



Listing Mirror



SELL MORE, WORK LESS:

The Definitive Guide to
Multi-Channel Ecommerce

Preface: Sell More, Work Less

As an e-commerce business, you want to sell more.

If you're only selling on one or two marketplaces, you're not selling as much as you could — because people don't visit every marketplace.

Multi-channel e-commerce is one solution to selling more: by reaching more people on more marketplaces, businesses can sell more products to more people.

But multi-channel has traditionally meant much more work and greater complexity, which can be overwhelming and maybe more than your team can handle without letting your standards lapse.

Whether you're a small business looking for a way to branch out from your Shopify or BigCommerce store or an enterprise that's been content thus far running your e-commerce through NetSuite — or anywhere in between — this guide is for you. In it, we'll show you the top areas you'll need to focus on as you move into multi-channel e-commerce.

We'll also show you how our powerful multi-channel listing management software can help you sell more products in more places, all while working less. Thanks to our process automations.

Why should you trust us? Simple: at Listing Mirror, we've guided hundreds of businesses through this process, and our results speak for themselves. This eBook combines the best of our own insights with the foundational strategies we've watched companies of all sizes use to achieve significant growth as they successfully transition from single to multi-channel e-commerce.

If you're ready to join them, we'll get you there.



Chapter 1

Make Your SKUs Strategic

The more products you sell and the more channels you sell on, the greater your operational complexity grows. (The best tools, Listing Mirror included, can greatly reduce this complexity — but it's always there as you scale.) As a result, strong planning and organization are indispensable. Keeping your data and processes as straightforward as possible now will help keep you from becoming overwhelmed as you transition to multi-channel.

Nowhere is this more foundational than in a company's SKU strategy. You want to ensure that your business's SKUs are organized, well planned, and strategic.

We've seen many clients come to us with inventory systems that are unnecessarily complex. Those that have already moved into multi-channel but are looking for help managing their listings often bring convoluted systems with them, like multiple unique SKUs for single items based on where that item is being sold.

Smaller businesses with fewer products may not see the importance of implementing a clear and effective SKU strategy: they're managing fine with their current system, after all. The problem likely won't show up until a business scales significantly or makes a notable change to sales strategy (such as moving into multi-channel)

But make no mistake: the problem will show up.

Small businesses have an advantage here, as well: it's much easier to bring order to a chaotic SKU system when you're small and before transitioning to multi-channel. If you haven't yet made the move, now is the time to get strategic and organized with your SKUs

And even if you're already larger or have already moved into multi-channel, think of it this way: your inventory isn't going to get any simpler. If you're going to do the work to get better organized, now is always better than later.

Cleaning up and organizing your SKU strategy will reap dividends for you regardless of how you implement multi-channel. But those who partner with vendors (such as Listing Mirror for their listing management or a third-party logistics firm for logistics support and order fulfillment) will see even more benefits. The cleaner your SKUs, the faster we can process your listings, and the fewer errors you'll see from your 3PL partner.

Avoid These Pitfalls and Mistakes

- **Multiple SKUs per product:** Businesses do this to track inventory levels per channel, but tracking becomes unbearably complicated
- **Unnecessarily complicated or randomly generated SKUs:**
Whenever possible, use meaningful numbers for your SKUs so that a warehouse worker can identify SKUs more easily and know what the product is

- **Include too little information on SKUs/labels:** Your SKUs are internal identifiers, so there's nothing stopping you from including rich identifying information such as color and vendor either in the SKU itself or on the label containing the SKU.



Chapter 2

Review Your Logistics Plan

One of the primary motivators for embracing multi-channel e-commerce is scaling. You want to sell more products to more people, so you need to sell where those people are.

But too often, businesses get caught flat-footed, unprepared for the growth that's about to happen. They don't have a realistic path to fulfillment that's ready to scale with them. As you approach the multi-channel transition, take some time to review your logistics plan and ask the hard questions about how scalable it is.

