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## 35 Open Source and Free Tools to Manage Your Online Store

– Vangie Beal, CIO

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For most small office home office (SOHO) businesses and entrepreneurs, breaking into ecommerce can have a hefty start-up fee. There's a lot of software to consider, and the costs to license or own that software can add up quickly.

Other than the obvious benefit to open source ecommerce software—none of the licensing fees that come with proprietary or off-the-shelf packages—you'll find open source software provides access to communities of users, including developers and other storeowners, who freely offer help and add-ons to enhance the software package.

### **Tips: [How to Build an Online Business From Scratch](#)**

If you find that open source software requires more technical know-how than you can manage, there's also free hosted ecommerce software to choose from. These are not open source software packages *per se*, but they are free for smaller businesses to try and will certainly get the job done when you're starting out. If you like the service and see positive results, you can always upgrade to a basic subscription plan.

### **13 Open Source Shopping Carts to Get You Started**

Some ecommerce software requires a bit more investigation than others. When choosing an [online shopping cart](#), there are two big considerations: How well the software meets your own business objectives and how it complies with ecommerce industry standards.

#### **1. [AgoraCart](#)**

This customizable and secure open source ecommerce shopping cart can be integrated in to an existing website. Expect to find cart features such as customizable templates to design your Web shop, support for multiple product categories and options for different tax rates in addition to back-end store management tools. AgoraCart is [PA-DSS](#) and [PCI-DSS](#) compliant and supports more than 10 payment gateways. The free community edition (5.2.x) is supported though online community forums.

#### **2. [Batavi](#)**

Batavi is a flexible open source ecommerce system for running a high-end Web shop. Features include a template-based system for pages, a full content management system and a robust architecture that can process very large numbers of products, visitors pages and orders. There's also built-in integration with product content providers, Google Analytics and a number of payment providers. Batavi is licensed under the [GNU General Public License version 2.0](#) (GPLv2).

### **Feature: [10 Open Source Shopping Carts to Run Your Ecommerce Business](#)**

### 3. [Broadleaf Commerce](#)

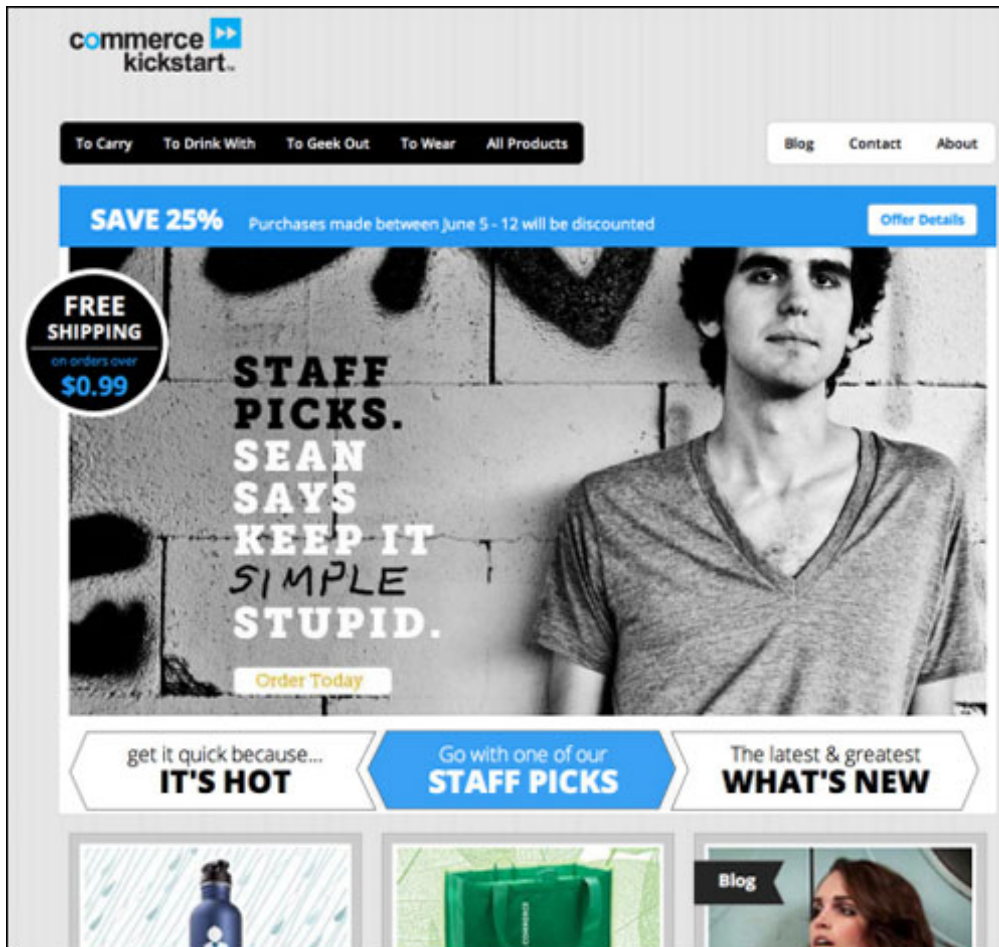
This enterprise-level e-commerce platform can be customized to specific business needs. Broadleaf Commerce features options to manage customer accounts, upsell, create promotions and also manage email marketing campaigns and social media integration. The Broadleaf Commerce community provides an online forum for discussion and contributions, articles, development guides and project API documentation. Broadleaf Commerce uses the [Apache license](#).

