some components of online sales and marketing operations has proven effective for over two-thirds of survey respondents to a recent Jupiter study.*** CSM is a ripe area for utilizing such a practice.
8. ***Experiment with different categories for your products, especially when the Cost Per Click (CPC) for your product’s main category is very expensive.*** Placing a product in the “toy” category instead of “electronics” may reduce the acquisition cost sufficiently to justify a previously unprofitable channel.
9. ***Category-mapping is one of the most tedious and error-prone aspects of using multiple CSEs.*** Studies show significant numbers of products are inadvertently placed in the wrong category. Solving this problem for multiple CSEs may be one of the highest benefits of using a shopping channel management provider.
10. ***Many CSEs offer a no-click, no-cost option.*** While these won’t generate much revenue, they can be used for brand-building. Look for niche-oriented CSEs. Their conversion rates would be higher than general purpose CSEs, although with a higher CPC.

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