E-COMMERCE

Online Stores & E-Commerce Playbook

Setting up, running and getting more from custom online stores — from the first template to the dashboard that tells you whether it worked.

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2026 Edition

Print shops no longer compete only on product quality and turnaround; they compete on convenience in quoting, design and checkout. This playbook walks the whole arc: launching stores fast, serving corporate and team customers, measuring performance, and turning first orders into repeat ones.

80%
of customers rate the experience as important as the product

80/20
of business comes from repeat customers

~70%
average cart-abandonment rate to design against

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SECTION 01 · SETUP

Using AI to Elevate Your Online Stores

AI has found its way into nearly every industry, and branded merchandise is no exception. On the e-commerce side of running a print shop, AI tools open new ways to refine your web presence and connect with customers. Used alongside InkSoft Stores, they can help you write HTML, conduct research and improve store functionality for you and your customers.

Content Blocks With AI

Content Blocks add versatility to an InkSoft site. Use them to embed videos, text and images that customize the look and branding of a site, whether it is for your shop or a customer. You can create an HTML block using a tool like ChatGPT for tasks such as embedding a uniform builder or building a store directory.

Incorporating the GraphicsFlow Art Portal

Integrating the GraphicsFlow Art Portal into your InkSoft site enhances how you handle online design requests. Customers submit design requests for specific events, teams and companies, including project descriptions, dates, salespersons and logos. Once submitted, the request enters GraphicsFlow, where it is assigned to a designer.

If you are a smaller business

It keeps art approvals organized and centralized — one place for every request.

If you have an art department

The portal makes it simpler to delegate mockup and approval duties and to communicate with customers.

You can edit these requests without complex software like Adobe Illustrator, customizing text, changing colors and tweaking elements directly in GraphicsFlow.

Templates for Signs and Banners

If you offer signage, you can convert GraphicsFlow designs to an editable format in InkSoft. Once they are in your store, you can create templates for signs and banners and edit text, colors and graphics.

The point of all of it

The key to successful online stores is clean, functional design that gives customers easy navigation and a simple, secure checkout. With a feature-rich store platform, AI tools can enhance that experience and help you build professional, profitable storefronts.

SECTION 02 · SETUP

Fast-Track Store Setup With Templates and Cloning

Staying competitive in e-commerce requires efficiency, especially when you build stores for everything from school teams to corporate clients. Store templates and cloning can transform how you create and manage online stores.

Three Ways to Start a Store

OPTION 01

From scratch

Create a store with a step-by-step guided wizard.

OPTION 02

Clone an existing store

Instantly replicate a store, keeping branding, imagery and colors consistent while saving your team time.

OPTION 03

From a template

Launch with pre-designed layouts built for common categories: sports and team, school and education, corporate and retail, special events, or your own shop.

Benefits for Your Business

- ✓ **Save time, boost productivity** — less setup time means more time to grow the business and nurture existing customers
- ✓ **Creativity without complexity** — professional starting points that are easy to customize, speeding up onboarding and freeing designers for detail-intensive work

- **Consistency in branding** — spin up multiple stores for a larger customer in a few clicks while keeping one cohesive brand identity

Benefits for Your Customers

Templates work for nearly every customer and event. For school spirit and sports, clone a template to set up merchandise stores for multiple teams quickly, and re-launching for the next school year becomes straightforward. For fundraising, a pre-designed template lets you launch a campaign store fast, turning a potentially complex process into a streamlined one.

Why it compounds

Reducing setup complexity and time lets you pitch online stores to more clients, launch campaigns faster and present more polished storefronts.

SECTION 03 · CUSTOMERS

Making the Most of Corporate Online Stores

When you hear “corporate,” you might picture a single type of customer, but corporate stores span a broad range of industries, including technology, healthcare, finance, education, retail and franchises, manufacturing and commercial construction.

Products That Work Well

Corporate stores suit uniforms, company-branded swag and incentive products. Strong categories include:

Branded apparel

T-shirts, polos, hoodies and jackets that build unity and boost brand visibility.

Uniforms

Consistent, professional branding for retail, hospitality and healthcare teams.

Apparel accessories

Headwear, gaiters, scarves and beanies that pair well with shirts and jackets.

Drinkware

Tumblers, mugs and water bottles that are easy to customize and popular year-round.

Customized stationery

Notepads, pens and office supplies for internal and external communication.

Tech goods

Phone cases, laptop bags and chargers, often available through outsourcing.

Totes and backpacks

Employee incentives, loyalty swag or event giveaways.

Staying Creative and Keeping Customers Engaged

Successful corporate stores offer unique, creative options that keep customers interested: themed collections tied to trends or holidays, seasonal and event-focused products, employee recognition items, and tie-ins with local athletic teams that employees are proud to wear outside of work.

