THE SHOP OWNER'S PLAYBOOK

The complete guide to online stores

A print shop's playbook for building & running profitable online stores — from strategy and pricing to fulfillment, packaging, and reporting.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- ✓ Plan your stores and price every job for profit.
- ✓ Turn stores into a repeatable sales and fundraising engine.
- ✓ Streamline artwork, terms, and team fulfillment.
- ✓ Launch in five steps, then track and improve.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Contents

01 Why offer online stores 3

02 Types of online stores 4

03 Plan & strategy — Steps 1–2 5

04 Products & pricing — Steps 3–4 7

05 Selling & marketing — Steps 5–7 11

06 Artwork, terms & operations — Steps 8–10 13

07 Launch & measure — quick start + Step 11 16

$6T

where global e-commerce is heading — the shift your shop can tap into

50+

stores a single solution can run at once as you scale

8

distinct store types you can sell into, matched to each customer

How to use this guide. Work through the eleven steps in order to stand up your first profitable store, or jump to the part you need. Every checklist is built to be done in an afternoon, and every table is ready to copy into your own pricing.

SECTION 01 · WHY & WHAT

Why offer online stores

The demand for convenient online shopping has accelerated across B2C and B2B — and decorated apparel has followed. Online stores are how your shop taps that shift: easier online payment, simpler selling tools, and faster order collection than forms and spreadsheets.

Beyond transaction volume, stores give you a real competitive edge. Online mockups are far simpler than printed samples, so you bring new products to market with less overhead. Most of all, you're selling convenience — and anything that makes ordering and paying easier helps you stand out.

- **Charge more for goods:** end-customers are in an e-commerce experience, not a wholesale one — so you can upcharge. Factor in the time to bag, ship, and support each order.
- **Reach a bigger audience:** pitch company stores nationwide or schools in neighboring towns. More sales, and stronger word-of-mouth.
- **Build a marketing list:** everyone who uses your stores can later receive email about your other services.
- **Tap into niches:** serve musicians, teams, organizations, fundraisers, and company stores.
- **Meet modern expectations:** many shoppers now prefer buying online, and don't want paper forms and checks.
- **Get paid upfront:** set quantities and time limits, and collect payment before you produce.
- **Showcase your shop:** a few live storefronts act as proof of your services to other customers.
- **Enable 1-click bulk ordering:** use your own store for easy bulk decoration — 100 shirts for $499, 1-color, 1-location.

> "We have reduced 90% of our challenges by using InkSoft software… we have streamlined our sales and customers love our new website!"
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> **Geno Talkington** | Wichita Screen Printing

SECTION 02 · WHY & WHAT

Types of online stores

You can pitch stores to nearly any customer. Match the store type to the customer's goal so every store is profitable and successful.

Company & corporate

Stay “open” and keep earning after hours — swag stores for a brand's audience and portals for employee apparel. With larger companies, expect to work with HR.

BEST USES

Employee uniform/swag portals; branded merch for a customer's own audience.

Client portals

A private ordering portal your customer logs into for reorders. Tie reminder emails to the store and pitch complementary products as upsells.

BEST USES

Recurring reorders and account-based upsells.

Team & school

Coaches and administrators want gear ready each season so they can focus on the games. All they do is collect money.

BEST USES

Short-term, seasonal — clubs, team sports, championship events.

Fundraising

Not limited to local patrons — your customer promotes to anyone, and you sell more printed goods. Great for presales tied to an event.

BEST USES

Local causes, nonprofit drives, disaster-relief efforts.

Bundled-purchasing

A quick path to purchase: collect sizes and payment, then move to artwork. Upcharge premium add-ons like bagging, extra colors, or stickers.

BEST USES

High-volume orders needing a fast, simple checkout.

Pop-up (short-term)

A digital order form meets a branded store. Shoppers buy through a link while the store tracks deadlines, payments, and totals; print in one batch when it closes.

BEST USES

School/team gear, campaigns, holiday gifting, merch presales.

STEP 1 · PLAN & STRATEGY

Define goals & audience

Before setting up stores, get a grip on where your shop stands. A quick SWOT analysis is a good starting point.

Example SWOT analysis

Strengths

Existing local customer base — schools, small businesses, city markets and events.

