

25 Must Read Books For Every eCommerce Entrepreneur

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If we encounter a man of rare intellect, we should ask him what books he reads – Ralph Waldo Emerson

The fact that you're reading this blog means you want to learn more about eCommerce. Whether you're a new entrepreneur or a veteran of the industry, you know that your education never really stops. Every time you read a blog post, listen to a podcast or watch a tutorial, you pick up something new that you can apply to your business to grow faster.

While blogs, podcasts, and videos are perfect when you've got 10 to 15 minutes to spare, they don't go into the depth of detail that a book does.

In this post, we'll look at some must-reads for eCommerce entrepreneurs. Read these books and you'll be way ahead of your competition.

Appetizers

If you're just starting out in eCommerce, these books are for you. You've probably come across some of them before. They're in this list because they've changed the way people think about eCommerce and starting an online store. Read them and [launch your business](#).

The 4 Hour Work Week

I had to add this to the list. It's what got me into eCommerce years ago and if you haven't read it yet, go get it now. Tim Ferriss's classic will open your eyes to a new world of possibilities. Be warned though, many entrepreneurs start with this book and then never more. 4HWW does paint a pretty picture about eCommerce, but there's more to it if you want to build a real business.

The Lean Startup

Another instant hit, the Lean Startup is now a movement in the startup world. Although it primarily applies to software startups, the book will show you the value of validating your product and getting feedback before investing lots of money into it. [With crowdfunding](#), many eCommerce companies have started putting these principles into action and reducing their risk of failure.

The Startup Owner's Manual

Steve Blank was the catalyst for the Lean Startup movement, so it makes sense to include his book here. The Startup Owner's Manual will show you how to bring your eCommerce idea to life with Customer Development and the Business Model Canvas.

Zero To One

Peter Thiel has built multiple breakthrough companies, and this book contains everything he has learned in his journey. While not as actionable as the previous three books, I've included it here because it emphasizes the

importance of being innovative, creating defensible market positions and finding unique opportunities to gain an edge in your business.

Branding

Now you're at the stage where you've validated your product and market, and you need to start selling online. eCommerce software like [LemonStand](#) makes it extremely easy to start an online store, but just because you build it [doesn't mean they'll come](#). There's more to selling online than creating a store, and branding is where you start.

What Great Brands Do

Drawing from her years of consulting work with top brands like Frito-Lay and Sony, Denise Lee Yohn lays out the 7 key principles of great branding in this book. If you really want to stand out from your competition and create a brand like Zappos or Apple, read this book and implement the principle in your business.

Lead With A Story

Without a story, your store is just another bland site on the web. With a story, you transform into something that engages and inspires consumers. It adds color and separates you from the mass of colorless eCommerce stores. In this book, Paul Smith shows you how to craft a captivating story that you can use in your About Page, your value proposition, your marketing materials, or anything else your customers come in contact with.

Don't Make Me Think

You may not be a designer, but you do need to care about your store's design. Why? Because your customers do. No I'm not saying they'll come in with a critical eye and find design mistakes. On the contrary, customers want things to be simple and easy when they shop on your side. Sadly, many eCommerce stores are [riddled with design and usability mistakes](#) that make customers want to tear their hair out in frustration. In this classic, Steve Krug shows you why customers are leaving your site, and what you need to do to improve it.

Marketing

The big problem for eCommerce stores, or any business really, is getting traffic to the site. How do you get the word out about yourself? How do you tell people that you have a cool, new brand that they should check out? That's what marketing is all about.

The Ultimate Marketing Plan

Dan Kennedy, the best-selling author of the No B.S. books, lays down the fundamentals of marketing in today's world with this book. It's not really an ultimate plan, but it does give you all the steps you need to build a foundation for your marketing strategy. Start with this if you're new to the game.

Traction

There are so many ways to market. Which one works best? That's where this book comes in. Traction brings a scientific approach to marketing by showing you how to score and test different channels to find the ones that work best for your business. Weinberg and Mares have created a step by step approach that we use at LemonStand and have distilled in [one of our previous posts](#).

Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook

In eCommerce, there's no escaping social media. Sites like Instagram and Pinterest are perfect for showing off

products. And you already knew you needed to be on Facebook and Twitter before you started your business. With this book, you'll learn how to create your social media strategy straight from one of the leading experts in the field.

Growth Hacker Marketing

Ryan Holiday was the director of marketing for American Apparel, so when he says marketing is changing and you need to adapt, you'd better listen. Growth hacker marketing is your primer into the new world of growth hacking. Even though it's primarily meant for software businesses, the concepts still apply to eCommerce, as we've demonstrated in our growth hacking book [50 Shades of Growth](#).

Free eBook: 50 Shades of Growth!

We're writing THE book on eCommerce growth hacking and we've collected growth hacks from the best in the industry. Get on the VIP list for a free copy!