The classic example is the solopreneur or startup that's shipping 10 boxes a day from the founder's garage. That works fine at a rate of 10 boxes a day. But what if you're shipping 10,000 units a day in six months or a year? The garage isn't going to cut it.

Wherever you are as far as size, what do your logistics plans look like in light of growth? Will you need additional warehouse space? Additional warehouses? Can you scale your warehouse space as fast as your growth? What if that growth reaches 10 or 100x?

Strongly Consider 3PL

Many businesses — especially those focused on aggressive sales growth — should consider third-party logistics (3PL) services like Amazon Multi-Channel Fulfillment or Deliverr as an alternative to in-house warehousing and logistics. These services are near endlessly

scalable and can greatly reduce operational complexity for multi-channel e-commerce businesses.

But Don't Be Afraid to Iterate

One quick caveat here: we're not saying that you need to have a meticulously detailed logistics plan before you start moving into multi-channel. Start by simply testing marketplaces and vendors so you can figure out what does and doesn't work for you. Iterate your logistics plan (and other components of your strategy) as you learn from those successes and failures.

Avoid These Pitfalls and Mistakes

- **Resistance to 3PL:** Make sure you're willing to fully consider the value of 3PL before determining it's not right for you
- **Fear of iterating:** No one gets everything right on the first attempt, so be willing to iterate before pulling the plug.



Chapter 3

Product and Margin Strategies

Next up in the transition to multi-channel e-commerce is determining both your product strategy and your margin strategy.

Product Strategy

New players to the e-commerce market often jump in too quickly: they can think of millions of things to sell, and they want to do so on every platform immediately. This doesn't tend to be feasible, though. Every new product creates new complexity, from product listings to shelf space in the warehouse. Instead, start slower. Find 10 or 100 products that are most likely to sell well, and then scale those across your initial set of channels. Make sure you understand how to fulfill them and how to create quality product listings for each (which vary from platform to platform — more on that later). As you find both success and stability with those initial 100 products, continue adding products and channels.