Weaknesses

Limited technology budget and training.

Opportunities

Online fundraisers, team stores, and corporate stores.

Threats

Large-scale, high-volume competitors.

Determine customer segments

Identify your key segments and what each one needs:

- **Local schools:** hassle-free reordering, fundraising tools, simplified team orders.
- **Corporate & business:** branded merch in company colors and logos, fast reorders, an employee portal.
- **Nonprofits:** low-risk setup, a revenue-sharing model, and metrics tracking.

STEP 2 · PLAN & STRATEGY

Build a strategy that sells

Stores that simplify how your customers sell to their shoppers create repeat business — you become the go-to printer for all their custom merchandise, and your reorder volume grows through referrals.

Store setup checklist

- **Product selection & pricing —** a final lineup of initial products.
- **Revenue-share confirmation —** a written acknowledgement (usually email).
- **Store branding —** logos, banners, and pre-approved copy, ready before launch.
- **Promotion schedule —** a plan so the store gets visibility.
- **Open/close dates —** clear start and end dates so you can plan production.

Example success benchmarks

- Team store: $2,000 in the first 14 days.
- Corporate store: 25% increase in uniform reorders.
- Fundraiser: $1,000 minimum payout.

Example revenue-sharing terms

- 20–30% of gross sales donated to the organization.
- Payout within 14 days of store closure (30 for ongoing stores).
- A full sales report provided at closeout.

Tip. Include a clause in your customer agreement making the customer responsible for promoting the store — it's the single biggest lever on hitting benchmarks.

STEP 3 · PRODUCTS & PRICING

Choose products & quantities

A successful store balances variety against overwhelming shoppers. Focus on the 4–8 top sellers you've seen across your customer base; if budget allows, add one or two newer products to test what resonates.

Simple rules for product lineups

Keep it small

Six or fewer products is a good start for most stores, especially those with a set end date like fundraisers or seasonal team stores.

The 3-3-3 rule

Three products, three colors per product, and three designs. Whatever the market, keep the lineup as simple as possible.

Good, better, best

Offer affordable, mid-priced, and premium items — for example T-shirts, polos, and embroidered fleece.

Example core products

- Cotton T-shirt
- Athletic shirt
- Hoodie
- Baseball cap
- Polo
- Decal
- Embroidered polo
- Koozie or keychain

Rule of thumb. Start narrow. You can always clone the store and widen the lineup once you see what sells — leftover blanks are the most common way a store quietly loses money.

STEP 4 · PRODUCTS & PRICING

Price online stores for profit

Stores are excellent revenue generators — but only if they're profitable and worth your team's time. Price with a simple formula: markup + decoration + a buffer for promos and fundraising.

Key details that impact pricing

- **Product types** — standard blanks vs. premium blends and styles.
- **Promotion strategy** — how the customer will promote; no plan means weaker sales.
- **Time investment** — mockups, customization, and shipping/pickup setup.
- **Misprints** — factor in spoilage; every shop has a bad day.

Markup models

MODEL	FORMULA	BEST FOR
Cost-Plus	Cost × (1 + Markup %)	Simple, fast pricing
Value-Based	Perceived value − cost	High-impact items or specialty services
Tiered Fundraising	Retail − flat fee, or Retail − (Cost × % share)	Fundraisers or cause-based stores

Cost-Plus. A shirt costs $8.00 and you want 40% markup → $8 + $3.20 = **$11.20**.

Value-Based. Cost is $8, but fans will pay $20 for a championship tee → price it at **$20**.

Fundraising — flat fee. Retail $20, flat fee $5 → store keeps $15, your shop keeps **$5**.

Fundraising — percentage. Retail $20, cost $10 ($10 margin). Sponsor share 25% → sponsor gets $2.50, store retains **$17.50**.

STEP 4 · PRODUCTS & PRICING (CONTINUED)

Set margins by customer & store

Two quick reference tables — start here, then adjust for your market. The middle column is the number to lock in first.

