

VOLO

Adventures in ecommerce

The Volo Lever Framework

The 5 Levers of Growth Affecting
Every eCommerce Business



Introduction

The Volo Lever Framework is a formula for explaining the forces at work on every ecommerce business. There are 5 levers affecting sales growth, and 5 affecting operational efficiency.

This ebook addresses the 5 growth levers in detail. Another ebook covers the 5 efficiency levers.

We've streamlined 5 posts we wrote in 2022, each post taking 1 growth lever at a time and analysing how it works and what you need to do to optimise it for your business. It's quite a detailed ebook, so we advise you to take a look at the framework diagram over the page and drill into your specific areas of interest.

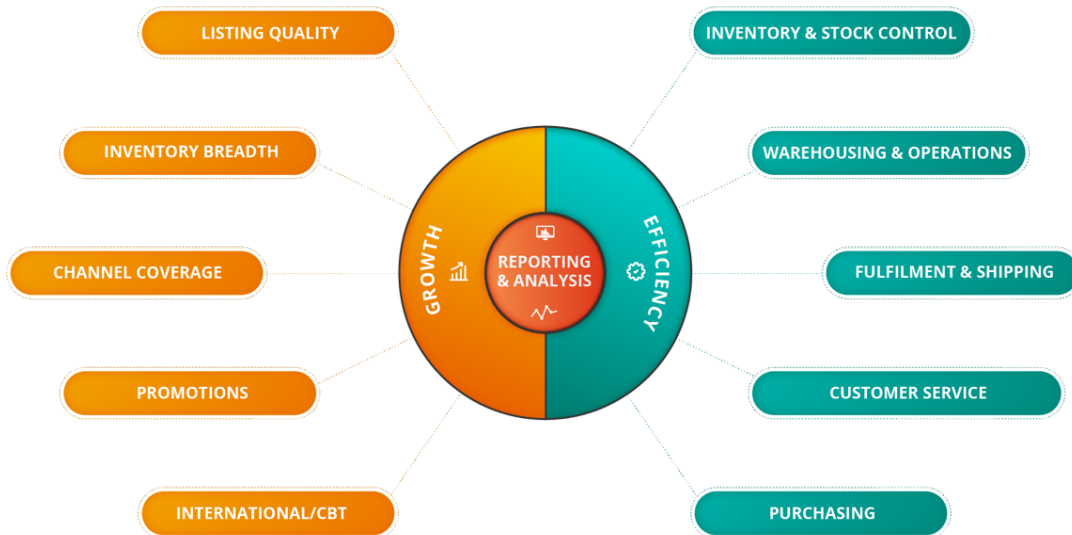
There is also a 'super lever' at work – reporting & analysis – which provides the insight and illuminates the decisions you can make for the 10 levers.

This document is a sister ebook to 'The Volo eCommerce Super Lever – How Reporting & Analysis Drives the 10 Levers of eCommerce Growth and Efficiency'.

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The Volo Lever Framework



Listing Quality

You are what you list. It's as simple as that. For your customers to engage in a transaction with you and buy one or more of your products, they have to see them. In order to see them, they have to be able to find them. In order for your customers to find them, your listing quality has to be high.

It's all about the quality of data that you have to manipulate to make it right for each marketplace or channel that you're going to list on. This places more emphasis on how you structure your listings data. Then, it's down to keeping the data up-to-date and accurate over time.

The better you list, the more you get found, the more conversions you get, the more you grow. This growth comes at a price, and the price is research, effort and time. Let's start with best practices around titles and data. You need to put yourself in the mind of your customer and design the exact title that they would search for. Listing titles are used by the various marketplaces to match against search keywords popularised by the end users. Different marketplaces have different character length requirements for titles. Use the full length available for that marketplace and prioritise the more important words at the beginning.

As well as your own research, you should study the competition. Use a resource like [eBay's Terapeak](#), for Amazon, pay-for tools like [Jungle Scout](#) or [Helium 10](#) to identify

relevant or high-volume keywords your competitors are using which you may be missing. Google's Keyword Research tool can help you identify relevant keywords with high search volume and add these to your titles.