### 4. [Commerce.CGI](#)

Commerce.CGI is a free Perl shopping cart for Unix-based servers, although developers claim it runs on Windows NT with minor code changes. Commerce.CGI can be an add-on for existing websites or installed and configured to manage a new product website. Standard shopping cart features include templates, email management, product search and payment methods. Commerce.CGI also supports sales tax, multiple shipping options, discount calculations and other options for customer check out. Commerce.CGI is free and supported through the online mailing list or a bulletin board system. User-contributed modifications are freely distributed.

### 5. [Drupal Commerce](#)

Drupal Commerce leverages the features of [Drupal 7](#) to build ecommerce websites and applications. With Drupal Commerce, you can create product types with custom attributes and manage dynamic product displays, orders, tax calculation and set discount pricing rules. Additional ecommerce functionality is provided through contributed modules such as Shipping, Stock, Coupons, File downloads and more. For those just getting starting, Drupal offers a "Commerce Kickstart" installation profile, seen below, which provides basic configuration of ecommerce modules.



The Commerce Kickstart provides ecommerce module configuration hints to Drupal Commerce users.

### 6. [Loaded Commerce Community Edition \(CE\)](#)

Loaded Commerce CE This ecommerce cart is built on the CRE Loaded code base but includes additional security modifications. The cart is primarily designed to meet the needs of the SOHO storeowner who wants to add transaction capabilities to an existing website. Loaded Commerce features flexible options for product, customer, order and content management. It is customizable; you can change your site design using templates, edit customer information, orders and invoices. The

Community Edition is free and supported by the [Loaded Commerce Community](#).

## 7. [Magento](#)

This is another enterprise-class ecommerce platform supported by a large ecosystem of solution partners and third-party developers. The platform offers marketing tools, search engine optimization, product catalog management and a one-page checkout option. Additionally, there are standard tools to manage tasks such as shipping, tax and customer service. The latest release of Magento Community Edition is a free version is available under the [Open Software License \(OSL\) 3.0](#). Merchants can pay to upgrade to an Enterprise Edition.

## 8. [OpenCart](#)

The OpenCart shopping cart gives Web shop owners the tools they need to quickly install the cart, select a template, add products and start taking online orders. The online store is designed using a built-in template system; you can also migrate a current website to OpenCart. Features include the ability to manage multiple stores from one admin interface, tax zones, shipping methods, back-end store administration and support for a number of payment gateways and languages. OpenCart is free open source software published under the GNU GPL.

