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Each month we explore the advantages and intricacies of developing and growing a niche practice. This month we're examining what it takes to serve the niche of eCommerce clients.

Case Study: Learning eCommerce the Hard Way

By Dawn Scranton

You've seen them – companies that do all of their business online. It looks easy, right? Getting from idea to execution doesn't exactly happen overnight. Here's how one company went from an idea to a functioning eCommerce website.

Trade Your Blades (www.TradeYourBlades.com) began as a service in need of scheduling software that

had the ability to process orders online. The mission of the Lake Park, Florida-based company was to swap out dull pet grooming clipper blades for sharp ones – a simple concept.

The requirements were simple too: Build a website that would allow for

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On Becoming an eCommerce Client Specialist

By Dawn Scranton

If you're interested in starting or growing a niche service for eCommerce clients, these concepts, ideas, tips, and quips from eCommerce expert and QBPluggedIn Founder and Director, Dawn Scranton, will help point you in the right direction.

It starts with data. With an eCommerce client, there is data coming from all directions. You, who are accustomed to working with many different clients and all of their issues, are comfortable with the chaos. You can parse it and compartmentalize,

and make sense of it all.

Your eCommerce clients are dealing with data silos originating in and moving through several different locations – sales orders in the financial software, sales orders in the online shopping cart, sales orders coming via email – you get the idea. Whether your client is fully immersed in eCommerce or just dipping toes in the pool (is there anyone out there who hasn't experimented with selling through Craig's list, eBay, Amazon, or some other website?), managing the

data is a key element in maintaining and growing that business. You need to be the IT expert, the empathizing consultant, the financial guru, all rolled into one.

I consider myself an eCommerce specialist, but it didn't happen overnight, and my skills continue to grow. I got my start by asking questions. I questioned computer people, consultants, and even my clients. I asked, I learned, I asked again, even when I felt ignorant or frustrated. I wondered about how we could get

customer, financial, and transactional data from one place to the next, from a website to the shopping cart to the financial software. How do we update everyone during the process, how do we avoid paying two or three times? How do we maintain our integrity while figuring this out?

It wasn't about my knowledge of computers or software, coding, or my special skills, my clients would tell me – leave that part to the developers and

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