Data manipulation is important when you're optimising for high listing quality. If you're using a supplier feed for example, you may have less than perfect information. Having a process to optimise this data can pay dividends for you in the long run. Optimising your data helps you stand out against *those competitors using the same suppliers and the same or similar products as you*. After all, on Amazon, for example, there could be many more than you selling the same item, and you need your version of the item to be noticed and clicked on.

If you use a system to unify your work across multiple marketplaces and webstores, the technology should help you share the data manipulation workload between your team members. In Volo, for example, you could flag all new inventory items as 'optimise title', 'check images', 'optimise specifics', 'list item' and so on. When a team member has completed the work, they simply remove the relevant flags and the inventory is ready to list. Within Volo, you can automatically download all the eBay Item Specifics for your products via the Volo API, and you can also download data in bulk from Amazon or other catalogue-based marketplaces to do something similar. This means no more copying and pasting values to create your specifics and it also ensures you're using the *exact* value required by eBay in order to show up in eBay-filtered searches.

Google factors marketplace behaviour and traffic into its search algorithm, so using the same data on all marketplaces and your website can hurt your web traffic. In Amazon, if you own the ASIN listing we recommend reworking your eBay and website data to create your bullet points. Ensure you include the top product features and reinforce its benefits. It's a short space to convince people to buy, so make sure you leverage your most important purchase triggers.

Similarly, with Amazon search terms, you have 5 fields, each allowing 50 characters. Ensure you're entering the relevant keywords that will bring in traffic. Recycle your eBay Item Specifics and your website keywords to fill all 5 fields. Remember that title, merchant and brand are automatically included, so avoid repeating these.

When it comes to images, the more product images you have, the better you perform. The visual aspects to purchase conversion are hard to underestimate, so it's worth getting your images right. We recommend using at least 4-5 images per SKU to increase buyer confidence, and using more images has long been proven by eBay research to increase your sales conversion rate. Volo's listing software can host all your images for you, at no extra storage cost. Primary images should be on a white background,

occupying about 80% of the space. Images should be of the product on offer and not include any accessories or other items not included in the box.

With eBay we recommend that image sizes are at least 1600 pixels on the longest side to enable the free 'zoom feature' in search results. This helps your products stand out against your competitors. Although Amazon recommends a minimum of 1280 pixels on the longest image side, we'd advise you go larger for a higher level of detail. Amazon state that images should ideally be 2560 pixels or larger. For Amazon in particular, your images should not include any text, watermarks or logos.

Mobile has long been extremely important on the major marketplaces, as buyers continue to buy via mobile or at least use mobile for some of the buying process. When browsing eBay items on your mobile, or using the eBay app, the full item description is hidden from view. Instead you see the images, title, variations and item specifics. For this reason it's extremely important to complete item specifics on eBay – and indeed this is mandatory in many categories – as they act as a short description. This allows customers to see the details they need and make a purchase, all without viewing the item description itself, Volo's creative services team produces web shop designs for that are fully mobile-optimised, giving the customer a rich user experience from browsing through to selection, drill-down and purchase.

When it comes to search rankings, the majority of online marketplaces uses item-level sales history to rank products. If your item sells well, these marketplaces deem it relevant to the users' search. They have confidence in your ability as a business to deliver and so boost your item's visibility in the search results. Clearly you want to be ranked first and seen first every time if at all possible. With this in mind, you're much better off combining related items into a variation listing, because each sale will increase your score on your variation listing, rather than diluting the score over multiple individual listings. Furthermore, customers expect to see drop-downs and filters when searching for a product, so it delivers a better buying experience. You should factor this into the way you structure your listings.

Since search on eBay is largely based on its historical conversion rate, you might be better off wiping your history and starting again in cases where you aren't ranking well. Be careful though, since the history at the top of an eBay listing page should not be confused with the conversion history used to determine its ranking (which is hidden). eBay's relist functionality can preserve your conversion history while wiping the listing history.

To conclude: when you have high listing quality, and you can list update many items quickly and easily, you can grow your business more effectively.

