

It is tempting to think ecommerce marketing is a matter of choosing a channel, setting a budget and watching orders arrive. The platforms are accessible, the dashboards are full of charts and many tasks can be automated. But a working account or a live campaign is not the same thing as a profitable growth engine.

That is the gap your team needs to understand. Ecommerce marketing depends on the product, the customer, the economics of each order, the experience on the website and what competitors are doing at the same time. The same tactic can work well for one retailer and lose money for another. There is no reliable copy-and-paste setup that removes the need to make decisions, test assumptions and learn.

If you need a simple way to explain it, try this: **the tools are available off the shelf, but the strategy and results are not.** Below are practical ways to make that case, with a focus on the testing mindset, competition reality and margin constraints that shape ecommerce performance.

Start with the difference between “set up” and “working”

Most ecommerce marketing tools are designed to make implementation easier. You can create a campaign, connect a product feed, schedule an email or add a sharing widget such as AddToAny. Those are useful capabilities, but they do not answer the harder questions: who should see the message, why should they choose your product, what can you afford to pay for a sale, and what should happen if the first approach does not work?

Use an everyday comparison. Buying a kitchen knife does not make someone a chef; installing a marketing tool does not create a strategy. The tool can help carry out a task. People still need to decide which task matters, how to do it well and whether the outcome justifies the effort.

This distinction is especially important when a team sees a competitor’s campaign or a platform feature and asks to “do the same”. The visible activity is easy to copy. The context behind it is not. You may not know the competitor’s margins, repeat-purchase rate, stock position, campaign objectives or long-term customer value. A tactic that appears successful from the outside may not be profitable—or even be aimed at immediate sales.

Ecommerce is harder than it looks

A customer’s journey can involve a search result, a product page, a review, a delivery promise, a comparison with another retailer, a basket and a follow-up email. Each step can affect the eventual order. Marketing does not operate separately from merchandising, pricing, stock, customer service, fulfilment or the website itself.

For example, an advert can attract relevant visitors and still fail if the landing page is unclear. A strong product page can still lose the sale if the expected delivery date is missing. A discount can increase order volume but reduce contribution so far that the extra orders are not worth having. In other words, the channel is only one part of the system.

That is why “more traffic” is not automatically a good answer. If the product range, offer or customer experience is the issue, increasing traffic may simply send more people into the same problem. A useful discussion with your team should consider the full path from first impression to repeat purchase, rather than judging marketing only by clicks or sessions.

Make the competition reality visible

Online shoppers can compare products, prices, reviews and delivery options quickly. They do not have to rely on one retailer's description or take a sales message at face value. That price transparency creates a demanding competition reality: customers may leave your site to check another seller, even when they are interested in what you offer.

Competing does not always mean being the cheapest. It means giving the customer a convincing reason to choose you. That reason might be product quality, range, useful advice, availability, service, a trusted reputation or a delivery option that fits their needs. The important point is to understand which factors matter to your audience and make them clear.

Ask the team to look beyond the headline price when assessing competitors. Compare the whole proposition: what is included, how stock availability is shown, what the returns information says, how quickly the item can arrive and whether customer feedback feels reassuring. Then ask where your own offer is stronger, weaker or simply hard to understand.

This helps move the conversation away from "Can we match their campaign?" and towards "What is the customer comparing, and how can we make our offer more compelling?" That is a much more useful starting point for creative, landing-page and channel decisions.

Reviews and delivery are conversion drivers

Reviews and delivery information are sometimes treated as operational details, separate from marketing. In practice, they can directly influence whether someone buys. Reviews help reduce uncertainty about product quality and the buying experience. Clear delivery information helps customers decide whether the order will arrive when they need it and whether the total proposition feels acceptable.

That does not mean every review is positive or every delivery promise will suit every customer. It means the information should be easy to find, accurate and relevant. If a shopper has to hunt for delivery costs or cannot tell when an item is likely to arrive, they may hesitate or continue comparing. If reviews raise a recurring concern, promotional messaging alone may not resolve it.

Marketing and trading teams should therefore share what they know. Customer feedback can inform product-page improvements, advertising messages and frequently asked questions. Delivery performance and stock information can inform what is promoted and when. When these teams work in isolation, campaigns risk promising an experience the business cannot consistently deliver.

Explain margin constraints before discussing growth

Revenue is not the same as profit. Ecommerce growth can look impressive in a sales report while leaving the business with little or no return after product costs, fulfilment, discounts, returns and marketing spend are considered. Margin constraints are not a reason to avoid marketing; they are a reason to judge it with the right measures.

