

EBOOK

FIELD AGENT

THE BRAND'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

Ecommerce Success on Walmart.com



What's Blue, Comes in a Box, and Has 4,700 Different Ecommerce Sites?

This is the only time you'll see this word in this entire guide: Amazon. There, I said it.

I mean, nothing against the world's largest ecommerce platform, but you've read enough "ultimate guides" and attended enough webinars about that ecomm retailer.

Naturally, pure-play ecommerce sites take a massive bite out of the consumer's overall online dollar, but...

...they don't get the whole dollar.

Increasingly, retailer.coms—that is, retailers like Walmart, Target, and Kroger that have both enormous brick-and-mortar (B&M) footprints and ecommerce operations—are

taking heaping bites themselves.

With online pickup and delivery (OPD), after all, groceries and household consumables have finally entered the ecommerce mainstream—and retailer.coms are making the most of it.

This is particularly true of Walmart. Statista projects Walmart's online grocery business to climb from \$15 billion in 2019 to \$45 billion in 2023—a 200% increase in 4 years.

And while selling on Walmart.com certainly has many similarities to selling through pure-play sites, there are key—very key—differences.

If you're a brand, your products

have only one expression or representation on pure-play platforms (say that five times real fast). But, on Walmart.com and other retailer.com sites, that same product has thousands of different expressions.

Why?

Because, with Walmart.com, your SKUs are stocked, sourced, priced, and (ideally) even marketed at the store-level—not the national level. Which means brands, in very real ways, have to manage each SKU-store combination as a different "ecomm site"—giving rise to unique challenges and opportunities.

Hence, this "essential guide." One focused exclusively on selling at Walmart.com—with its sprawling



MEET THE EXPERT:

Gabe Wight

We interviewed Gabe Wight for this guide. He's the co-founder and team lead of [Webata](#), whose custom software and analytics suite helps Walmart suppliers improve their merchandising and marketing on Walmart.com.

Gabe has spent the majority of his career building brands and sales in and around food, drug, mass, club, and specialty retail. He has extensive experience developing and leading initiatives in the omnichannel space.

network of both B&M stores and OPD operations.

Working with Walmart.com expert Gabe Wight, co-founder and team lead at Webata, we've assembled several essential practices and principles to help brands as they vie for more business on Walmart.com.

Back to the original question:
What's blue, comes in a box, and has 4,700 different ecommerce sites?

The answer, of course, is Walmart.

Given this reality, what do you—a brand sales, marketing, or ecomm professional—need to know about selling on Walmart.com?

Turn the page, and find out.



It Takes Two: the Specialist & the Generalist

When it comes to ecommerce at Walmart.com, brands should heed the advice of Kim Weston and Marvin Gaye:

It takes two.

This, according to Gabe Wight, is the fundamental difference between merchandising and marketing a brand on a pure-play site versus Walmart.com or another retailer.com site.

For Walmart.com, brands must know when to be “specialists”... and when to be “generalists.”

As mentioned in the intro, in the OPD age, ecommerce is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. Because

Walmart essentially maintains 4,700 different “sites,” one for each store in its gargantuan network of stores, brands must sometimes be specialists.

Brands must monitor, manage, and market certain aspects of their Walmart ecomm business on a store-by-store basis.

Aspects like...

- > **Listings**
- > **In-stocks**
- > **Prices**
- > **Advertising**
- > **Content Details**

Times 4,700 Walmart stores.

But thinking specialist, when generalist has been the M.O. for brands since the inception of e-tail (remember that term?), is a real challenge for many brand professionals today.

“It’s hard for people to make the leap from owned ecomm to Amazon ecomm to old Walmart ecomm,” said Wight. “They’re used to going to one central place to run their ecommerce effectively.

“But when Walmart.com went store-specific, now, all of a sudden, you have thousands of places you have to go to pull levers and gather information.”

Of course, the generalist role is still

very important, too. There are, certainly, decisions brands make and actions brands take at the national level—that are universal across Walmart.com.

Consider, for instance, content, photography, and user-generated content like product reviews. In its various forms, item-page content is largely managed at the national, generalist level.