Inventory Breadth

Widening your inventory breadth is about focusing on quality and quantity, so initially we'll touch on three areas. One, you need to have a command over sourcing and procurement. It's about constantly researching, finding and working with new suppliers. Some of your suppliers may supply you with physical stock for your warehouse. Others may be drop-ship suppliers, holding the stock for you and, when you make sales, fulfilling and the dispatching the orders for you too.

Two, carrying a large breadth of inventory means an increased reliance on ordering items to replenish stock and back-ordering items that are in demand. The more your inventory breadth, probably also the more supplier relationships you have to manage, and the more ordering and re-ordering you need to do to maintain optimum stock levels.

Three, the more suppliers to work with, the greater the quantity of different supplier information coming into your business, with a varying degree of quality data in those supplier feeds. Some suppliers may still rely on paper, others may use spreadsheets with stock and barcode information, and others may use automated feeds, again with a varying degree of automation. Suppliers also structure their products data in different ways and formats, with varying levels of completeness, which you have to harmonise.

Although inventory breadth is good, there are clearly some challenges that come with trying to increase the range of products on offer. SKU coverage is important, since often it's not simply a case of one version of each product. In addition to a master SKU for the base product, there's also a sub-SKU for each variation. Sometimes there's even a listing SKU for each variation for each marketplace or channel. This makes it more complex to manage your inventory breadth.

Sourcing strategy is key when you're dealing with a large range of products. The internet has effectively brought the global pool of potential suppliers to your business, which is great for choice but also brings with it the legal, regulatory and tax requirements behind importing goods from overseas. An over-reliance on cheaper products from the farther reaches of the world may leave your supply strategy exposed, as it has in the last couple of years as the pandemic stressed both supply and transportation.

If you use a system to unify your work across multiple marketplaces and webstores, the technology should help you considerably. Re-ordering and managing your records are also more complex when you have a breadth of inventory and suppliers. If you're doing your re-ordering manually, then you need to know how fast each item of inventory is selling, where it is, how much stock you have left and how many days' worth of stock

this represents before you run out. You also need to calculate the lead-time for getting the stock in from the supplier.

Using virtual suppliers and drop-shipping your orders means that someone else is holding the stock for you. It also allows you to broaden the range of items you sell, but don't forget that your supplier may also be holding the same stock for several other suppliers, so stock levels can sometimes deplete rapidly and you might not get regular and frequent updates. You still need to get those accurate and up-to-date levels of stock your suppliers are carrying, so that you don't oversell. You also need to make sure you're showing the adjusted stock levels for the item across all the places where you sell. Clearly, this gets more complicated the more virtual suppliers you use, the more virtual products you offer for sale, and the more places you offer them.

Volo has been providing technology and expertise in multichannel ecommerce for over 15 years. Over that time we've accumulated a lot of software functionality and industry best practices in all the key areas, including inventory breadth. When it comes to sourcing, we advise you to deliberately set regular time aside to source new suppliers. When you're running an ecommerce business, it's easy to get sucked into the daily operations. Devoting time to work on your business, not in your business, should give you long term returns.

Verifying suppliers' data on your products for listings can take up a lot of time. The more you can automate these processes of inventory breadth, taking feeds from your suppliers and being able to turn them into the optimal listing information for your buyers on your various channels, the better and faster your business will grow. Multichannel ecommerce systems like Volo Origin and Volo Vision can allow you to automate your supply and your inventory breadth. That translates to less time integrating your suppliers and managing your inventory and more time marketing your products and growing your sales.

With a broader range of inventory to manage, of course, you also have more of your money tied up in stock. This makes it really important to know the items that are not selling quickly, not selling at all, or haven't sold for a while and are sitting in the warehouse taking up space and tying up money. On the other hand, overselling and having no fast-selling items in stock is bad for your seller ratings and your marketplace status. Try to make sure that your physical products and your virtual products are always in stock. Inventory management systems like Volo can provide you with analytics on how fast your inventory is moving, how much stock you have left, and when you need to re-order. Volo will also send you automated alerts when your stock levels reach

a certain threshold. You can even put rules in place, with manual interventions built in, to automate stock purchase and re-purchase.