Suggested margins by customer type

CUSTOMER TYPE	SUGGESTED MARGIN	NOTES
Retail (general public)	**40–60%**	Prioritize perceived value and presentation
School & teams	**30–50%**	Competitive, accessible pricing for parents and students
Corporate / uniform	**20–35%**	Focus on bulk discounts and long-term volume
Fundraisers	**50–100%+**	Based on the fundraising goal and the buyer's audience

Pricing strategy by store type

STORE TYPE	PRICING STRATEGY	NOTES
Public retail store	**Cost-Plus or Value-Based**	Emphasize perceived value
Fundraising store	**Tiered Fundraising**	Communicate how much supports the cause
Corporate program	**Discounted bulk pricing**	May include quantity-based price breaks
Team or school store	**Cost-Plus + loyalty perks**	Loyalty discounts for returning customers

Fees & revenue sharing

Additional fees

- **Flat fee —** charge a set rate to build a store; good for short-term stores with a fixed product count.
- **Product pricing —** waive setup and build cost into prices; good for long-term profitability tracking.
- **Deposit —** tie to print minimums; refund when met, keep if they fall short.
- **Shipping —** charge separately; rolling it in creates “free shipping” that still gets taxed.

Optional: revenue sharing

- **Gross revenue share (recommended) —** tier by sales, e.g. $0–5k: 15%, $5–10k: 20%, $10k+: 25%. Simple to track when margins are healthy (40–60%). Shares apply within each tier, not retroactively.
- **Profit-based share (advanced) —** a share of net profit; more equitable but needs accurate cost tracking across variable decoration and fulfillment.

PRICING PRO TIPS

Always A/B test markups and audiences · let quality visuals justify premium pricing · communicate the purpose of pricing, especially for fundraising · reward loyalty with discount tiers for returning customers.

For high-volume partners — schools, teams, influencers, or organizations that drive real traffic — revenue sharing can replace traditional markup entirely. Reserve profit-based deals for when you already have an established, well-tracked pricing structure.

STEP 5 · SELLING & MARKETING

Use stores as a sales tool

Some customers are already asking for stores; many don't know it's an option. A few qualifying questions help you gauge fit and scope.

Qualifying questions

- Do they have an active community?
- Can that community meet store minimums?
- Are they OK with a limited product/design set, or do they need an extensive selection?

Build sample stores

Create example stores by customer type — schools, breweries, banks — showing 6–10 products with the customer's branding. Then narrow to the eight or fewer that keep the store profitable. A branded sample is the perfect way to start the conversation.

Taglines you can use

- “Sell online hassle-free! No paper forms, checks, or order sorting.”
- “Get a branded online store with your logo — and get paid today!”
- “Ship orders directly with our online stores! No collection or distribution.”

Set sales goals

Benchmarks tell you if the strategy is on track — for example, five new stores a month, or a total online-store revenue target that fits your shop's size.

Sales scripts by scenario

Replacing order forms

“How long does it take to collect all this? We have tools to simplify ordering, apply designs to multiple products, and set up reorders.”

Branding example

“We're a local shop that can simplify holiday gifting for your employees. Check out this example store, with multiple sizes to choose from.”

Value-add pitch

“We can print branded uniforms for your crews, handle multiple sizes, and set up easy online reorders.”

STEP 6 · SELLING & MARKETING

Launch hassle-free fundraisers

Successful fundraising is easy, profitable, and repeatable. Your customers focus on raising money, not order collection or web design — so make it turnkey.

One-page explainer

A sample-store screenshot, a clear revenue breakdown, a partner testimonial, and a contact email and phone for follow-up.

Standardize terms

Pay the partner within 14 business days, have them review final totals, and add a bonus tier for high performers.

Follow-up strategy

Send a thank-you with results and a testimonial ask, request referrals, and schedule a next-season reminder within two months.

STEP 7 · SELLING & MARKETING

Drive traffic with social media

Promote your service — many leads don't know you offer it. Pick two platforms and stay consistent: Instagram for visual storytelling and reels, Facebook for community sharing.

30-day posting plan

- **Week 1 —** highlight an example store with a walkthrough video.
- **Week 2 —** spotlight a customer with photos of finished goods.
- **Week 3 —** post a behind-the-scenes video of your shop in action.
- **Week 4 —** share a giveaway — “Build a fundraiser today and we'll waive setup fees!”