## 9. [osCommerce Online Merchant](#)

This free offering gives storeowners tools to manage both the front-end catalog and back-end administration. It provides a basic template layout structure to customize the product catalog. The Administration Tool lets merchants configure the online store, insert products for sale, manage customers and process orders. Released under the GNU GPL, osCommerce Online Merchant is supported by a large community of more than 256,000 storeowners, developers, service providers and enthusiasts.

osCommerce lets storeowners easily manage the front-end catalog and back-end administration.

## 10. [PrestaShop](#)

This PCI-DSS compliant, e-commerce solution is designed to handle everything from Web store set-up to managing customers and orders. Features include a customizable catalog, marketing options, order customization and shipping options. PrestaShop is available in three languages—English, French and Spanish—with an additional 41 translations available through add-ons. PrestaShop is published under the OSL v3.0.

## 11. [Spree Commerce](#)

Powered by the [Ruby on Rails](#) framework, Spree gives store owners complete control over the appearance and functionality of the Web store and features a flexible product management system to create single products, as well as multiple variations based on different attributes such as color and

size. In addition, there are hundreds of Spree extensions available to further customize your Web store.

### **12. [Zen Cart](#)**

Designed by a group of shop owners, programmers, designers and consultants, Zen Cart offers a number of features to customize the cart using a template system to design a store. From there, you can configure product categories, sales discounts, and shipping and payment options. Zen Cart also provides community contributed add-ons to improve your Web store. Documentation and the community support forum is available on the Zen Cart website.

### **13. [Zeuscart](#)**

ZeusCart is a Web-based [PHP/MySQL](#) shopping cart with a rich user interface that's primarily for small and medium-sized storeowners. Features include inventory management, attribute driven product catalog, category management, a built-in content management system (CMS) and SEO-friendly URLs. ZeusCart is licensed under GPL 2, and it can be installed on any server where a PHP interpreter, MySQL database server and a Web server is present.

## **6 Free Hosted Shopping Carts: Basic Plans and Try Before You Buy**

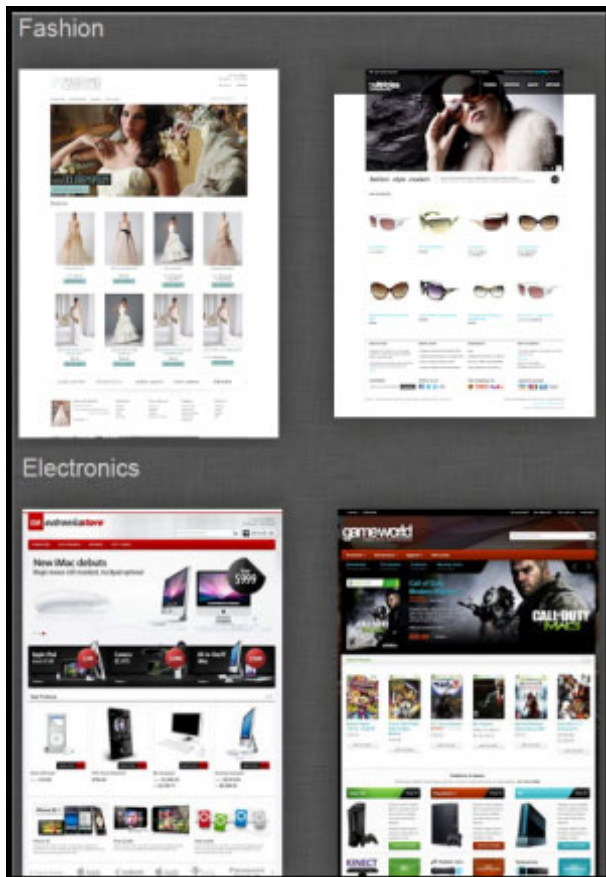
If open source shopping carts are too much for your small operation, or you currently don't have an online website to integrate the cart, there are a number of free hosted Web shops you can investigate. Small businesses can try almost any hosted service for free; however, keep in mind that you're typically limited to a set number of products or monthly transactions (with options to upgrade to a paid subscription).

### **14. [eCrater.com](#)**

ECrater.com makes setting up a storefront easy. You can customize your free online store, import eBay products (eCrater supports unlimited products and categories) and add up to 10 photos per listing. Payment options include PayPal, Google Wallet, personal checks, cashier's checks, money orders and cash on delivery.

