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The ECommerce Decisions That Actually Mattered

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Tactics are not a strategy.

Tactics are what you do after the strategy is wrong.

25 years. 4 continents. One pattern.

*Most ecommerce failures are not
technology failures.*

They are readiness failures.

25 years. Every business type. Same observation.

These are not the decisions that mattered.

~~Platform~~

Shopify vs Magento vs Salesforce

Important. Not the decision.

~~Ad spend~~

Google vs Meta vs TikTok

Important. Not the decision.

~~Influencers~~

Micro vs macro vs none

Important. Not the decision.

Get the structural decisions wrong and no amount of tactical optimisation rescues you.

1

Channel architecture is a strategic choice.

D2C

Margin & data

You own the customer relationship.
Everything else follows from that.

Marketplace

Volume & visibility

200m Prime members.
You will not own the data.

Wholesale

Capital efficiency

Scale without infrastructure.
You cede the customer relationship.

D2C, marketplace, and wholesale are not channels. They are business models.

2

The US is not a bigger UK.

UK

Brand awareness: exists

3–5 day delivery: acceptable

Returns: ~18–22%

CAC: established baseline

vs

US

68 million online shoppers. Zero brand awareness.

2-day shipping: not a premium. It is the baseline.

Returns: 30–40% in apparel D2C.

CAC: materially higher. Market is more competitive.

Decide your entry model before you spend a single dollar on US acquisition.

Three credible US entry models.

Only one is right for your business.

Direct-to-US

High control. High cost.

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- US fulfilment, CX and returns from day one
 - Min. viable commitment: ~£150–200k year one

Only viable with runway for 18–24 months before payback.

Marketplace-first

Lower barrier. Lower margin.

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- 200m Prime members, no US infrastructure
 - You will not own the customer relationship

Amazon's algorithm is indifferent to your brand story.

Partner / Wholesale

Capital light. Brand risk.

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- US distributor carries the infrastructure risk
 - One bad season = potential delisting

You cede control at the most critical moment.

3

Your UK margin architecture is probably wrong for the US.

30%

Minimum blended contribution margin before entering the US

The US adds structural cost to every P&L line:

US fulfilment

Materially higher than UK equivalents

Returns uplift

Apparel D2C: 30–40% vs UK ~18–22%

Customer acquisition

More competitive market, higher CPMs

Currency exposure

Unhedged FX on US revenue at scale

Below 30% blended contribution margin in the UK? The US will make it worse before it makes it better.

4

Measure what drives decisions, not what fills reports.

What fills reports

Revenue

Sessions

Bounce rate

Social followers

What drives decisions

Contribution margin by channel

Repeat purchase rate by cohort

Cost to acquire by channel

US: contribution margin per order

If your dashboard doesn't tell you what to do next, it is not a dashboard. It is a report.

The decisions that mattered shared one quality.

This is what I call **Foundation First**.

	DEFAULT	DELIBERATE
EARLY	Missed opportunity Accidental decisions made early may still work, but not by design.	This is where businesses scale Deliberate. Early. Foundation First.
LATE	Structural failure Default decisions made late. The most expensive category.	Recoverable with cost Right decision, wrong moment. Expensive but not fatal.

Before you go to the US.

Answer these three questions. Specifically.

01

Which entry model can we sustain for 24 months?

Not which model is most exciting. Which model has the runway.

02

Does our margin architecture support US cost structure?

Run the P&L with US fulfilment, US returns, and US CAC before you build anything.

03

What does success look like in month 18, specifically?

If you cannot state a specific commercial outcome, you are not ready to go.

One decision. This week.

*Pick one structural decision your business has been making by default.
Make it deliberately.*

Channel architecture · Market entry model · Margin architecture · Measurement
