

How construction companies can maximise their profits with ecommerce

There remains a belief that the construction industry cannot or doesn't need to make use of ecommerce – but this might not be as simple as it was before. In an increasingly digitised world, no industry is immune, and this is certainly true in construction, where we are seeing more and more businesses choosing to go online.

It has undoubtedly been a couple of years of change. The Covid-19 pandemic has made more people comfortable buying online and this includes in B2B scenarios. Where some companies before would have preferred to manage all of their buying and hiring with suppliers and partners in person, more are opting to do some of their business online.

Many construction companies now realise that this is the case. In fact, it has been reported that 70% of organisations in the industry believe that those that do not adopt digital ways of working will go out of business.

So, if your construction industry business is yet to embrace the digital revolution now might really be the best possible time. Here we take a closer

look at how construction companies can maximise their profits with ecommerce.

Hire an ecommerce manager

If you want to take your business to the next level with ecommerce, it's important to invest in the right staff. You might believe that managing a website and dealing with online sales is something that you can manage yourself, but it can be extremely beneficial to bring in expertise to the business - someone who understands both ecommerce and construction.

"We took the decision to hire an ecommerce manager to lead the company's ecommerce expansion and support the next stages of its growth," says Tony Hobbs, Managing Director of *Southern Sheeting* "We've invested a lot of time in launching our new website. Its full ecommerce functionality allows both new and existing customers to see their own pricing, check live stock levels, and purchase everything online within a few clicks".

Hiring early can make a big difference - having the right staff in place as you embrace digital transformation can help shape the business the right way.

Understand the importance of AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) might feel like something that isn't yet relevant for the construction industry - but that kind of thinking can result in you being left behind. A recent survey revealed that more than half (55%) of larger construction companies and more than a quarter (28%) of small construction companies currently use AI.

It is true that AI can have a very broad range of applications in construction, and it is certainly valuable in ecommerce planning in the industry. Having AI that can analyse demand for products and services seasonally can be a huge advantage as relates to availability and stocking levels, and that is before we even consider its applications in customer service or lead generation.

This is technology that is being used across many industries to boost their ecommerce capabilities, and it can do the same for construction.

Websites support offline sales too

It is now the case that the majority of B2B customers are millennials - the first generation of 'digital natives' who prefer to do their purchasing online. However, it is also true that construction has been an industry that has been

historically slow to embrace the advances in *digital technology*. This means that businesses need to strike a balance.

Remember that when you focus on creating a great website for ecommerce transactions, you are also helping with your offline sales too. Customers will almost always do their research on products and services online first. That means that even those who are going to make their eventual purchase through traditional channels, they will likely learn more about the product online.

This puts an onus on your business to create a website that is not only optimised to make sales, but also provides fantastic, useful information. Design your website with information-based visits in mind, as well as transactional-based visits.

Final thoughts

Construction companies need to embrace the change in the market place and look at ecommerce as an opportunity rather than as a challenge. By bringing in the right staff, investing properly in the technology and infrastructure, and planning for a high quality website that is more than just a sales platform, companies can improve their revenue and maximise their profits.