It's important that your supplier feeds, for both physical and virtual stock, are accurate and up-to-date. This helps you avoid overselling and having to back order for in-demand products. Try to get automated feeds where possible from your suppliers, rather than having to phone up or send chasing emails, which is a major time-suck. Volo's multichannel software can automate and integrate your supplier feeds directly. This will give you a more efficient end-to-end process, freeing you up to grow the business.

Kits and bundles are a great way to increase inventory breadth and increase sales. When you put products together to create kits and bundles, you're able to create a new product and extend your range. You might sell a sander as one product, for example, and a sanding belt as another. You can then put them together to create new products, a 'sanding kit', using your own barcode. It's the same with a camera, tripod and case, and so on. As well as broadening your range, you're also driving more sales and higher profitability. You'll be able to deliver better value for your buyers who know that they can come back to you for more items since your range is so broad. Moreover, you can use bundling to help tag slower-moving items to faster-moving items, as long as the fit is a natural one. Systems like Volo enable you to spot products that are bought together, easily set up kits, bundles and other promotional offers to widen your range and make more sales.

Finally, we've talked about the increased importance of stock level and supplier status with a larger product range. Great reporting can give you a real insight into what's happening across your inventory range. Volo Vision allows you to see what's happening with your inventory breadth down to the individual item. You can analyse sales performance and stock levels by supplier, channels, regions and time periods. This means that you're constantly keeping the well-performing items stocked and discontinuing – or bundling where possible – the poorly-performing ones. Volo Vision reporting gives you the information you need to rotate your inventory, orders and suppliers in accordance with your business growth goals.

When you get great at inventory breadth, you can grow your revenues more effectively. Volo helps companies grow their sales and average order values. We do this through automating supply and inventory management processes.

Channel Coverage

If you're active on one online channel – it could be your webstore(s), or maybe Amazon or eBay – then you've every right to consider yourself to be an expert on it. You know how it works and how to be successful on it. You're probably also aware of what might happen if there's a problem and how quickly your single revenue stream can go pear-shaped, or dam-shaped to extend the metaphor. To avoid this unpleasant scenario, you could look at making the same stock available on a second channel. Then you're spreading your risk between the two channels and getting a bit of balance in the business. That sounds easy, but this second channel might not be another webstore, it might be different. It might have different rules and work in a different way. You have to start from scratch to learn it, which takes time, money and sweat, all of which you could be devoting to your single channel.

There are hundreds and hundreds of channels to choose from across other regions and countries, each of which comes with its own effort and reward, depending on your business and the products you sell. There are webstore platforms, global multi-category marketplaces, regional or national marketplaces, vertical marketplaces, price comparison sites, daily deal sites, flash sale sites, aggregators and B2B marketplaces or exchanges. The list is long, and that's just online, which doesn't take into account physical channels like stores or telephone order/mail order, aka MOTO. There are opportunities in all of them, and of course costs and risks inherent in them too. What's the right balance, the right channel coverage?

Hope is not a strategy for your channels, you can't rely on being lucky. You need to strategically spread your risk across channels, but also within channels. You could have multiple seller IDs in the same channel, with each ID selling different – but perhaps complementary – sets of products. Do the research into each channel – or seek out channel experts – to find out what's right for you: how each channel works, how its categories are structured, what its policies are, how its pricing works, how it operates, its requirements for joining, its terms and conditions, how much market share it has in the areas of your interest, its attitude to sellers, its current seller base, its ethos and so on. As we said, if you can't get the answers yourself, ask someone who already has them, or can get them for you.

Once you've decided a second or third channel is worth investing in, the next thing to figure out is how it will work with your existing channel. You'll now have 2 or more places to go for all the stages of your business process. How will you manage your inventory? How will your listings work? How will you monitor what you've sold where, and show the right stock levels across your channels? How will you make sure you don't

oversell anywhere? How will you manage customer service? If you're not careful, you might find that doubling your channels simply doubles the amount of work you have to do, unless you can get some economies of scale or scope going.

