Google Merchant Center - How It Can Work For You

Written by Spiral Scripts
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Google offers a variety of online facilities in addition to its general search functions. If you are selling products online, one facility that you should definitely be be aware of is the Google Merchant Center
. This is a tool which allows you to upload your product   listings to be used in Google Product Search, Google Product Ads, and   Google Commerce Search. So what are these, and why might you want to use them?

Google Product Search

 Google Product Search is a service designed to helper users locate products online, currently available for the following countries: USA, UK, France, Germany and Japan. Listing is free to merchants, you just need to upload the product information to Google. Shoppers can access by clicking on the 'Shopping' link on Google's front page, it is the e-commerce equivalent of Google's website search results. Since the only cost is the time it takes to submit your products, there is little downside to using this service, and a strong reason to do so, since it provide an additional way for potential customers to find your products.

Google Product Ads

If you are running Google paid advertising you can link the product information uploaded through the Google Merchant centre to your advertising. This can then be displayed to potential customers along with your advertising, encouraging click-through. Linking the product information is a free service, though of course you have to pay for the advertising.

Google Commerce Search

 Google Commerce Search is a new service that allows you to deploy Google search facilities on your own e-commerce site. This service is currently available in the U.S., U.K., Germany, and Australia. It is not free however, the pricing starts at $25,000 per year, meaning it will only be of interest to large e-commerce sites.

Submitting Your Product Listings

First you need to create an account with the Google Merchant Cente r. You can sign up for an account for free (or, if you already have a Google account, such as gmail, you can use your existing account). Then you upload your product data feed, this needs to be in a specific format supported by Google, you can read further information about this
 here

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If you try submitting your product information by hand you will quickly find that it can be very time-consuming. This is why we created our extension for Joomla and Virtuemart, [Googlebase XML](#) . This Component for the Joomla 1.5 Content Management System generates a product data feed for your Virtuemart store in XML format. The product listing can   be manually uploaded, or submitted as an URL to Google Merchant Center for   scheduled upload. You can find more about how it works [here in our documentation](#) .

For a small outlay you can have an extension which will allow you to easily take advantage of the e-commerce services that Google offers to merchants.