Related resource. See the Marketing Kit Library for ready-to-customize email and social templates by customer type.

STEP 8 · ARTWORK, TERMS & OPS

Win customers with high-quality artwork

Good design drives volume — people buy products with artwork they're excited about. With GraphicsFlow and the design tools in your stores, you can do more with far less back-and-forth.

What the tools unlock

- Offer design templates by market to target customers and prospects.
- Add art portals to store pages for faster design requests.
- Manage approvals and revisions online with GraphicsFlow.

Design in sales & marketing

- Feature custom mockups in emails and social posts.
- Highlight design quality in demo stores.
- Embed an art portal into store homepages.

Example proofing workflow

- **Day 1–2 —** design delivered within 2 business days.
- **Revisions —** one revision round included.
- **Approval —** customer approves via the portal.

Why it matters. A clear, online proofing loop is what stops the endless “which version is final?” — the intake problem behind most reprints.

> **InkSoft has been life-changing for our business, and I can’t imagine living without it.**
>
> **Dan Rossow** · SHIRTWORKS

Set terms & conditions

Whatever store you run, spell out what you guarantee and where you're free of liability. A few key terms to nail down before you launch:

- How are orders handled after the store's close date — or are they allowed at all?
- Does your customer have permission to use and sell the artwork? (Make sure they aren't using licensed imagery like a pro-sports logo.)
- How are returns handled — or are all sales final once the store closes?
- What happens if minimum order quantities aren't met?

Related resource. Use the Copyright & Trademark Release Agreement template to document a customer's right to use their branding on the merchandise you produce.

> **With the technology we have with InkSoft, it's going to give us the tools to grow our company for the next 25 years.**
>
> **Scott Creagan** · Graphic Connection | President

STEP 10 · ARTWORK, TERMS & OPS

Set your team up for success

Whatever the store type, a few operational areas need to be buttoned down: fulfillment, pickup and delivery, and supplies. Together they decide how you stock blanks, how customers get their goods, and how you avoid downtime.

To stock or not to stock?

Many printers now use “just in time” fulfillment instead of stockpiling — a fit for DTG and DTF short runs, and for monthly promo stores that create urgency to buy before items sell out. Supplier freight-advantage programs cut on-hand inventory further. Keep stock only for recurring customers who order the same thing monthly, especially with local delivery.

Pickup & delivery

Offer local pickup to whoever runs the store — for a school, the coach or administrator distributes orders. Store owners can specify pickup terms right on the invoice: “Pick up at the school office, Mon–Fri, 9–5.”

Packaging materials

Stock poly bags and mailers in multiple sizes before launch. Beyond tape and packing materials, keep on hand:

- Clear shipping bags.
- A thermal printer for postage.
- Large and small shipping boxes.
- A thank-you postcard — drop one in every order.
- A coupon or QR code to keep customers shopping.

Ordering schedule for supplies

Order monthly if you have room and a bulk discount; smaller shops do better ordering as-needed, every two weeks or so.

QUICK START · LAUNCH & MEASURE

Build a store in 5 steps

The whole loop, start to finish — from picking a store type to shipping and reusing designs for your next campaign.

- **Choose your store type —** fundraiser, team, corporate, or seasonal.
- **Create your store —** launch in minutes with the store builder or a template.
- **Manage artwork in GraphicsFlow —** use file storage and the graphics library to create and recall customer art.
- **Optimize production with Printavo —** automate scheduling and approvals; organize by job type to hit deadlines.
- **Ship & communicate —** automate customer updates and reuse designs for future marketing.

Pro tip. Store templates let you build a store — or a landing page — quickly, and cloning duplicates an existing store to save setup time. A single solution can run 50+ stores at once, so you stay organized as you scale.

STEP 11 · LAUNCH & MEASURE

Track, improve, repeat

Make every launch smarter than the last by tracking performance where it counts.

- Sales volume.
- Best sellers by product and category.
- Conversion rate.
- Email and social analytics.

A store performance dashboard lets you and your customers drill into which stores are most profitable and which items sell best — revenue benchmarks, fundraiser goals, gift-card use — so you can build stronger campaigns and reorders. Follow every campaign with a thank-you email that includes a direct phone number and a request for a review on Facebook and Google.