

Using Pinterest with your eCommerce store

Draft White Paper

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Introducing Pinterest

Although it's been around since late 2009, it seems as if Pinterest just now has taken the Social Media world by storm, amassing an amazing *11 million* visits a week by the end of 2011 – *40 times* what the site was getting just six months ago. Not bad for a still in beta, invitation-only site whose purpose and use is still a mystery to many!

But what exactly is Pinterest? If you've stumbled across a site and seen page after page of wedding cakes and fancy dresses, you might be wondering whether there is any way such a platform can be integrated with an eCommerce business like your own.

This white paper intends to clear up any questions you might have about Pinterest and show you how easy it is to get free, self-generating publicity for your products amongst the web's most sought-after demographic and open up a whole new channel of potential buyers!

What is Pinterest?

Pinterest is without doubt the fastest growing social network sites on the web at the moment. According to statistics released by the ComScore last month, Pinterest now receives over 10 million unique visitors a month, and is outranked among social networking sites by only Twitter and Facebook. Indications are that it is already the most popular social bookmarking site for women, particularly affluent women who are likely to make online purchases – in other words, the section of the market that no eCommerce business can afford to ignore!

So what is Pinterest for? Well, to put it simply, and as its name implies, Pinterest is an online pin board. Users create boards or collections of boards, and then pin to them things they find online that interest or inspire them. It is most notably used for planning weddings, creating highly visual, annotated wish lists that are not tied to one store. Other common uses are home decoration, sharing recipe collections, photographs of favorite places,

crafts, this year's fashion must-haves, in fact collections of anything and everything.

Anyone wanting to set up a Pinterest board has to first request an account. This currently takes a few days, but it's been made clear that this is a temporary situation and soon users will be able to create their own accounts as they would any other social media platform.

Once a user has an account, she can install the “pin” button to her browser and start “pinning” images to her board. All this means is that when a user finds something she wants to add to her board, she simply hits the “pin” button. (If there is more than one image on the page, she is asked to choose which one she wants to pin.) She can then select which “sub-board” she wants to pin the image to, and amend the text to be displayed if required. Images on a Pinterest board are hyperlinked to their original source, driving traffic back to external sites. Fellow Pinterest users can “Like” or “Comment” on a “pin” in the same way as Facebook.

Although users can pin images from almost any web page, most tend to follow their friends or favorite brands or stores, and pin images from these. There is also a search function within Pinterest enabling a user to search within other boards rather than the entire web for a specific keyword or words. Therefore to really make the most of Pinterest you will need to:

- set up your own Pinterest boards
- make your product pages “pin-able”

Setting up your own Pinterest board

Go to pinterest.com and apply for your account. While you wait to get your invitation, you should take a look at other business's Pinterest boards, decide how you want to lay your board out, and if you need to create a special header graphic etc. [Neiman Marcus](#) provides a good example of an early adaptor that seems to have immediately grasped how to do it right –

however, other brands may be just as useful in showing you how not to do it!

Add pins to your board

You now need to pin your products from your eCommerce webpages to your Pinterest store.

1. Make sure you're signed into your Pinterest account.
2. Go to your storefront, display the first product you want to pin, and click the *Pin It* button.
3. A new browser window opens showing the images on the page. Click on the image you want to pin.
4. A new window opens showing this image. Select the board you want to display this on* and enter a description of up to 500 characters. In addition to plain text, the following can be used:
 - To display a price, prefix it with a dollar sign (\$).
 - To display a link, enter the full URL including the *http://* prefix.
 - You can also use hashtags (eg *#shoes*). This will associate this pin with all others with this hashtag on the Pinterest platform. It will be displayed as a hyperlink on your board. Clicking on this will display the latest pins throughout Pinterest with this tag.

Congratulations, you've created your first pin!

* To create a new board, scroll to the bottom of the list, enter the name in the *Create New Board* field, and then click *Create*. You can then add the pin to this board.

Tell your customers to follow your Pinterest board

You'll want to tell all your customers to follow your Pinterest board, so log into your Pinterest account, and go to pinterest.com/about/goodies/. Scroll down to the *Follow Button for Websites* section, where you'll find a nice

selection of buttons, along with the code for each button.

You can now paste this code into your storefront header/footer, in your store's *Nav Menu Promotions* and into your promotional Newsletters the way you do with your Facebook and Twitter pages.

Using your board

Continue adding pins and creating new boards as appropriate. If you have a blog, or other pages you want to pin to your Pinterest board you can do this as long as they have images. You can also pin pages from other websites – affiliates, friends, etc – enabling you to personalize your board as desired.

Also, don't just pin your own products – pretty much the first rule of the Pin Etiquette guide is *"Avoid Self Promotion."* Pin other things you think your customers and potential customers will be interested in and would also want to share. Obviously you won't want to pin your competitors' products, but go for brands, products and anything else that compliment your own, that form part of the lifestyles that your customers have or aspire to. You might not sell designer couture, but why not show your products alongside them, or at least on a "Things we love" section? And you should follow other boards - expanding your network will bring people beyond your customer base to your board, and then to your site!

Tips

- It's a good idea to create a personal Pinterest account (with a different email address) so that you can see what your page will look like to customers.
- Create multiple "sub-boards" rather than one large, undisciplined board. Although unbridled enthusiasm is a key Pinterest requirement, remember to stay organized. Despite everything, you want to get people to click back to your store and make purchases, not get swept away with a mass of pretty images!
- Stay up to date. As mentioned earlier, Pinterest is going through pretty wild times right now, introducing new features and concepts

almost every day. Don't let your content grow stale, and don't leave “pins” to discontinued or changed products.

- Have fun. Although most major brands are getting into Pinterest and are serious about it, the majority of Pinterest boards are ordinary people using it for fun, and that's something that is hard to analyze. But that person whose board consists mostly of photographs of poached eggs and bad puns may post a “pin” that brings your serious revenue!

The Volusion “Pin It” button

As well as setting up your own Pinterest board, you'll want to make the products or services in your main eCommerce store as “pin-able” as possible. Although Pinterest users can pin any of your products to their boards using the “Pin It” button in their browser, we've created our own Pinterest button to go with our other social media sharing buttons to gently encourage them to do so.

How to put the "Pin It" button on your product pages

You don't have to do a thing if you've got the *AddThis* feature enabled – you'll find you already have the *Pin It* button displayed on every product page. And if you haven't enabled *AddThis* yet:

1. Go to **Inventory > Products**.
2. Select **All Product Settings** from the **Settings** dropdown.
3. Select **Enable Share Button**.
4. Click **Save**.

You'll now see that all of your products display buttons for Facebook, Twitter, Email, Google +1, and Pin It.

Summary

The last six months have seen Pinterest explode in the social media arena and become the social bookmarking choice of that most desired of Internet demographics, affluent women between 25 and 44. Newspaper columnists, both mainstream and specialist, have struggled to predict its short and long term future. Although currently valued at \$1.5 billion, Pinterest has yet to make a penny in revenue. Whether its popularity will continue to grow at its present incredible rate is uncertain, particular when it decides it needs to introduce advertising or affiliate links, but right now there is no reason not to invest some time and effort into letting Pinterest put your products and business in front of over 10 million potential customers.