Staying Relevant and Flexible

- ✓ Manage inventory and offer backup options to navigate supply disruptions and deliver on time
- ✓ Align products with current fashion trends to keep perceived value high
- ✓ Use technology-driven fulfillment — automated processing, inventory tracking and print-on-demand — for consistency and fewer misprints

The payoff

By providing corporate customers with a seamless online experience, you build long-term loyalty and grow your customer list through referrals.

Selling Signs and Banners Through Online Stores

Sign shops benefit from expanding their e-commerce presence, whether through a mobile-friendly site with secure checkout and easy design-request submission, or through customer stores a shop offers its clients. That digital presence helps signmakers stay competitive as the market changes.

Adding stores often starts with customer demand:

> **“I had quite a few clients ask if I could do stores for them. They saw the value in having all of their different departments and their different employees be able to go into one central place and find items specific to their company.”**
>
> **Tami Napolitano** | Awesome Graphics

That same request tends to keep coming up across all types of shops, so even if you are not heavily into e-commerce, there is a good chance customers will ask for easier ways to buy and customize products online.

Signage Products for Online Stores

Not all signage works well in e-commerce, but a few categories are excellent additions, especially with virtual mockups:

Banners

Durable, portable and versatile for indoor and outdoor use, grand openings, directions and pop-up events.

Yard signs

Compact and popular for graduations, fundraisers, campaigns, parking and sporting events.

Site signs

Danger, prohibition and general-safety signs for industrial and construction clients.

Reducing Confusion With E-Commerce

Online stores simplify reorders — a shop can recall a customer's last purchase and set it up again without new paperwork. A curated storefront also lets customers self-serve from a select set of products instead of guessing what they need in a showroom.

Using InkSoft for Signage Sales

- ✓ **Components for simple design** — header images, contact info, and logo and branding
- ✓ **AI capabilities** — features like chatbots that simplify how you run a store
- ✓ **Cloneable stores** — duplicate stores and connect featured products to supplier feeds, with templates for different categories
- ✓ **Responsive design** — shoppers can use your stores from phones and tablets

SECTION 05 · MEASURE

Tracking Performance With the Store Performance Dashboard

The Store Performance Dashboard gives you a comprehensive overview of a store's performance directly from the admin panel. Both admins and end-customers can assess metrics like revenue, funds raised, coupons, gift cards and more, making it easier to tell whether a store is on track for its goals and to adjust product offerings, layout or pricing.

Accessible Metrics for Admins and Customers

Reports live in the store admin section, and admins can grant end users access. If you set up a fundraising store for a school, for example, you can grant a school administrator access to the report so they can monitor the fundraiser directly. Shop owners save the time once spent relaying updates, and customers can self-manage on their own schedule.

What the Dashboard Shows

Revenue and orders

Total revenue and number of orders placed.

Fundraiser goals

Progress toward your and your customers' targets.

Coupons and gift cards

How many orders used them.

Latest orders

A snapshot of recent orders and totals.

You can also view a product report listing active and inactive products with sales quantities, and customize which metrics are visible to customers. The Store Performance tab is available in all plans, with some advanced features exclusive to Unlimited.

Granting client access

Click the “Store Performance” tab → select “Allow Customer Access” → designate the customer to grant access to → use the dropdown to choose which items are visible, then save.

Practical Applications

Event management

Use a store to register people for events and track registrations and orders.

Product inventory

Make data-driven decisions about what to stock, swapping out items that are not selling.

SECTION 06 · SELL

Pairing Proposals With Online Stores

As the back-to-school season approaches, shops gear up for a surge in demand for custom apparel and promotional items. Pairing InkSoft Proposals with InkSoft Stores gives coaches and school administrators a single, organized way to order team gear, fundraiser swag and club apparel.

A Simple Way to Review Orders

Schools and teams are short on time — a Department of Education study found that many schools report being understaffed. Proposals give those customers a streamlined way to review exactly what they are getting. Add products, custom artwork or an existing mockup inside the platform and send it to administrators. Because the process is online, customers can review details and respond with questions or changes without scheduling a trip to the shop.

Combine Proposals With a Store

Coaches and administrators do not want to distribute and collect paper order forms. Combine Proposals with an online store for a smoother way to track spirit shirts, uniforms and fundraiser swag. You can even use a store as an online order form to cut down on their paperwork.

Meet Modern Expectations

80%

of customers consider the experience a company provides to be as important as its goods or services, one study found.

~70%

average cart-abandonment rate — which an easy proposal paired with a mobile-friendly store helps reduce.

SECTION 07 · RETAIN

Speeding Up Reorders With the Customer Portal

Print shops need hassle-free experiences to keep long-term customers and encourage repeat orders. The Customer Portal speeds up and streamlines reordering for both you and your customers.