### **15. [E-junkie](#)**

E-junkie is a cart that falls in to the "cut-and-paste" category. You can create shopping cart and "buy now" buttons to sell physical and digital goods on your website, blog, social network or anywhere else. E-junkie is free for 30 days, though PayPal merchants can try E-junkie free for three months. After that, basic subscription plans start at \$5 per month.



With Magento, you can create a customized online store, configure products and try it free for 30 days.

#### 16. [Magento Go](#)

Magento is an ecommerce platform that enables you to create a hosted online store, customize the design to suit your business, configure products and then market your store in search engines. A fully functional Magento Go store is free for 30 days. If you like the ecommerce service, pricing starts at \$15 per month.

#### 17. [Mercantec E-Commerce Express](#)

Mercantec offers a small Express Cart option for sellers who want to sell online and list on eBay. The E-Commerce Express product generates a storefront for you, or you can opt to put the cut-and-paste cart-button code on an existing website. You can create a free account on the Mercantec website.

**More: [6 Easy Ecommerce Shopping Carts for Small Business Websites](#)**

#### 18. [PayLoadz](#)

This ecommerce shopping cart can be used to sell just about any type of digital product. It handles the secure file storage and file delivery to your customers and also features product key registrations for selling software online. In addition, eBay Auctions are supported. PayLoadz is free to try; if you sign on, there's a \$14.95 monthly maintenance fee.

#### 19. [StoreYa](#)

StoreYa.com is a Facebook commerce platform that imports an existing Web store in to Facebook. Features include Facebook store customization, support for many languages and currencies and social marketing features. A Facebook store with up to 50 product SKUs is totally free. Upgraded plans start at \$9.99 per month.



StoreYa.com lets you import an existing Web store in to Facebook. It's free for up to 50 product SKUs.

#### 4 Open Source Email Marketing Solutions to Connect With Customers

[Email marketing](#) is a valuable tool for any ecommerce business. You can tell your customers about your latest in-store promotions or offer tips and advice to improve your brand image. These four free open source email marketing programs are worth a look. You will need your own server, though.

##### How-to: [7 Email Marketing Tips to Gain Customers in 2013](#)

#### 20. [OpenEMM](#)

OpenEMM is a Web-based enterprise application for email marketing, newsletters and service mails. Features include an easy interface, bounce management, link tracking, a CMS module and real-time analytics tracking. The code base, in development since 1999, is an easy to set up as a single-server system. The OpenEMM interface works with all major Web browsers.

#### 21. [phpList](#)

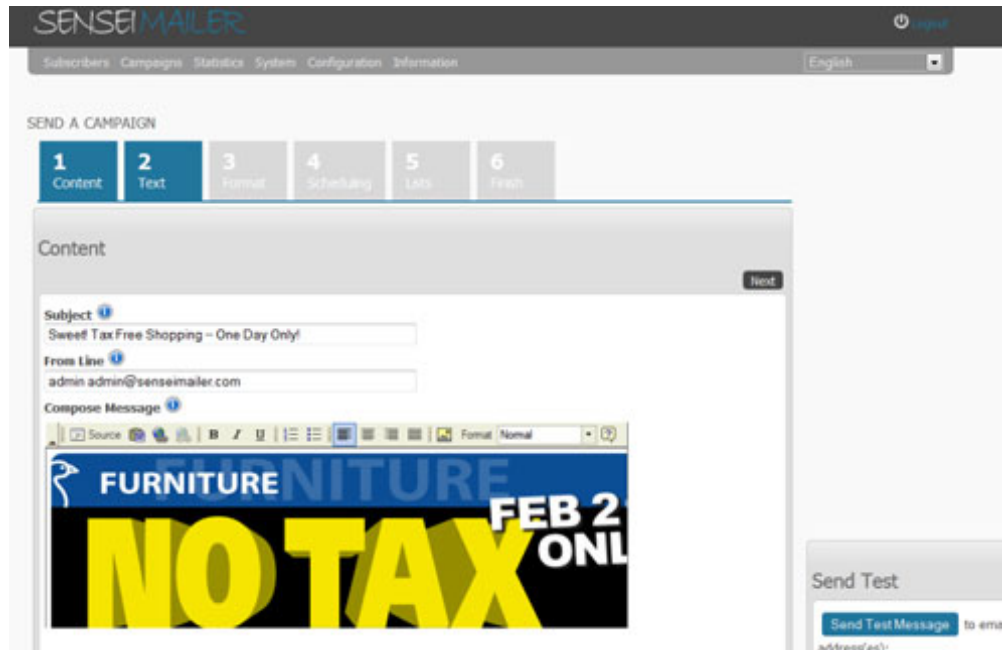
This one-way email announcement delivery system uses a Web interface that makes it easy to write and send messages. Features include support for more than 100,000 subscribers, message delivery management, click tracking for links and URLs, templates and bounce processing. In addition, you can set subscriber preferences so every email message contains personalized URLs for subscribers to update their preferences or unsubscribe from your list. Phplist is licensed under the GPL; version 2.10.19 is the latest stable release.