Margin Strategy

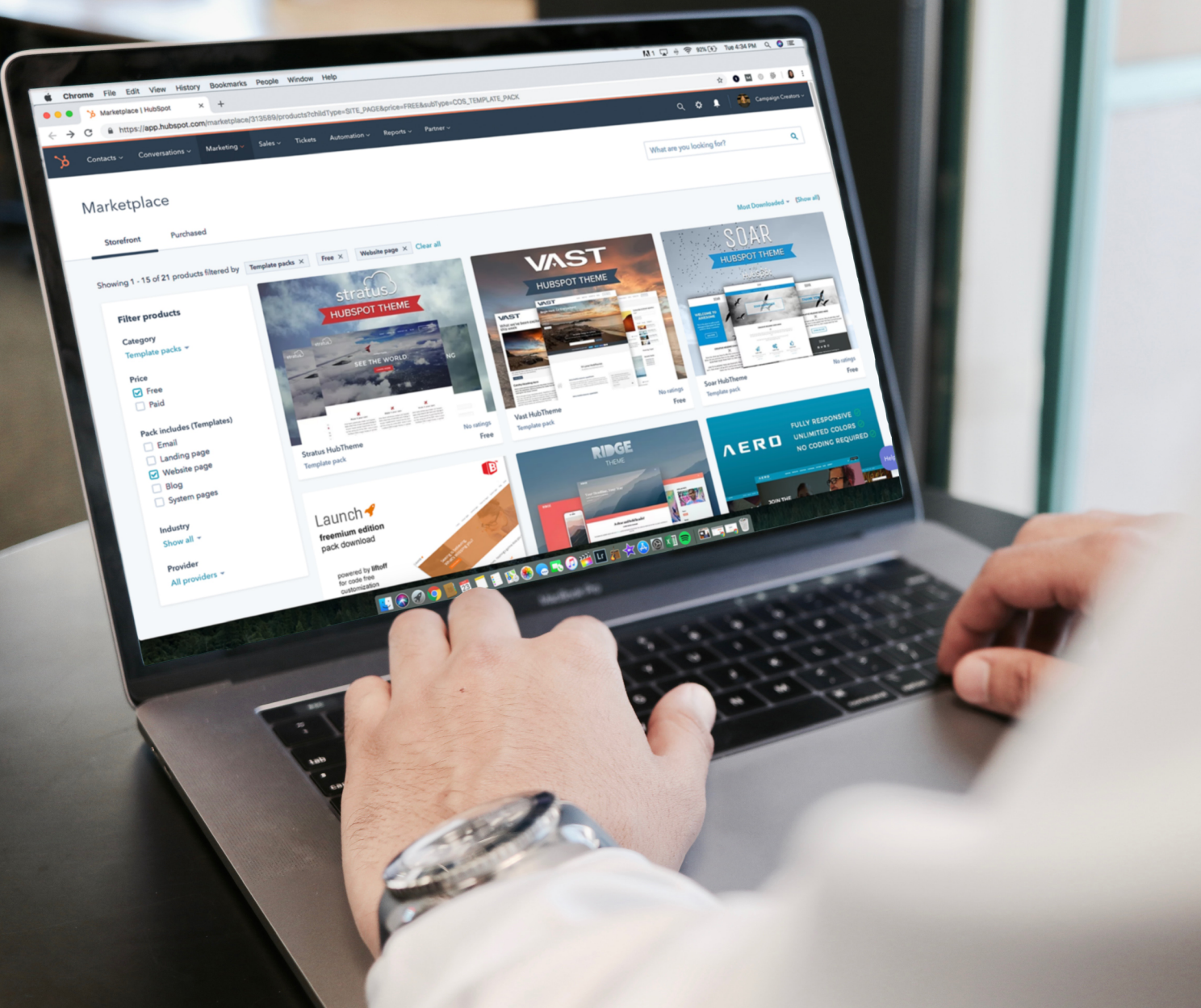
Margins are often thin in e-commerce, and scalability matters here as well. Your margins right now are set so that you can be profitable, despite shipping costs and other expenses. Make sure you consider how those expenses do or don't scale. If your margin costs increase because of a transition to 3PL, you must protect. You also need enough margin to cover the costs of software like Listing Mirror and any other support services you select (accounting, 3PL, marketing, and so forth). Manual processes don't scale well, and neither does keeping non-core

functions in-house. But each of these moves — though highly strategic — comes with a cost.

The best way to improve your margin strategy is to make sure you're investing in products with healthy enough margins that will give you some breathing room.

Avoid These Pitfalls and Mistakes

- **Scaling too much, too many places, too fast:** scaling your multi-channel efforts takes time and attention. Don't go from zero to hundreds of products on 12 marketplaces. Take a metered approach.
- **Failing to consider scalability into margin:** What's profitable at one size may not be when you add scale. Build room in your margins so that you're profitable at any scale.
- **Getting in a race to the bottom:** think quality items, not commodities.



Chapter 4

Tailor Your Multi-Channel Listings

The most successful multi-channel e-commerce businesses tailor their listings for each marketplace. It's tempting to create a generic paragraph and then paste that content across all market places because doing so saves time and effort. But this approach has several flaws.

Each platform has its own look and feel, and some have specific character limits or formatting requirements. If you don't follow them, your products could be penalized in search or your listings may not even be approved.

Here are a few examples:

- eBay limits listing titles to 80 characters, while most other platforms allow 255.
- Many eBay sellers like to use HTML templates with inline images, which don't work on other platforms.

Another channel-specific consideration is the size and aspect ratio of product photos. We've all seen poorly designed Amazon listings where the photos don't work or don't fit. It takes extra effort to shine on every single platform, but it's worth the investment. The more you customize listings according to best practices on a channel, the more successful those listings will be. Listing Mirror supports custom listing data per channel, allowing you to achieve this level of customization while benefiting from Listing Mirror's powerful suite

of listing management tools.

