

# ComeUpSmiling Ecommerce Guide

## a) Potential Costs

When selling products online, it's important to appreciate what the set-up and maintenance costs are likely to be. Firstly, a domain needs to be registered (**£5 to £20**). Next is hosting of the site, and for your average ecommerce store of several hundred products, this will be around **£100 a year**.

The price of the web design is far more difficult to predict; considerations include the design style and complexity of the products that you want to sell, plus options such as customer accounts. Some design companies choose to charge a monthly fee (typically **£100+ a month**) which includes hosting and the site design. An alternative is to make use of an ecommerce package such as Actinic, JShop Server, RomanCart, osCommerce, or XCart, with each one trying to simplify the setting up/maintenance of a shopping site.

**Actinic Catalogue** is **£399 + VAT** (with an extra **£250 + VAT** for one year's support). **JShop Server** is **£200 + VAT** (with an extra **£100 + VAT** for installation and one year's support). **RomanCart** charges a yearly fee, starting at **£50 + VAT**. The web designer would then add on design and set-up costs which will vary depending upon aspects such as number of products to be sold, complexity of design etc. For a typical shopping site using a reasonably sophisticated ecommerce package, expect to pay anything from an **additional few hundred pounds to several thousand pounds** - but remember this web design component is just a one-off payment.

A stand-alone ecommerce package removes the need for an extra monthly charge, and some packages are offered free; generally the more expensive the package, the more sophisticated its options. For example some packages restrict the design style of the site, but then as there is almost a 'standard' three column design for ecommerce sites this is not necessarily a problem. Some packages also expect the buyer to have an understanding of coding languages and/or the initial set-up may be rather complex - again this where the web designer earns their fee.

Photographs will form an integral part of the website; they need to be of appropriate quality, quantity and size. And what about the main or top banner of the website - is this created from your logo (if you have one), or is it simply your company name, or a mix of product images? The banner design could well form part of the web designer's brief, but a logo is usually left to a graphic designer, and then there's still the product and section photographs to be arranged. Depending upon which option you choose, such aspects might cost from **almost nothing to several hundred pounds**.

## b) Credit Card Payments

At this stage you also need to think about how you are going to accept payment for your products. An **Internet Merchant Account** is a special bank account through which Internet credit card payments are made. A **Payment Gateway** is a means whereby transaction data is transferred (with all the security associated with Internet Banking) from the seller's website to your particular Internet merchant account. You

are likely to be charged a set-up fee, plus additional fees for receiving or transferring money. **WorldPay** – part of the Royal Bank of Scotland Group - charges both a set-up and an annual fee, plus a percentage per credit card transaction; **Protix's** small business service currently charges a fixed fee per month irrespective of the number of transactions. **RomanPay** is a Payment Gateway service provided by the makers of RomanCart and costs £150 per year with 150 free transactions per month. In general, expect to pay **a few hundred pounds** per year for this facility.

If that wasn't complicated enough, then the various ecommerce software packages only support certain specific Payment Gateways. Details are at <http://www.actinic.co.uk/services/online-payment.htm> for Actinic, <http://www.jshop.co.uk/gateways.php> for JShop, and [http://romancart.com/locale/payment\\_gatewaysuk.htm](http://romancart.com/locale/payment_gatewaysuk.htm) for RomanCart.

An alternative option is to process credit cards directly yourself. Using a **Secure Server**, the customer sends their details directly to you, and you process them as you would a phone sale. Security is the key aspect here, with data encrypted as it flows from the customer and eventually back to you. First the web browser makes sure that a **Valid Site Certificate** exists, which in turn has been issued by a trusted organisation e.g. **GeoTrust, Thawte or VeriSign**. To set this up is a reasonably complex process, and of course the certifying agency make a charge for a certificate - anywhere between **£80 and £250 per year**. The web hosting company might also charge a small set-up fee. It's a little tricky to get the web designer to do all of this for you as it's a contract between you and the certifying agency, who may well want to do a business check on your company before they issue the site certificate.

**In total** for a site selling, say, **100 or more products**, it would be wise to budget an initial **£2500 to £3500** for all associated website costs, depending to some extent upon whether or not you are going to accept credit card payments directly, with another **£500 to £1000 per year** after this – but obviously it depends on your sales figures and related bank charges. At the other extreme, for a basic 'three-page' site selling just **ten products** via links to individual product pages, and using PayPal, then the website costs might vary between about **£200 and £500**. In either case, there are a wealth of additional aspects to consider, such as are you going to advertise online? What about search engine optimisation? What are the legal requirements for an ecommerce site? Who will change all the price details when it comes to the January sales?

It's important not to rush into selling online and to make sure you are fully aware of all the potential costs; once you've finally got your site up-and-running, then advertising costs could easily make a big dent in your remaining budget.

### **c) JShop Server**

JShop Server (the professional shopping package used by *ComeUpSmiling* for its larger ecommerce sites) provides an ever-expanding variety of interactive and dynamic aspects, such as customer accounts, wishlists, bestsellers, advanced pricing, stock control, gift certificates, newsletters, multiple currency and language support, shipping and tax zones, customer reviews, affiliates scheme, detailed log summary and report data, automatic sending of emails etc. **If you are struggling with JShop Server and need help and advice on any aspect, then**

**please contact us.**

All data is updated via a password-protected management interface, and the JShop package can easily be integrated with a wide variety of merchant accounts, such as WorldPay, Protix, Nochex etc. In addition, the web page style, structure and content can be adjusted to suit each client's specific needs. JShop is appropriate for any size of store, whether or not prices and/or details are likely to change; clients can easily update images, items, and other data themselves via the management interface.

One consequence of the JShop option is that the organisation and administration of the site is very much in the hands of the client. This is generally felt to be a significant advantage, and it also reduces the admin and set-up costs. However, the initial set-up will require (unless it forms part of the original web design quote) significant input from the client, involving the preparation of detailed product descriptions, section headings, product images and thumbnails etc. Such details can easily be added directly via the management interface, or more efficiently via a spreadsheet. If hundreds of products are involved, the client will need to set aside time to do this essential admin task.

To view the management interface for yourself, please log on to the JShop demonstration site <https://www.jshopecommerce.com/v2demo/admin/> both the Username and Password are '**demo**'. Although the interface can look a little daunting to begin with, it provides a wealth of detail and options that you can choose to use or not. Various actual JShop Server stores can be viewed via <http://www.jshop.co.uk/livestores.php>

<http://www.comeupsmiling.com/webdesign>