

International eCommerce Best Practices

1. **Research your customers.** Understanding in what country your visitors live will help you understand if there is a current market for your products internationally. If you currently ship internationally, look at the traffic and orders from the top countries as a guide to indicate which countries should be launched first.
2. **Conduct an international market assessment.** Look at the international competition for your products. Can you compete there? Is it difficult to ship your goods there? Can you use a regional partner or fulfillment company? Which countries look most promising? If you sell a product that no one else does, great. If it is not sold internationally because it is not a product that has a market there, not so great.
3. **Investigate your site capabilities.** International eCommerce may not be supported on all eCommerce solutions. If your current solution cannot support international eCommerce, some third party providers can run international eCommerce sites for you and send you orders to ship.
4. **Think hard about the cost benefit ratio.** The benefit and sales generated from going international is often hard to determine due to unknown differences in the international marketplace. The costs are known more accurately, but there will still be some uncertainty based on the level of international sales. Look at both carefully and create multiple scenarios to plan for in advance.
5. **Ship internationally and/or fulfill internationally; consider both.** At some point, it would make sense to open an international fulfillment center. Shipping times, cost and customer service implications can all be improved by fulfilling internationally (even through a third party), but factor in set-up costs.
6. **Make sure you consider local customer privacy laws.** Customer data privacy laws vary by country. Some countries do not allow their citizen data to be sent outside of the country. Hosting in a different country would violate this regulation.
7. **Write in the local language and dialect.** When US retailers first launched UK sites, many did not change to UK English. These sites were not received well. To launch internationally, try to translate into the local language and dialect. If this is not possible, look for a third party to support translation. Using English on an international site would only be a short-term option.
8. **Understand local taxation.** Each country has its own taxation. Canada has similar taxation at the province level to the US at a state level. Other countries have their own regulations that need to be understood and planned into your international expansion strategy.
9. **Make sure you can sell in each country.** Suppliers or manufacturers may restrict sales of their products internationally. Retailers need to make sure they can sell internationally to prevent violations of their agreement with suppliers and manufacturers.
10. **Use local payment and shipping methods.** Carte Blue is not used in the US but it is in France. Ship to a local package store is not used in the US, it is in Germany. Understand the nuances of each country that you plan to expand to and support how they pay and ship.
11. **Plan your organization and work flows internationally.** Having the US merchandising manager handle merchandising for France is easy to say, not easy to do. Each country has its own tastes; they may react differently to merchandising and product assortment, for example. Plan your organization to effectively and efficiently run your international eCommerce sites.