

MIVA Merchant™

Getting Started as an Online Business





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An Easy Introduction to E-Commerce

Relax. You'll be an e-commerce expert before you know it!

MIVA Merchant enables you to easily create and manage an online store, taking your products to a virtually unlimited market, with little initial investment, and low overhead. In many ways, opening a MIVA Merchant online store is just like opening a new store in the "brick and mortar" world. You decide what kind of products to carry, stock and price your items, attract customers to your location, take orders, and ship merchandise.

There are a few new concepts to grasp, and some unfamiliar technologies to understand, but none are difficult, and we will go through them one-by-one in this guide.

You will need a web host for your store. A landlord, of sorts. We will review the three most common options for hosting. We will cover all the basics of starting and running an online store, like handling orders and collecting money. You will learn how you can suggest products to shoppers, and offer discounts. There is even an easy way to bring your store data into QuickBooks™.

Special financial and security services are needed for doing business on the Internet. We will discuss payment gateways, merchant account providers, and security certificates. When you are ready to explore in more depth, there is a complete online Help system, and support for MIVA Merchant, and other MIVA products, at smallbusiness.miva.com. Immediate assistance is available as well - as you work with MIVA Merchant. Each administration screen offers an online Help topic, providing explanations and definitions. To access this information just click the Help button.

In this guide, we assume...

- You are well versed in running your business. You have a good understanding of your own pricing, inventory, taxes, and shipping.
- You are skilled in using the Internet. You can navigate web sites use search engines, and work with online forms.
- You are familiar with the basics of creating web sites, and are comfortable doing simple design and screen layout.

Getting your MIVA Merchant Store Online!

It can be a little overwhelming to start any business. Making use of an unfamiliar technology can make it even more daunting. Take heart - thousands of entrepreneurs just like you are succeeding with MIVA Merchant. Let's break the process down into simple steps, and work through them one at a time.

Here is a quick to-do list for getting your first e-commerce site up and working for you. You may have accomplished some of these tasks already, and there will undoubtedly be other tasks you'll need to accomplish as well.

This overview checklist will help you get started:

1. Establish Your Business

Choose a web hosting provider that offers MIVA Merchant, or that supports you in using your own copy of MIVA Merchant.

Decide on a name for your business. Part of this decision may hinge on the availability of the domain name you want to use (www.yourbusinessname.com).

Acquire the domain name, and arrange for hosting.

Secure any business licenses or fictitious name statements that are required in your area.

2. Start Working with MIVA Merchant

Familiarize yourself with the features of MIVA Merchant. You'll find clear, complete online Help throughout the administration interface. From any screen simply click "Help" to find relevant details and examples.

You might want to take advantage of MIVA Service Club to get your store up and running quickly. Available services include the initial store setup, or loading a set of products into your store.

Check out some existing MIVA Merchant online stores for ideas and inspiration. There is a large collection of great examples in the MIVA Galleria, at smallbusiness.miva.com/galleria.

Browse through MIVA Central, at www.mivacentral.com, to find specialized features, "look and feel" tools, and training resources available from third-party developers.

Set up your MIVA Merchant administration options. Keep your store "down for maintenance" for the time being - until you are ready to open to the public.

3. Create and Stock Your Store

Decide what products you will offer. You can enter them directly, using a wizard. Or, if you currently have these products in a database, you can import them, including their pricing, and inventory levels, into MIVA Merchant via a flat file.

Design the look of your store. Don't worry about getting it perfect on the first try. You can change it later. Store Morph Technology™ gives you total control, and freedom to experiment.

Arrange to accept payments. Most merchants take credit cards. You might want to take advantage of MIVA Payment™, an easy way to accept credit cards online.

4. Set Yourself Up for Success

Use MIVA Submit™ and MIVA Ad Center™ to drive shoppers to your store. Both focus your marketing resources on attracting the shoppers who want exactly what you have to offer.

Connect with your customers through MIVA Mailer™, an integrated email marketing service.

5. Open for Business

Once you have your store designed and stocked to your satisfaction, you're ready to invite shoppers in.