And this distinction between specialist and generalist is by no means academic. The outcomes are real and the stakes are high.

According to Wight, failing to draw the line between national-generalist and store-specialist is arguably the top mistake today's brands make when doing business on Walmart.com.

That, and failing to draw the line in the right place.

“It's hard to know,” Wight said, “where do I need to be a generalist and where do I need to be a specialist. And we haven't yet split that apart clearly and definitively as an industry.”

Brands can't afford to be specialists everywhere. Walmart.com is just too big.

Instead, Wight encourages brands to pick their battles wisely—and understand where they should specialize (e.g., in-stocks, prices), and where they should generalize (e.g. content).

One thing is certain, however: If you want to succeed with Walmart.com, you have to think a little differently.

Maybe the tools—product, price, place, and promotion—remain the same, but you can't apply them as you do on pure-play ecomm sites.

“This is new to all of us,” Wight said, “and we don't yet have great standard practices around e-commerce practice at the store-level for many different retailer.coms.”

Since it's so new, let's explore it.

The rest of this guide is organized according to the specialist/generalist framework just described. We'll first discuss several principles of store-level, Walmart.com specialization, followed by several principles that can be applied at the national, generalist level.

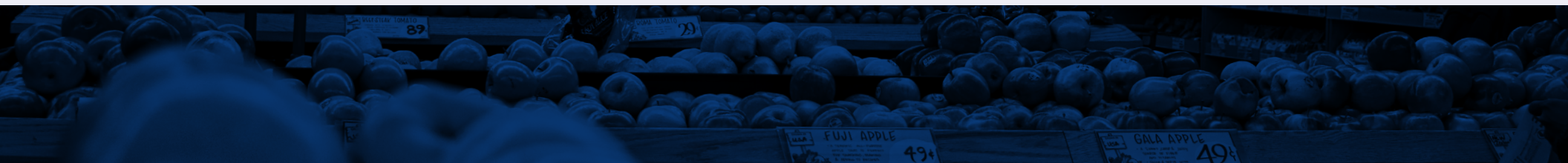


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Specialist Principles for Winning on Walmart.com

You Can't Sell What Isn't Listed

It comes as a shock to many brand professionals, but it's actually a very common occurrence...

Your SKUs are in-store, but they aren't listed for OPD at the same store, which means shoppers can't buy them for pickup or delivery.

Before you can sell on Walmart.com, naturally, you first have to, you know, *be* on Walmart.com—and it's anything but a given.

"The vast majority of brands don't know this," Wight said. "They just assume that if their products are available in (Walmart) stores, they're also available online."

Just how common is the problem?

Analyzing Walmart's OPD listing compliance in February 2022, Wight found that **12% of item-store combinations were available in-store, yet not listed for OPD with Walmart.com**. Indeed, Wight said his retail analytics system has yet to identify a single Walmart store with full compliance.

So, step one, make sure you're listed for online purchase. Don't assume.

[Webata's OPD Listing Compliance tool](#), available through the [Field Agent Marketplace](#), can help brands quickly and easily identify items not listed for OPD on a store by store basis at Walmart.



OPD Creates Challenges & Opportunities for Staying In-Stock

Of course, even if you are listed for OPD, that does little good if you're not in-stock online. You still can't be purchased by shoppers.

Out of stocks, like non-listings, are also more common than you might imagine.

Wight's February 2022 analysis found that 8.5% of item-store combos were available in-store through Walmart, according to Retail Link, yet were out of stock on Walmart.com.

"Almost 1-in-10 stores you're in-stock but you're not in-stock on ecomm," Wight said. "No one can purchase you for pickup or delivery."

And while it's scary, it also makes sense.

For in-store stock levels, Retail Link, in the case of Walmart, simply *describes* the number of units available at a specified location.

Not so with ecommerce.

Here, Walmart must *predict* how many units will be available when an associate arrives at a shelf to fulfill a customer's online order.

It's the difference between predictive and descriptive in-stock calculations—and the predictive, ecommerce side of any retailer.com omnichannel system necessarily runs out of stock faster than the descriptive, B&M side.