The New Rules Of Marketing And PR

While the previous book shows you what's changing in marketing, this one gives you a step by step plan to take advantage of that and apply it to your business. David Meerman Scott is a marketing expert and author of multiple marketing best-sellers, and in this one you'll find the tools, techniques and strategies to market your business at a fraction of the cost of traditional marketing strategies.

The Referral Engine

We place far more importance in recommendations from friends and family than an advertisement, and with good reason. We trust people more than we trust a faceless organization. That's why [word of mouth marketing](#), or referral marketing, is so powerful. By getting your customers to talk about you and your products, you'll dramatically increase your sales. John Jantsch, of Duct Tape Marketing fame, shows you how it's done.

Analytics

What gets measured gets managed. Ultimately your store boils down to profits and losses. To make a profit, you need a certain number of sales. To make those sales, you need a certain amount of traffic. To get that traffic, you need to spend money marketing. Unless you measure it all, you can't find out what's working and what isn't.

Lean Analytics

Alistair Croll and Benjamin Yoskovitz bring the lean startup principles to analytics in this book. If you're new to analytics, this book will help you build a foundation and understand what metrics matter most to your business.

Web Analytics 2.0

Avinash Kaushik is the analytics evangelist for Google so he clearly knows what he's talking about. His previous book, *Web Analytics: An Hour A Day*, was a guide on creating a successful analytics strategy. In this book, he follows up with specific strategies and frameworks to measure, analyze and act upon the data you collect from your analytics.

Advanced Web Metrics with Google Analytics

You can't talk about analytics without mention Google Analytics. Brian Clifton's book comes recommended by Avinash Kaushik himself as the only book you need on [using Google Analytics](#). This book teaches you everything, from fundamentals to best practices, so buy it and read it before your competitors do.

Optimization

The easiest way to make an impact on your sales is to optimize your website conversions. If your eCommerce store makes 1 sale for every 100 customers, then optimizing it to make 2 sales is far more cost-effective than throwing twice as much traffic at it.

Optimize

While this book isn't about conversion rate optimization, it's still required reading to learn how to optimize for search engines and social media. Lee Odden shows you how to create optimized content that attracts and engages the right customers.

You Should Test That

Chris Goward is the founder of WiderFunnel and the brains behind the LIFT Model and Kaizen Method for conversion rate optimization. In this book, he gives you a step-by-step guide to help you optimize your website conversions. He also talks about how to analyze data, prioritize experiments and make business decisions through tested insights.

Convert!

Ben Hunt teaches designers, developers and marketers how to make web sites that work. In this book, he shows you how to create an eCommerce site that provides a compelling shopping experience and converts browsers into buyers. Many of the techniques presented in this book can easily be implemented without the help of an expert.

Legacy

At the end of the day, starting a business is not just about making some money. It's about creating something that outlives you, a long-lasting legacy for people to remember you by. But the journey begins today.

Built To Last

When Jim Collins and Jerry Porras were doing a research project at Stanford, they asked themselves what makes the truly exceptional companies different from others. They studied companies that have lasted longer than any others, like GE, Disney, and Walmart and distilled what made them exceptional. This book is the culmination of all that work.

Good To Great

While Built To Last addressed already successful companies, Jim Collins wanted to find out if there were any that went from good, mediocre, or even poor to great. After 5 years of research and mountains of data, Jim and his team found why some companies make the leap while others don't. This book contains all their findings.

Indispensable

The key to building a company that customers can't live without is to create products that are indispensable. In this book, Joe Calloway shows us a 5 step strategy to turning a commodity product into a necessity.

Inspiration

Ok, while all these books are extremely valuable, some can get a little heavy. Every now and then, when things get rough, we just need to take a step back and find inspiration instead of another marketing book. Here are some suggestions.

Steve Jobs

Steve Jobs literally started Apple in his garage, but today, years after his death, it's the most valuable company in the world. Everyone knows the story of how he was kicked out but came back and turned the company around. So when you're feeling down and out, pick up this book and get inspired by Steve's resilience and sheer force of will.

Sam Walton: Made In America

Sam started out with a single dime store and grew it into the retail giant that Wal-Mart is today. In his autobiography, Sam tells his story and his motivations behind starting Wal-Mart.

Elon Musk

If you had to point out one man who's changing the world right now, it has to be Elon Musk, the real-life Tony Stark. Elon's is not a rags-to-riches story, but the way he thinks about the world and the future of humanity is just fascinating. Read this book if only to get a tiny glimpse into the mind of one of the most amazing people alive right now.

They Pay For Themselves

Yeah, books cost money but they eventually pay for themselves. Every single one of these books will pay for itself many times over when you have a thriving eCommerce business.

How many of these have you read? And which books do you think should go on the list? Let us know in the comments below!

Sid

<http://www.siddharthbharath.com>

- 105
- 20
- 11
- 26
- 19

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