Key Points

- You don't need to install any software on your own computer to create and manage your MIVA Merchant online store.
- All the work you do in the MIVA Merchant administration Interface is done right in your web browser, via the Internet, working directly with the software and your data on the web server.
- You can work with your MIVA Merchant store from any computer that can access the Internet - from the local library, at your favorite coffee house, or from an Internet enabled cruise ship anywhere in the world. With MIVA Merchant, you are never tied to your office.

MIVA Small Business Products & Services

The MIVA Small Business suite of products handles every aspect of e-commerce, from the tools to enable you to easily create a professional store, to the underlying technology your web host needs to make it all run. MIVA Script, the language in which MIVA Merchant itself is written, offers development tools to third-party developers so they can create advanced, specialized modules. You may find that these after-market plug-ins provide exactly the features you'll need to customize your storefront just the way you'd like it.

Here is a brief overview of each of the MIVA Small Business products. When you are ready to learn more, extensive information on each is available at: smallbusiness.miva.com.

MIVA Merchant™

A browser-based storefront development and management system that provides the tools for merchants to create and manage an e-commerce site on the Internet. MIVA Merchant makes it easy to create and run an online store. Two flavors are available: MIVA Merchant 5 and MIVA Merchant Fast Track.

MIVA Ad Center™

This keyword-targeted advertising service introduces buyers to sellers at exactly the right moment - when buyers are searching for products and services. Results and revenue generated can be easily measured.

MIVA Mailer™

An e-mail marketing service giving merchants the ability to send targeted messages to customer mailing lists.

MIVA Submit™

A robust set of 15 search engine optimization and web site enhancement tools to help increase your online store's visibility and performance.

MIVA Payment™

A user-friendly credit card processing service that performs real-time credit card authorizations from MIVA Merchant stores, and enables merchants to manually input credit card transactions via the Internet. MIVA Payment optionally includes a merchant account.

MIVA Synchro™

A product that makes it possible for the online merchant using MIVA Merchant to easily transfer their store data into the third-party accounting applications, QuickBooks Pro™ and Premier™, 2003/2004/2005, from Intuit®.

For Developers and Web Hosting Companies:

MIVA Script™

A proprietary XML-based web development language that supports the easy creation of interactive web pages that can accept and retrieve stored data. Modules, including those that make up MIVA Merchant itself, are written in MIVA Script.

MIVA Script Compiler™

Compiles MIVA Script into applications that run under MIVA Empresa and MIVA Mia™. Compiled code runs faster, and the source is concealed so others cannot read it.

MIVA Merchant Limited Source Kit™

A collection of source code files (not compiled) for MIVA Merchant modules (4.14 and later), giving developers well-written, tested examples on which they can base their own MIVA Script modules.

MIVA Empresa™

The MIVA engine installed on the web server to run compiled MIVA Script applications, including MIVA Merchant. The engine includes database functionality, and supports commerce library functions that communicate with remote services via the Internet.

MIVA Mia™

An engine and personal web server environment that runs compiled MIVA Script applications, giving store designers and software developers the means to run and test their work on their Windows desktop.

Driving Shoppers To Your Store

MIVA Ad Center™

Bringing new customers into your store is vital to your success. In the “brick and mortar” world you try to locate your business where people will find you. On the web, you need to put out virtual signposts, to guide shoppers to your store. MIVA Ad Center gives you the power to put your store’s products right in front of people who are looking to buy them. You choose exactly the keywords you want, and bid to have shoppers directed to your products. Among many powerful account management features in MIVA Ad Center, you can have top product-specific search result positioning for just a penny more than your competitor’s bid, and you are only charged when a shopper actually visits your site.

For complete information on MIVA Ad Center, and to sign up, visit: smallbusiness.miva.com/services/adcenter.

MIVA Submit™

Another way to bring more, and better-quality, traffic to your business is to fine tune your site’s functionality, and make sure it is working its best with Internet search engines. MIVA Submit provides 15 effective and easy-to-use optimization and enhancement tools. Verify your HTML, check the site’s links, and ensure browser compatibility. Monitor your site’s uptime, and test page load times. Analyze your keywords, check your search engine rankings, and much more...

For details about MIVA Submit, and to sign up for a free trial, visit: smallbusiness.miva.com/services/submit.