Thus, brands must be especially diligent to ensure product availability for ecomm operations. Tools like [this one from Webata](#) and the Field Agent Marketplace can help.

But we mentioned opportunities, right? Not just problems.

Here it is: The next foray into store-level ecommerce, according to Wight, is brands using ecomm as a "strategic advantage" to gaining additional in-store placement.

Right now, most brands base their replenishment activity around what Wight called the "busy Saturday shopping period"—if only because that's when most people are in-store, and stock-levels often fall to their lowest level, thus triggering replenishment.

Today, however, brands should take a different approach to replenishment for B&M retailers like Walmart...



“You really need to be planning replenishment around your ecomm OOS,” Wight said, “because that’s going to run OOS faster than that busy Saturday.”

And it can result in some very favorable outcomes. “There are going to be brands that pick up facings and holding power by planning around ecomm OOS,” Wight said. “You get more merchandise in-store around ecomm OOS than you would that busy Saturday.”

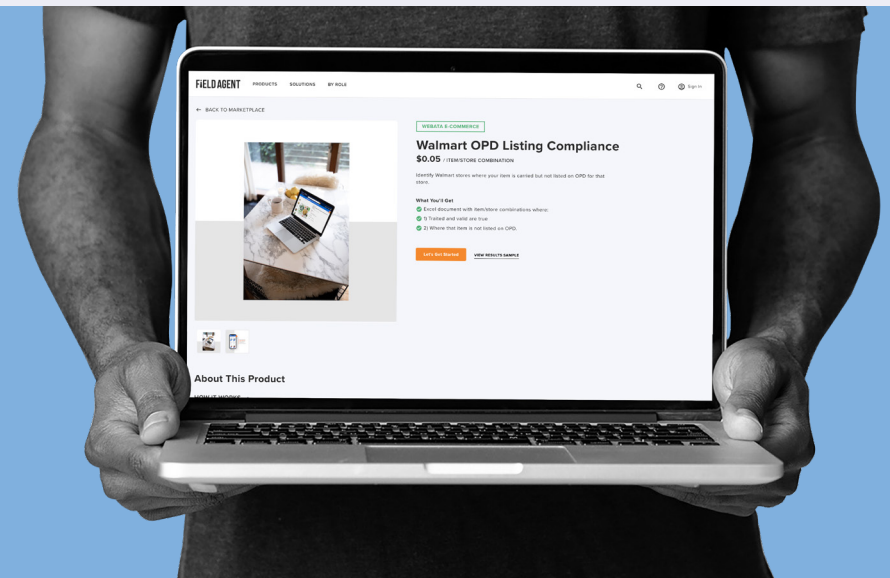
You see there, *opportunity*.

Are you Listed for Walmart OPD?

Are you sure?

Launch a Walmart OPD-Listing Audit With Just a Few Clicks, in Just a Few Minutes.

GET OPD LISTING COMPLIANCE →



Don't Assume the Price is Right Online

With B&M retail, we know prices can often show up wrong on shelf tags and displays.

Field Agent knows, because we've conducted thousands of [price checks](#) for leading brands—and, yeah, those prices aren't always right inside stores.

But *ecomm* pricing variation often surprises brand professionals.

"Everyone we run a pricing variation analysis for," Wight said, "thinks their online products are consistently priced across the nation, meaning they have the same price at all stores.

"And then all of a sudden, we run the data for them, and look at this price range. They're shocked."

Again, as with listings and in-stocks, it behooves brands to manage online pricing at the "specialist," store-level.

In fact, Wight recently analyzed a portfolio of SKUs being sold through Walmart.com, through Webata's "custom pricing intelligence" system.

Not a single product was consistently priced across the nation, and many of the SKUs reflected drastic pricing variation.

For instance, one SKU showed a high price of \$18 and a low price of \$11.88. Another had a high of \$4.34 and a low of \$2.98.

And these aren't anomalies. Pricing variation is the rule with retailer.coms, not the exception.