Key Benefits

- **Self-service** — customers set up a reorder on their own schedule, without waiting for the shop to open
- **Faster order creation** — reuse existing data or clone an order instead of re-entering information
- **Easier upsells** — clone a previous order and add recommended products to simplify the pitch
- **Seamless branding** — because Proposals connect to Stores, customers get a complete branded experience
- **Fewer mistakes** — stored information means fewer typos and reprints
- **Consistent results and better communication** — less back-and-forth and faster processing

Why repeat customers matter

Studies show roughly 80% of your business comes from 20% of your repeat customers. Repeat customers typically spend more than new ones, cost less to acquire, and drive new business through referrals — so an efficient reorder process pays off directly.

SECTION 08 · BRAND

How Online Stores Strengthen Your Brand Image

A brand image is how customers perceive your business, and that perception forms before they ever make a purchase. In a digital marketplace, an attractive brand image is essential for growing business, retaining customers and attracting new ones — and you can strengthen yours with simple changes, particularly by using online stores.

What a Brand Image Really Is

A brand image is not just about the products you offer; it reflects what your business stands for. One study found that 64% of shoppers said shared values were the main reason they had a relationship with a brand. You do not need to broadcast opinions to convey values — a commitment to high-quality printing, speedy service and an exceptional online experience communicates plenty.

Better Stores, Better Experiences

Today's shoppers want accessible, seamless online experiences. Giving customers professional storefronts signals that you are on top of your e-commerce game. Tools like an easy style editor, a deep feature library and built-in SEO help you appear higher in search results, and a simple, secure checkout builds trust. Because business changes, choose a platform that lets you add custom pages for new services or retail sections when you need them.

Improve Your Customers' Brand Image Too

Your customers can use storefronts the same way you do. A quick setup gets them selling fast, and temporary storefronts work well for time-sensitive campaigns like fundraisers, where simple tools such as countdown timers drive urgency. Better selling tools for your customers mean more merchandise for you to print — and more repeat campaigns.

SECTION 09 · SEASONAL

Winning Team Sports With Online Stores

Team sports remain a major revenue generator for schools and print shops — the National Federation of State High School Associations estimates that nearly 8 million students participate in high school sports each year. Capitalizing on that requires preparation months in advance and the right product mix.

Popular Printed Goods

Printed jerseys

Nearly every team sport needs custom jerseys; locking in designs early leads to repeat business across seasons.

Custom T-shirts

Great for the sidelines, spirit, fundraisers, clubs and events, with room for slogans and quotes.

Headwear

Beanies and caps that work across regions and seasons.

Socks

An easy add-on decorated with school logos and mascots.

Timing Is Everything

The sooner you connect with school customers, the better positioned you are. Send quotes and approvals online to move faster, set up teams and booster clubs with custom stores, and email clients early so orders are placed with time to spare. When something is out of your control — a delayed blank shipment or a sold-out ink color — tell customers early so you can work out an alternate color, product or delivery date together.

SECTION 10 · STRATEGY

Why Offer Online Stores at All

Print shops no longer compete only on product quality and turnaround; they also compete on convenience in quoting, design and checkout. Customers want seamless digital experiences, whether they are ordering custom shirts or launching a branded merchandise store. Offering online stores is no longer a luxury — it is a necessity for serving schools, nonprofits and corporate clients alike.

What Makes an Online Store Professional

- ✓ Mobile-optimized, secure checkout
- ✓ Built-in fundraising and revenue-sharing tools
- ✓ Custom branding across multiple products
- ✓ Virtual product mockups
- ✓ Automated email tools for abandoned carts
- ✓ A store analytics dashboard that tracks profitability

Seven Essentials for Your E-Commerce Strategy

ESSENTIAL	WHAT TO DO
Define goals and audience	Identify key customer segments and pitch products that match their needs
Build a product strategy	Focus on four to eight proven products and price for markup, decoration and fundraising margins
Use stores as a sales tool	Set up demo stores by customer type as sales collateral
Launch hassle-free fundraisers	Make it simple for schools and nonprofits, with clear payout terms
Drive traffic with social	Showcase launches and testimonials, and consider a 30-day posting plan
Win with great artwork	Use tools like GraphicsFlow for templates, easy approvals and visuals that sell
Track, improve, repeat	Monitor analytics for best-sellers, conversion and traffic sources

A connected ecosystem

InkSoft-powered stores handle payment processing, customer portals and bulk ordering for teams, businesses, events and fundraisers. Paired with other Inktavo solutions like Printavo and GraphicsFlow, you can manage the full operation — from customer artwork and design requests to order fulfillment and production automation.



The e-commerce platform for branded merchandise.
From order to delivery.

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