MIVA Mailer™

Once customers discover you, and have purchased items from your store, keep them coming back for more! These are people who know your company, and who buy the products you sell. You want them to return to your store again and again. A very effective way of keeping your name in front of them is by sending targeted, personalized e-mail messages, with MIVA Mailer. You can create as many lists as you like—maybe “Monthly Home Gardening Tips”, or “Pro Landscapers’ Specials”. You can offer users the chance to opt-in to receive messages, and they can unsubscribe if they like. The messages are sent from the MIVA servers, so they don’t tie up your office e-mail, or use your company’s server bandwidth. The service is charged to you monthly.

Learn more, and start taking advantage of MIVA Mailer now, at: smallbusiness.miva.com/services/mailer.

Accepting Credit Cards

You can sign up on your own for each of the services you need to accept credit cards, or, for an easy, reliable way to handle everything in one place, with a company you know and trust, you can use MIVA Payment™.

MIVA Payment provides all the tools you need to accept all major credit cards, including a Payment Gateway, virtual terminal for manual transactions, fraud screening, and detailed reporting, all seamlessly integrated into MIVA Merchant.

For information: smallbusiness.miva.com/services/payment.

To accept credit cards, whether your store is on Main Street, or on the Internet, you need a merchant account - a special account that routes deposits from the credit card companies to your business banking account. You can arrange a merchant account with any compatible online Merchant Account Provider (or MAP).

Your own business bank may offer them. A merchant account is an additional service available with MIVA Payment.

If you are not using MIVA Payment, you will need to arrange for your own Payment Gateway. MIVA Merchant passes the shopper’s credit card number and information to the Payment Gateway, which communicates with the shopper’s bank, and verifies that the card is valid and can cover the payment. The Payment Gateway collects the money from the shopper’s bank, and routes it into your merchant account.

Another way to accept credit cards is to get the card information from your customer, then manually process the transaction through your in-store credit card terminal. If you already take credit cards, you are ready to go - but this requires your time, is prone to input errors, and creates a delay in collecting the money.

“MIVA Merchant 5 has become an application that is no comparison to its competitors. With its modular structure and ease of use, it is hands down the best small business e-commerce application on the market.”

Source: - Scott Zielinski, Sebenza

Increase Sales with Suggestive Selling and Upselling!

The time-tested sales techniques of suggestive selling and upselling are available to you with MIVA Merchant.

Shoppers appreciate it when you let them know about products they would likely want, and they may add an item or two to their order.

Related Products

Some of your products probably “go with” others. Perhaps you also sell memory cards, batteries, and cases that work with the digital camera your customer is considering.

In MIVA Merchant™, you simply specify related products to suggest with any of the products you offer. These products are displayed with the items they complement.

Upsale Products

When a shopper has already decided to make a purchase, they may be happy to hear about additional or alternative products they might like.

Let’s say your customer has selected a memory card for a digital camera. When they check out, you might like to offer them an additional card, or card holder, at a special price.

Upsale products can be linked to specific items being purchased, the total sale amount, or other criteria.

MIVA Merchant has made e-commerce an enormous success for us and has enabled us to nearly double our business in just two years. We have been able to use this software with ease and to integrate many of the excellent enhancements to our online storefront. Reliability and flexibility is what you will get with MIVA Merchant.

Source: - Jenni Cho, Sage Jewelry

Importing Product Data Via Plain Text “Flat Files”

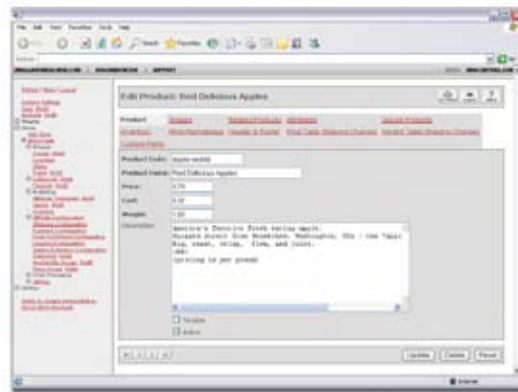
If you already have a product database, you will find it very handy to populate your online store by exporting the data to a plain text “flat file”, then importing all the products into MIVA Merchant.