Avoid These Pitfalls and Mistakes

- **Using generic listing content on all platforms:** doing so looks unprofessional and can get your listings penalized.
- **Ignoring channel-specific advertising:** while it isn't right for everyone, e-commerce companies should be familiar with how these advertising systems work (e.g., Amazon, eBay).



Chapter 5

Multi-Channel Pricing Strategies

If every marketplace is unique, with its own costs and customers, then pricing can and should vary from channel to channel. But there are complexities to pricing per channel that sellers need to consider.

On every channel, you must consider two primary factors: profitability and competitiveness. First, you have to be profitable. If you're losing money, this isn't the platform for that product. But you also must be competitive. Look at the direct competition and do what you must to beat them (even if by just 10 cents).

That ideal price will often be different on various platforms, as will the margins. Both are OK, as long as you're profitable and competitive within the platform.

You'll generally want to bake in shipping costs rather than charge them separately. These can vary from platform to platform, which can affect final pricing as well.

Certain marketplaces have additional price requirements. Amazon has a price requirement that says you can't sell for less than Amazon on any other channel. Walmart has something similar. So, if Amazon is a significant platform for your business, you might want to make Amazon your price floor.

Listing Mirror supports third-party repricers, allowing you to mirror prices across all channels (or to reprice based on competitor data). If your

margins are healthy (and especially if you're the sole manufacturer of your product), you can use this tool to match all pricing to your Amazon rate, keeping you compliant with Amazon's requirements.

Avoid These Pitfalls and Mistakes

- **Pricing competitive products the same on every channel:** Each channel is its own battleground, so price competitively on each rather than keeping prices identical across the board.
- **Chasing identical margin on every channel:** worry less about making this match and more about building healthy margins on all channels. Customers aren't concerned with margin; they're comparing your price to your competitor's on a given channel.
- **Charging for shipping:** Thanks to Amazon, no one wants to pay for shipping anymore. Bake shipping costs into the price and then offer "free shipping."

What's Your Promotion IQ?

An often-overlooked part of tailoring listings is knowing and then leveraging the promotions available on each marketplace. eBay's Promotion Manager lets you enable quantity discounts ("20% off if you buy 3 or more!"), while Amazon allows you to run coupon codes (including coupons with multi-item requirements). Whichever platforms you're on, make sure you know the promotions available, and leverage them in ways that make sense for your business.



Chapter 6

The Single Source of Truth

Of all the aspects of your business, inventory management will see the greatest change when you move further into multi-channel e-commerce. Synchronizing inventory data across marketplaces is difficult without the right tools.

This is the area where we see the most businesses start to lose control, harming the customer experience through overselling, stockouts, fulfillment delays, and more.

The most important strategy here is to have a single source of truth for inventory data. You also want that source to update all your channels automatically so that you don't have to do those updates by hand.

Listing Mirror is that single source of truth: it tracks your inventory across all channels, where that inventory is held, where it gets routed, and more. And with Listing Mirror, all your marketplaces receive inventory updates simultaneously from a single source.

Listing Mirror is the fastest in the business: it updates every four minutes to all channels, helping you avoid overselling

Know Your Level of Risk

Even the best inventory management system can't stop five (or 25) people from hitting "buy" at the same time. If inventory is low enough, you would typically oversell in this scenario. There's always a risk

of overselling — either that, or you set your inventory threshold so high that you leave money on the table, going “out of stock” when you still have plenty to sell.

The key here is to know what risk level you're comfortable with and to understand your plan B. No risk at all, and you'll miss out on sales you could've fulfilled. Too much risk, and you could tarnish your reputation. How you set these thresholds will vary depending on your market, the relative ease or difficulty of restocking, and typical order volumes for the item.