For many Volo customers, it's the addition of a second channel that leads to a call or email in our direction. It's now too much for the company to rely on the mainly manual processes that have served them well so far. They've been doing everything directly on the marketplace or webstore, but now they want to avoid duplicating their effort and also they want to easily compare and contrast performance on each channel.

Importantly, the opportunities of selling stock on a second channel far outweigh the costs of enlisting some outside expertise in the form of technology and know-how.

Companies find that trying to save money by taking a DIY approach means they can't grow their sales and profits as quickly and steadily as they would like. The pain of change is less than the pain of staying the same, and it's the kind of change that scales for the long term. Let's look at a few specific areas where channel coverage impacts us.

First, managing stock. We don't recommend keeping a separate inventory for each channel, because then you can't capitalise on the unifying and streamlining advantages of being a multichannel seller. We suggest you use a single inventory pool from which all your channels are updated. Volo's Channel Profile function, for example, allows you to push all your stock updates out across your channels automatically. In this way you can sell items on different channels, show the right stock levels everywhere and replenish your orders and stock availability to get the balance right between overselling and underselling, or between having too little stock and having too much.

Second, understanding channel-specific search. We've already talked about doing the homework on each channel to get your coverage right. It's obviously key that you understand how the search capability works on each channel. Look at how search enquiries are returned to potential buyers, how buyers can filter or narrow down their searches, what information is presented and how it's structured. This will impact how you structure the information – the listing data – on your products. The better you structure your data to the way the channel works and the way its customers search, the better the chance of your product being found and then bought. Again, it's a question of effort versus reward. Of course, choose the channel or channels where you think you'll get the best return on your investment.

Third, being resilient. Resilience is a big word for us, and if there's one aspect your business has had to excel in over the last couple of years, it's resilience. In the UK, apart from your webstore there are three main channels, each of which can drive significant revenue for your business: Amazon, eBay and OnBuy, plus large category-focused

marketplaces like Etsy. You should diversify the channels you're on to spread your risk. It's better to have three channels providing you with about a third of your business each than two, one of which brings you 70%, for example, or, worse still, one channel than brings you 100% This way, you're better insured against a major incident beyond your control taking out the main source of your income.

Fourth, structuring and optimising your data. Data really is king, queen and the whole royal family. The better your data on your products is organised, the better your business performs. We all know that information is power, especially well organised, accurate information. You should use rules to structure your data in bulk. This streamlined approach will give you major productivity gains over dealing individually with the data on each product item.

Fifth, optimising your customer communications. Make sure you pool your customer communications across your channels into one central place, since it's easier to manage and a more productive use of your customer service staff time in the long run. Furthermore, add information – both imagery and text – to your product detail to reduce questions from your customers. Storing pre-written responses to standard and frequently asked questions will buy your staff valuable time every time. This is the gift that keeps on giving over hundreds and thousands of individual communications.

Sixth, and finally, building your brand. You should use your channels as an opportunity to build your brand online. You're probably already remarketing to those customers who have bought from you via your webstore. In addition, where marketplace rules allow you can use those marketplaces as additional direct acquisition channels. Once someone buys from you, you can send them an offer in the package, if you're allowed, to return directly to your webstore. You can capture their data, keep them abreast of your special offers and turn them into repeat direct buyers.

When you get your channel coverage right, you can build your ecommerce business quickly and spread your risk across the different places where you sell.

Promotions

In the traditional world of marketing there were the 4 Ps – 4 areas to think about when marketing your product or service – product, price, place (ie distribution) and promotions. Within promotions, there were another 4 ‘sub-promotional’ areas: sales (ie people), advertising, public relations and sales promotion. We’re going to concern ourselves with the second and fourth areas.

A promotion is an effort to create an emotion in customers that moves them towards a decision in your favour. The AIDA acronym helps here, as it reminds us of the desired process we’re trying to elicit: Awareness, Interest, Decision, Action. From awareness of the offer to interest, where they engage with the offer, decision where they elect to buy and finally action where they follow through on a purchase. First things first: what are you trying to do with a promotion? Are you looking to attract new customers with enticing offers? Are you striving to build average order value by encouraging buyers to take additional products with their order? Are you trying to increase customer loyalty and ‘lifetime value’ (to you) by inspiring buyers to make repeat purchases over time?