If you don’t have a product database already, but plan to have a large number of items, you might want to create a simple data file, in a spreadsheet, for example, and import that information.

Before importing your products, set up the store, including categories, attribute templates, and inventory tracking, if you use those features.

You can even reference products’ images in the database, then upload those images all at once via FTP. You can import products in as many batches as you like, so you can add more later. A good approach might be to try just a few the first time, to be sure you have mastered the process.

For complete details, refer to the online Help topic “Import Products from a Flat File”.



Products can be entered one-by-one using the MIVA Merchant administration interface. Multiple products can be added or edited at once using database flat files.

Common Questions, Answered

Perhaps you have managed a local business for years, and you are ready to open a new branch-on the Internet. You are an experienced user of e-mail, do your banking online, and have purchased items from online sellers. Even so, you probably have a lot of questions-most people do. Let's go over some of the questions that most new online merchants ask:

Q: How Do I Get a Website?

A: Web sites and online stores are just data and programs stored on a Web server - a computer linked into the World Wide Web. Each site has an address, called a domain name, such as www.mystorename.com, where others on the Web can find it. You will need both - space on a Web server, and a domain name.

Q: How Do I Get Space on a Web Server?

A: Providing space for web sites is called Web hosting. There are three kinds of hosting: virtual, dedicated, or your own on-site server.

Many small merchants use virtual hosting, where a company offers space to many sites, all hosted on the same server, each in its own private folder. Some companies, especially those with larger sites or higher traffic, have dedicated Web servers - whole machines just for their own site's files - provided and maintained by centralized facilities just for that purpose. The third way would be to purchase a server, arrange for a high speed commercial Internet connection to your business, and handle the whole operation on your own. How to do that is beyond the scope of this guide.

Virtual hosting is an excellent choice for most online businesses. Many Web hosting companies provide a supportive incubator-like environment, with powerful, user-friendly tools and services, like MIVA Merchant, payment gateways, security certificates, and usage reporting. Some provide excellent online and telephone support services as well. Before you choose a Web host, be sure that they support MIVA Merchant.

Q: How Do I Get a Domain Name?

A: Your Web host can help you register a domain name when you arrange for hosting services, or you can use any number of companies that specialize in registering domain names. You can find them with a quick Internet search for "register a

domain name". Be sure the name is registered to you or your company not to the Web hosting company, or to your Web designer. You may want to consider private registration, or use a P.O. Box for your address, to protect your privacy.

Q: How Do I Sign Up for a MIVA Merchant Store?

A: There are two ways you can have a MIVA Merchant online store. Most conveniently, your Web host may offer e-commerce accounts that feature MIVA Merchant software. Simply contact them and arrange for an e-commerce account. They will take care of everything you need, and will invoice you directly.

If your Web host does not offer MIVA Merchant yet, you can purchase a license directly from MIVA, and install the software on your web site. For this option, your Web host must be MIVA-enabled (that is, they have MIVA Empresa running on the server). Or, if you have access to your own cgi-bin folder, you should be able to install MIVA Empresa yourself. If you prefer, MIVA offers a service where, for a fee, we can install your MIVA Merchant and MIVA Empresa software for you.

Q: How Do I Set Up My Online Store?

A: MIVA Merchant provides tools to guide you through each basic step of building your first online store. Once you have the primary features configured, you can take advantage of the more advanced utilities and fine-tune each area to work exactly the way you like. You can customize the look, and incorporate your store into your current site, if you have one.

You can add each product into your MIVA Merchant store, one at a time, using forms that prompt you for the needed information. If you have an existing product database, with names, stock numbers, descriptions, costs, pricing, and so on, you will be able to easily import that information into your MIVA Merchant store.

Most stores have photos or graphics to show their products. It's easy to transfer these to your online store individually, as you enter each new product, or upload a large collection of images at once, and reference them in database fields when you import your product information all together.

You can always make changes to your store administration, add more products, or update your look store-wide, so don't worry about getting it exactly perfect on the first pass.

Q: How Do I Let Shoppers Know About My Store?