#### 22. [poMMo](#)

The poMMo Project is open source mass-mailing software for adding a mailing list to your website, though it can also be used for standalone mailings. This Web-based system installs in two minutes and is compatible with all common Web hosts. Features of poMMo include flexible mailing management, the ability to create subscriber groups, subscriber base import and export, and WYSIWYG HTML email creation. For user support and discussion, poMMo offers community forums.

### 23. [SenseiMailer](#)

SenseiMailer is based on the PHPList email marketing system and has been enhanced to provide better subscribe forms for integration with online services such as [Amazon Simple Email Service \(SES\)](#). Other features include single opt-ins, improved back-end subscription processing and a better selection of integrated forms. The full package, which includes the SenseiMailer software, step-by-step installation videos and a guide to setting up Amazon SES, is available for \$19.95. A demo version is available.



SensiMailer offers an easy-to-use editor to create custom email marketing campaigns.

## 5 Free Hosted Email Marketing Software Options

Small businesses, thanks to a smaller subscriber base, can use hosted online email marketing solutions for free. The free versions tend to be basic plans that restrict the number of messages or recipients you connect with in a 30-day period. When using a free service for ecommerce email marketing campaigns, be sure to read the fine print and make sure you can obtain your contact list if you decide to use another service provider or switch to an open source platform down the road.

How-to: [Find the Right Email Marketing Service Provider](#)

### 24. [Campaigner Free](#)

Campaigner offers its hosted email marketing solution completely free to lists of fewer than 500 email addresses. You get access to hundreds of email templates, 1 MB of storage and email address management options, including the ability to see who has read your mailing and clicked on the links in your messages.

### 25. [Kualo MailMachine](#)

This list-building tool lets you create your email list, manage opt-in processes and import contacts or set sign-up forms on your website. Features include ready-made templates, [autoresponders](#), [A/B split tests](#) and a dashboard view for email campaign reports. The "Forever Free Plan" is good for up to 2,000 subscribers (15,000 emails per month). A discreet MailMachine badge is embedded in all email footers on the free plan. Upgraded plans start at \$10 per month.

### 26. [Mail Chimp](#)

This online service lets you design email newsletters, share them on social networks and integrate them with services you already use. Features include list building and management, custom forms, Facebook integration, pre-designed templates and a drag-and-drop editor. MailChimp reports show you who's opening emails and clicking on links in those emails, and it integrates with [Google Analytics](#) to show you how email campaigns affect traffic to your website. The free account is good for up to 2,000 subscribers (12,000 emails per month).

### **27. [ReachMail](#)**

ReachMail provides a number of features including custom templates, auto-responders and detailed reporting with built-in social media sharing and message testing. The free account is good for sending up to 15,000 emails a month. Upgraded accounts start at \$10 per month.