In order to achieve these three differing goals, the good and bad thing is that there’s a large range of promotional options available, and an array of tools on each marketplace. Your challenge, should you choose to accept it, is to successfully manage your activities and campaigns to make sure you’re growing sales and profits adequately and still have time left to do your other important tasks. Let’s look at some of the promotional avenues.

Complementary Items

Related items encourage a buyer who has already selected an item to add another complementary item to their order. Examples: a case and/or tripod for a camera, half a dozen replacement sanding belts for a sanding iron, the other two books in a trilogy, or perhaps an accessory to match a piece of clothing. This increases basket size and attaches additional sales at little or no extra cost. Kits and bundles are a great way to communicate value and great service to buyers by packaging up products in ways that make sense to them, while also increasing average order value.

Discounts

Good old-fashioned discounts are a good way of increasing order value. When a buyer’s order value has reached a certain minimum threshold, for example, they could be entitled to a certain discount that you specify. For example, if a customer has spent £55

and they see they get 10% off all orders over £60, it's a relatively straightforward step to add something small to avail of the discount and possibly pay less than the subtotal of £55.

Buy one, get one free

The 'buy one, get one free' or 'BOGOF' incentive is designed to make the first item more attractive by getting another one free or perhaps half price. If the product in question is a decent margin to you, you can move additional numbers of it while still maintaining profitability.

Free Shipping

Offering free shipping on items is another promotional tactic, but in fairness is fast becoming table stakes as the ecommerce market matures and intensifies. To use the recent example, you use free shipping for orders of £60 or over to encourage the buyer to add more items to the order to take advantage of the saving on transportation. Your margins need to be sufficient on the product or products for the offer to make good business sense.

Pricing

A key promotional tool in the competitive battle to drive sales growth has always been pricing. Showing the original price compared with the offer price, using the 'strike-through' mechanism, is a proven way to grow sales. That said, it's very difficult to manually monitor all your prices across the various channels you sell through. Concentrate on your best sellers, therefore, or else use technology in the form of rules-based or algorithmic re-pricers which can automate this important weapon for you.

You probably already use a variety of these promotional ploys in your physical stores and / or webstore(s). Marketplaces also have their own specific tools to drive sales.

Amazon Advertising (more [here](#))

- Today's Deals, as well as Prime Day(s) and the traditional retail/ecommerce anniversaries like Black Friday and so on

- Sponsored Brands – if it's your brand, or you're similarly authorised, appearing in shopping result pages and allowing you to showcase your brand identity, strapline and a selection of your products
- Sponsored Display – these are ad placements that appear on Amazon and elsewhere on the web, using display advertising that you create and manage yourself
- Stores – functionality that allows you build a multi-page store and content for your brands, free of charge

eBay Promotions (more [here](#))

- Daily Deals, as well as the traditional anniversaries we talked about above
- Multi-buy – essentially a version of the BOGOF technique we mentioned earlier
- Order Discount – as above!
- Sale Event – example: 20% off all swimwear in May. Use it for in demand items or to offer reduced prices on part of your inventory. You can show customers before and after prices with 'Markdown'
- Offers to Buyers – you can engage your interested buyers by offering a reduced price on your listing or giving them the opportunity to make their best offer
- Coded Coupons – create and share your own discount codes for buyers or groups of buyers
- [Promoted Listings \(Standard\)](#) – multiple sponsored ads across eBay for high quality eBay sellers to boost the nominated listings' visibility. You pay per sale
- [Promoted Listings \(Advanced\)](#) – currently in beta, according to eBay, you can "Drive traffic to your listings with preferred access to the top slot of search using keyword and budget controls." Also for high quality, active sellers, you pay per click

OnBuy Boost (more [here](#))

- OnBuy's pay per sale promotional offering to increase your visibility and your product rank

Successful companies confidently manage all the promotional options at their disposal and can deliver great customer service through the order peaks that result from their activities and campaigns. When you're great at promotions, you can win more business from new customers and sell more to existing customers. Volo helps our companies grow revenues through dynamic re-pricing, kits and bundles, having things like eBay Promoted Listings (Standard) manageable from within Volo, as well as other automated back end processes.