A: Once you have an attractive store, stocked with your products and ready to go, you need customers to find you. Three of the most effective ways of driving serious shoppers to your store are services offered by MIVA, that work seamlessly with MIVA Merchant: MIVA Submit optimizes your store's and products' visibility in search engine results, to bring in new customers. MIVA Ad Center enables you to advertise your store across the vast MIVA Performance Marketing Network. As you establish a customer base, MIVA Mailer gives you the ability to send targeted email messages to keep inviting them to return.

For more information, see "Driving Shoppers to Your Store", on page 7 of this guide, or visit the MIVA Small Business web site.

Q: How Do I Know When a Shopper Orders?

A: If you expect to be getting lots of orders, you will probably want to check regularly-daily, or more often-and download all the new orders. If you anticipate receiving orders infrequently, you can set up MIVA Merchant to notify you by e-mail when an order comes in.

Q: How Do I Get My Existing Product Information Into My MIVA Merchant Store?

A: You can upload your entire existing product database via a plain-text flat file. See "Importing Product Data Via Plain Text Flat Files", on page 10.

Q: How Do I Get a Secure Certificate?

A: Many companies, called Certificate Authorities, provide Secure Certificates, with varying standards for validation, encryption, and authentication. Your Web host may provide this service, directly, or through a partnership agreement. If not, you can find many suppliers on the Web. MIVA Merchant can work with any available SSL Certificate.

Your shoppers will have the confidence to buy from your store when they see this reassuring little padlock, which tells them their personal information will be handled in a secure way.

Q: How Do I Collect Money from My Customers?

A: If you are already set up to accept credit cards, that's great. Accepting them via an Internet store is a natural next step. If you don't accept credit cards yet, it is easy to set that up. For more information, see "Accepting Credit Cards", on page 8.

You can also utilize your existing PayPal™ business account and accept orders with one of the most widely accepted online payment methods available.

Q: How Do I Learn to Use MIVA Merchant?

A: You'll quickly gain expertise as you go. Each administration feature of MIVA Merchant offers immediate, detailed Help at the click of a button. Additional information, including resources for store design advice is available in the documentation and support areas of the MIVA Small Business web site.

Q: How Can I Transfer My Store Data Into my Business Accounting Software?

A: MIVA Synchro is a powerful product from MIVA that gives you a quick and automated way to transfer your accounting data from your MIVA Merchant online store into your QuickBooks™ accounting system (supports 2003/2004/2005, Pro and Premier).

If you use something other than QuickBooks, you can export store information to a flat file, and import it into almost any commercial accounting software.

Q: How Do I Provide Security for My Shoppers?

A: Just like in the "brick and mortar" world, doing business on the Internet requires giving some thought to the security of your shoppers' personal and credit card information. The most common and effective way to keep their information secure during online transactions is to equip your store with a Secure Certificate, or SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) Certificate. This encrypts the information that the shopper's computer sends to your server, and displays a small padlock in their browser's status bar, to assure them that your site is secure.

Where to go from here

You have the basic information now - a solid overview of e-commerce. You have a good idea of what it takes to get started, what is possible, and how to be successful.

Here are some places you can go for more information, products, and training:

MIVA Small Business, at smallbusiness.miva.com, is an excellent resource - both for Documentation and Support. The entire MIVA Merchant online Help system is available, providing easy-to-follow instructions, and real-world examples. MIVA Small Business offers knowledgeable, experienced support via telephone and email.

Many web hosting companies offer MIVA Merchant as part of their e-commerce hosting packages. These hosts can help you get started. If you prefer, run your licensed copy of MIVA Merchant on your own server.

You can find MIVA partners, at smallbusiness.miva.com/partners, including Web hosts who offer MIVA Merchant stores, developers who create specialized modules you may want for your store, and web site designers who are experts in producing attractive, appealing shopping experiences.

Visit MIVA Central, at www.mivacentral.com, where you can find MIVA products, including MIVA Merchant, along with specialized plug-in modules and services from third-party developers. At MIVA Central, find modules to add capabilities to your store or training packages that complement MIVA Merchant.

So grab a pen and start completing the Action Item Checklist on pages 3 and 4. You can have your store online sooner and more easily than you ever thought possible.

With MIVA Merchant, you'll see how easy e-commerce can be!

Contact us

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