### **28. [SendBlaster Free](#)**

SendBlaster lets you manage email marketing campaign quickly and directly from your desktop. You can import your contact list and manage blacklists and bounce backs. SendBlaster features easy set-up: After a single download and a few clicks, you can set up direct mailing and customize the details of your simple mail transfer protocol (SMTP) server. SendBlaster Free also provides advanced tracking so you can analyze customer behavior and collect information to improve your next campaigns. Upgrades are a one-time payment starting at \$49.

## **3 Editing Tools to Improve Your Product Shots**

Online Web store owners know the value in presenting customers with perfect, professional product shots. A plain-Jane digital photo of the item you sell is often not enough to inspire a purchase. If you manage a small online store with a small product catalog, you're at an advantage, since you can provide perfect product shots for every product you sell. All you need is a digital camera and one of the following free or open source editing tools.

### **29. [GIMP](#)**

GIMP is a free, open source image editor that can be used for photo retouching, image composition and image authoring. It features a full set of tools including brush, pencil, airbrush, a gradient editor, a blend tool and anti-aliasing capabilities. The manipulation tools to rotate, crop and scale images, meanwhile, will be useful for editing product shots.

### **30. [Paint.NET](#)**

Originally developed as a free alternative to Microsoft Paint, Paint.NET features a tab interface to display thumbnails for easy navigation. It includes image effects, 3-D rotation, editing tools for drawing shapes. You'll also find the basic tools for improving product shots: Cropping, rotating, a basic text editor and a recolor tool.

### **31. [Picasa](#)**

Picasa is Google's free software to edit and organize images. After you install Picasa, you can scan your entire hard drive to organize all your photos. For editing and improving product shots, there's a plethora of photo editing affects to choose from, along with basic tools such as crop, straighten, rotate, red-eye removal, contrast and lightening focus.

## **4 Free Shipping Tools For Small Businesses**

Another piece of the ecommerce pie new store owners have to lean about is the world of shipping. Do it wrong—that is, charge too little—and you could lose your shirt. While there's not much in the way of open source software to help you figure out the shipping aspect of your online business, there are a number of free shipping tools to help you get started. Remember to do your research first and then decide where you'll offer to ship to and which carrier you will use.

### **32. [FedEx Rate and Transit Time Finder](#)**

FedEx offers a simple online tool to obtain a rate quote and determine the expected delivery date and time for your shipment. Provide the package details along with the "ship to" and "ship from" information to see available rates and delivery times.

### **How-to: [Take Advantage of Free Shipping and Still Make a Profit](#)**

### Shipping Rates and Delivery Times

Hover over prices for info. – Click on prices for details.

	Tue 26 Feb 2013	Wed 27 Feb 2013	Mon 04 Mar 2013
8:00 A.M.	\$103.76		
10:30 A.M.	\$70.61		
12:00 P.M.	\$39.75		
	\$39.75		
	\$52.25		
	\$39.95		
	\$39.95		
End of Day	\$52.45		
	\$64.15	\$10.69	\$8.91
		\$16.85	\$3.43*
		\$12.35	
		\$5.80	
		\$26.69	

UPS 2nd Day Air

ShippingSidekick offers side-by-side shipping rate comparisons for domestic and international parcels.

### 33. [Shipping SideKick](#)

One way to save money on shipping is to ensure that you use the most cost-efficient service. To help small businesses figure out which service is best for business, Shipping SideKick provides United States domestic and international quotes from multiple carriers, based on your "to" and "from" details.

### 34. [UPS Online Rate Calculator](#)

Enter your parcel information, along with the "to" and "from" details, and discover what rates and delivery service are available. The site also offers handy zone and rate charts and service guides to ensure that shipping goes smoothly.

### 35. [USPS Postage Price Calculator](#)

The United States Postal Service also offers an online rate calculator to help you determine the cost to ship packages. You can choose a flat rate service or use the pictorial guide to choose a package shape. Enter the "to" and "from" ZIP codes to see the different rate options and the delivery service guarantee.

*Based in Nova Scotia, Canada, Vangie Beal has been covering small business, electronic commerce and Internet technology for more than a decade. You can tweet with her online [@AuroraGG](#). Follow everything from CIO.com on Twitter [@CIOonline](#), [Facebook](#), [Google +](#) and [LinkedIn](#).*

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