International / Cross-border

It's not an understatement to say that the international picture changed dramatically for UK sellers on the 1st January 2021, following frantic last ditch Brexit deals hammered out the week before, whose ramifications are still being felt across Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Changes to customs, tax and marketplace responsibilities affected the UK from the beginning of last year, and the EU followed suit in the second half of 2021. This has complicated affairs for UK sellers to the degree where in a [Volo-ecommtors survey](#) a year ago 'Tax and Customs Changes in the UK and EU' was the top blocker to growth, with 48% of all respondents citing it.

Across the Volo customer base the percentage of cross-border business has dropped considerably, mirroring the wider picture, and to compensate sellers have doubled down on domestic sales while also focusing unwaveringly on profitability. International conditions are starting to settle down and improve, however. So it's not the purpose of this post to talk about IOSS numbers, or the £135/€150 threshold and when the marketplace rather than you collects the tax, or which carriers are better set up to support you; we recommend a good tax advisor for that. Instead, we'll focus on what cross-border options are out there.

A caveat before we start however. While serving the 'long tail' of global online customers for your cool product sounds great, you need to prioritise. Each new country you consider selling to has barriers to entry, each requiring knowledge and experience to negotiate. There are currency and exchange rate considerations, insurance matters, and the legal & regulatory hurdles we've touched on. There are also language barriers, cultural concerns, shipping arrangements and returns policies to fathom. There's also the customer service aspect to ponder. As you can imagine, depending on which country you import from, or sell to, at what order value, there are almost countless permutations that we can't cover in a single post. What we can say, however, is that you need a plan of attack, covering which markets, which channels, what level of risk, what

level of return, what time frame, and with which partners.

Simply speaking, your options boil down to three broad areas: webstores, country sites of global marketplaces, and international or regional marketplaces.

Webstores

We're assuming that you're a registered UK business. You can start by offering your products on your own website to international buyers, shipping to them directly from your UK warehouse. Many Volo sellers have concentrated on growing their webstore presences over the pandemic, with the greater control and profitability they bring, at the expense of attracting buyers to their site. In fact, web is now the largest channel among our customer base.

Starting with overseas markets that also speak English will enable you to park the language aspect for a while. If your products are seasonal, you can also look at markets that have their peak period at different times to yours, thereby growing your business and evening out to a degree any lumpiness in your trading picture.

Selling internationally is about finding new customers in less competitive markets for your product. It pays to research products and their price sensitivity in your target markets, to make sure you can make attractive offers to buyers who are OK with waiting the extra time for their order to be delivered. If quick delivery continues to be a key buying factor, you may need to consider drop-shipping from local supplier-partners, or using a third party logistics provider, or even investing in your own warehouse if the demand and potential justifies it.

Depending on your business strategy, you may consider having country-specific website addresses and websites hosted in the countries you're targeting, to present a more localised offering to your buyers. Also, for countries whose first language is not yours, you need to build the business case for translating and localising the content for each key market. Here your options range from a DIY Google-translate approach through to translation and cultural advice agencies who use either human or machine-assisted translation – or a bit of both – for everything from your listings to your FAQ answers. You could even outsource the logistics and customer service elements to local providers, in return for a chunk of your margins.

Amazon and eBay International Sites

If you're already selling on Amazon and / or eBay, a natural next step is to internationalise your offering on one or more of their several country sites.

Marketplaces are not as profitable as your own webstore(s), but they offer potentially huge international reach, invest heavily their enormous traffic volumes and in the main are seen as highly trustworthy.