Before increasing spend, make sure the team understands the economics behind an order. The allowable cost to acquire a customer depends on what remains after variable costs and on what the business can reasonably expect from that customer over time. Those figures differ by product, order type and customer behaviour, so a single target can be misleading if it is applied everywhere.

It can help to ask these questions before approving a campaign:



- What is the expected contribution from the order, after relevant variable costs?
- Does the promotion change the margin, and if so, by how much?
- Are we looking for a first order, a repeat purchase or a broader customer relationship?
- What evidence would tell us that the spend is sustainable?
- What is the plan if the result is weaker than expected?

This keeps the conversation grounded. A campaign should not be labelled successful solely because it generated clicks, impressions or sales. Those metrics can help diagnose performance, but the business question is whether the activity delivered a valuable outcome at an acceptable cost.

Build a testing mindset into the plan

A testing mindset is the practical alternative to expecting a plug-and-play answer. It means treating campaign ideas as hypotheses, not guarantees. You identify what you think will happen, choose a meaningful way to assess it, run a fair test where possible and use the result to decide what to do next.

For instance, if the team believes delivery reassurance is missing from a product page, state the hypothesis clearly: making the delivery information easier to see may improve purchase completion. Decide which page or audience to assess, what outcome matters and how long you will observe it. Then check that other changes have not made the result impossible to interpret.



Not every test needs complex technology. Some questions can be answered through customer conversations, support queries, a careful review of analytics or a small change to a page. What matters is being disciplined about the question and honest about what the evidence can and cannot show.

Keep tests focused

Changing several things at once can make it difficult to know why performance moved. Where practical, test one meaningful change at a time. If that <https://smenews.digital/why-specialist-ecommerce-marketing-services-deliver-better-results> is not possible, record the changes and treat the result as directional rather than claiming certainty.

Agree what success means in advance

Choose a measure that reflects the objective. If the goal is profitable acquisition, a rise in clicks is not enough. If the goal is reducing hesitation on a product page, a change in conversion behaviour may be more relevant than social engagement. Include guardrails, such as margin or returns, so a short-term uplift does not hide a harmful trade-off.

Share what you learn

Tests that do not produce the expected result can still be useful. They may show that the original assumption was wrong, the change was too small to detect or another part of the customer journey is holding things back. Record the learning so the business does not repeat the same debate without new information.

Use a simple framework to align the team

When you discuss a new marketing idea, work through a consistent set of questions. This makes the decision feel less like a matter of opinion and more like a business choice.

Question What it helps the team clarify Who is the customer? The audience, need and buying context the activity is intended to address. Why would they choose us? The point of difference beyond simply copying a competitor. What does an order contribute? The financial limits within which the activity needs to work. What could prevent

conversion? Potential barriers such as unclear product information, reviews or delivery concerns. What will we test? The hypothesis, measurement and next decision—not just the campaign launch.

This framework can be used for paid media, email, onsite changes or social activity. It also gives non-marketing colleagues a way to contribute: operations may know about delivery limitations, customer service may recognise recurring objections, and merchandising may understand which products have healthier economics.

Set expectations without making marketing sound mysterious

Saying “ecommerce is complicated” is true, but it can sound like an excuse if it is not followed by a clear plan. Instead, explain the dependencies and the decisions involved. Tell the team what is known, what remains uncertain, what you will measure and when you will review the evidence.

It is equally important not to promise certainty. A forecast is an informed estimate, not a guarantee. Results can change with demand, competitor activity, stock levels, seasonality and customer response. A responsible plan makes room for those factors and identifies how the team will react if performance moves in the wrong direction.

When someone asks for a quick fix, acknowledge the underlying goal. Then bring the discussion back to the customer and the economics: “We can test that idea, but first we need to know who it is for, what makes our offer competitive and what result would make it worthwhile.” This keeps the conversation constructive without pretending that the answer is automatic.

The message to take back to your team

Ecommerce marketing is not plug-and-play because every business is working with a particular product range, customer expectation, cost base and competitive environment. Tools can speed up execution, but they cannot decide what your customers value or whether a campaign is profitable.

Make the case through three connected ideas: the competition reality means customers can compare you closely; margin constraints mean growth has to be judged on more than sales volume; and a testing mindset helps the team improve decisions instead of relying on assumptions. Add reviews, delivery and the wider customer experience to the conversation, because conversion is shaped by more than the advert.

The aim is not to make every decision slow or complicated. It is to make the important decisions deliberate. When the team understands that marketing is a cycle of learning and adjustment—not a switch you turn on—you can set more realistic expectations, spend more carefully and build growth that has a better chance of being sustainable.