Avoid These Pitfalls and Mistakes

- **Multiple inventory systems:** Don't set up separate inventories for each channel. Keep all inventory unified and source orders from every channel from your centralized inventory.
- **Slow or manual inventory updates:** Manual updates are error-prone and lead to overselling, and so do automated systems that update too infrequently.
- **Bifurcating order routing and inventory management:** instead, think of these as a combined function, overseen by a single system (Listing Mirror).



Chapter 7

Supercharge Your Order Fulfillment with the Right Software Tools

Order fulfillment is another area that can be challenging in multi-channel e-commerce. With multiple channels all pulling from the same inventory — which may itself be distributed geographically around the country or the globe — how can you keep it all straight? And in cases where you're forced to prioritize some orders over others, how do you make those decisions?

Listing Mirror solves questions like these for its customers: because we are managing your inventory and your orders, we know who has the capacity to fulfill a given order. We don't route orders to a fulfillment center that doesn't have the products in stock.

Consider these additional ways that Listing Mirror supercharges your order fulfillment efforts.

Inventory Source Prioritization with Listing Mirror

Listing Mirror also offers inventory source prioritization: we can analyze which fulfillment method provides the cheapest shipping option on a per-order basis and route orders there (provided they have stock).

Order Splitting with Listing Mirror

If one single warehouse can't complete an order, Listing Mirror can also split an order into sub-orders split up according to which warehouses

have which items. Once those orders get fulfilled, we can recombine them and send them on to the final market.

Price Shopping

Businesses using Amazon MCF for their 3PL needs could have products scattered through fulfillment centers all over Europe. Listing Mirror knows how much inventory is in each warehouse and country and can price-shop orders across a region. The software can analyze how expensive shipping would be from each fulfillment center and automatically send it to the least expensive one.

We've used Amazon MCF as an illustration, but Amazon isn't our only warehousing partner. Listing Mirror has the capability of connecting to any warehousing network — and all the major internal warehousing systems.



Chapter 8

Avoid This Macro Mistake

One big-picture mistake we see e-commerce companies make all too frequently is giving up too quickly on a resource. Whether a marketplace, a product, or a software solution powering your multi-channel efforts, don't give up too quickly.

- It takes time to learn what does and doesn't work on a given marketplace.
- Software solutions are complex, and there's always a learning curve.
- Products sometimes need time to hit their stride and penetrate their markets.

In each of these areas, it's certainly possible to wait too long to kill something that's not working (and never will). But frequently, businesses make the opposite mistake: they aren't patient enough, or they give up before they've experimented and iterated enough to learn what works on a marketplace.

Give It Time

We recommend committing to a minimum of one year on any new channel. It might take that long simply to learn the incentive programs, listing formats, and competitors on the channel. If you're not selling well two weeks in, you may just need more traction — or you may need to update aspects of your strategy.

Not only that, some channels (eBay included) factor how long you've

been on the platform into their search rankings. The difference between middling and excellent performance on eBay may literally be how long you've been selling there.

Our “give it a year” advice also applies to new software. We're deeply confident in the value that Listing Mirror provides, and our customers' results speak for themselves. Listing Mirror customers see results immediately, but they don't reach maximum efficiency on day one.

When you start using Listing Mirror to manage listings across multiple channels, you'll see initial results quickly. And as you continue getting comfortable with our tools and systems, your ROI will only grow. We're confident that you'll achieve significant ROI in your first year — and every year after that.

Multi-Channel Success Requires the Right Software Tools

Success in multi-channel e-commerce relies on a range of factors and strategies, which we've outlined throughout this eBook. Ultimately, though, multi-channel e-commerce is just too complex to manage via manual processes. Success also depends on having the right software tools.

Listing Mirror greatly simplifies the management of your multi-channel

product listings and manages your inventory levels with greater precision than anything else on the market today. Ready to see what Listing Mirror can do for you?

SCHEDULE A CALL TODAY