Amazon first. In case you didn't know, it's very, very big. It's a highly recognised global brand, enjoys 200 million Prime members worldwide and back in 2018 was the initial product search destination for [45% of European consumers](#) (so we imagine that percentage is higher now). At the time of writing, Amazon boasts [21 international sites](#): 4 in the Americas, 5 in Asia-Pacific, 3 in the Middle-East and 9 in Europe. A European account will give you access to international sites, making it an easy step for you to test the waters overseas – if you pardon the mixed metaphor – by offering a small number of listings to buyers in a country or two, rather than throwing all of your eggs into the international basket. You have to do the research though, so invest in a product like [Jungle Scout](#) or [Helium10](#) that we've already mentioned to see what the demand on Amazon is like internationally for the products you have in mind.

FBA, along with Seller Fulfilled Prime, is a great way of reaching the Prime audience, and FBA items do very well in product search since the customer delivery experience will be second to none. For small, light and fast-moving items, you should consider using the FBA European network centres, since having your product there will ensure you can offer equally excellent delivery options to your buyers.

eBay has recently raised its game on the fulfilment side and now offers eBay Fulfilment, with centres in both the UK and in Germany for your EU sales. This is good news if you sell on both marketplaces since it gives you round-the-clock fulfilment flexibility in addition to any orders you ship yourself. As with Amazon, you should use the previously cited [Terapeak](#) tool to research the likely success of your products in various eBay international markets.

eBay has around two dozen international country sites and your eBay Seller ID allows you to list your products on them in the normal domestic way. There are different flavours to [selling internationally with eBay](#). [Basic International Selling](#) allows your UK listing to be shown on overseas sites – so in the English language – and if you sell then you pay the eBay UK selling fee. [Advanced International Selling](#) allows you to put a listing and set the price on the eBay country site in question, in the local language, and buyers can see your UK reviews too because of the one Seller ID. Having an eBay Shop subscription may also give you access to similar benefits as you get in the UK and when you sell, you pay the eBay country fee where your buyer bought from.

Finally on eBay, the [Global Shipping Programme](#) allows you to send your international order to the eBay UK centre and they take care of everything else for you. Restrictions, and costs of course, do apply. With both Amazon and eBay you need to study the requirements carefully before deciding you're eligible and jumping in.

[OnBuy](#) has been pushing selling internationally for a couple of years and has ambitious plans to open up 140 country sites; there are no dates for the rollout at the time of writing.

International or Regional Marketplaces

In addition to the [global players](#) (we haven't mentioned [Etsy](#), but they're not as all-encompassing in their categories as the other 3 marketplaces we've talked about), there's a very large range of marketplaces dedicated either to a certain region or else a certain category. They're too numerous to cover in this post, and your shortlist of candidates will clearly depend on your own circumstances and ambitions, but [this list](#) is a great place to start.

Worth calling out though, and in alphabetical order, are [Allegro](#), Poland's biggest marketplace and the third largest in Europe, [Cdiscount](#), based in France and with access to other marketplaces within the [International Marketing Network](#), [Fruugo](#), another global player which also offers free translations on listings, and [ManoMano](#), a French-based European home improvement and gardening marketplace. Some of these players also round out their offerings with dedicated logistics solutions.

Mastering international or cross-border selling has become more complicated and challenging for UK sellers, but it's still about managing the risk of entering new markets, streamlining your international operations and leveraging the benefits of language and seasonality. Fortunately, a large portion of the complexity can be take care of by inputting rules into rules engines and using automation to take care of the decision-making.

Systems like Volo's are engineered to accommodate the latest customs, tax and other legislative requirements so that you're listing, pricing and successfully delivering in the most effective way. Volo also allows you to control more business processes for multiple channels from one system, rather than having to duplicate the effort on each channel, and this includes Amazon FBA and eBay Fulfilment. Using the Volo system to grow international sales and profits can help you grow your businesses smoothly, safely and sustainably, by finding new customers with attractive lifetime values.

Next step

Every ecommerce business has 5 levers of growth at its disposal, which it can move to suit its own unique situation and goals. The Volo Lever Framework helps you understand them all and gives you a handy, important dashboard for business success.

Mastering the flow of data and the automation of processes is central to executing how you want each lever to work in your favour.

To discuss any of the growth levers in this ebook, or do explore your requirements for scaling your sales growth, take the next step and [get in touch](#).



Volo Commerce

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