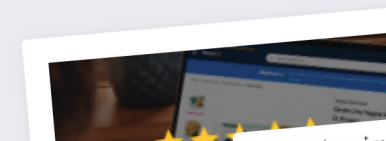
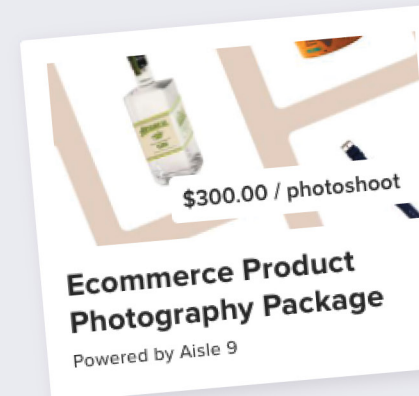
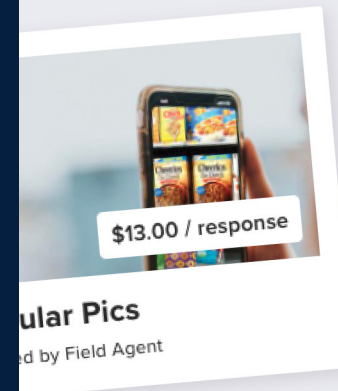
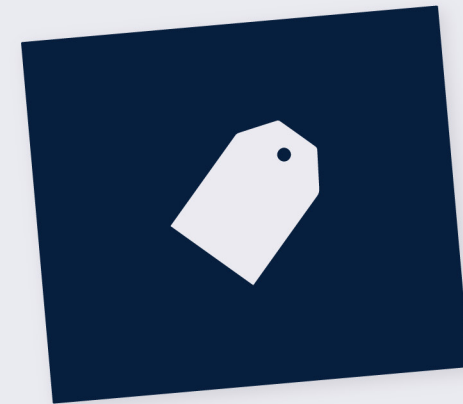
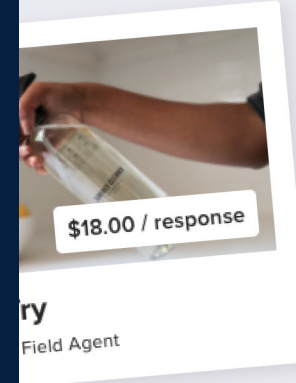
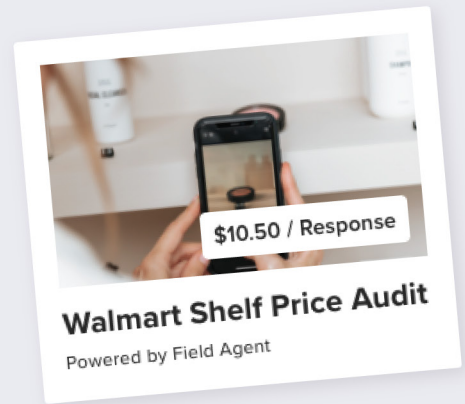
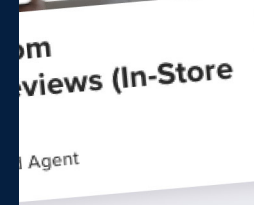
The moral of the story: Don't assume the prices on your wares are consistent across the country. Here, too, there are [simple, on-demand tools](#) that can shed light on your ecommerce pricing with Walmart.com.

After all, as your price goes, so goes your sales.

Your One-Stop Destination for Walmart Success

The Field Agent Marketplace features a specially-designed toolkit with fast, simple, affordable solutions to help brands win specifically at Walmart.

WIN AT WALMART →



You're Probably Wasting Your Ad Spend

This is hard to hear, I know.

The ugly truth is: Too many brands manage their ecomm advertising budget at the national, generalist level and thus waste a lot of their media spend.

For many brands, it's high time to start executing ad campaigns at the store-level—as with listings, in-stocks, and prices.

“Most people are still national in terms of how they think about driving traffic,” Wight said. “That makes no sense if you're OOS at certain stores. Why would you drive to an OOS page?”

“But nobody really runs the data to say, is this item OOS, should I be running media in this market, they just put media out there nationally. But you're wasting money.”

There's also a potential competitive advantage in thinking this way. For instance, if a brand does the due diligence to monitor not only their stock-levels on retailer.com sites but their competitors' as well, they can spot places where they're plentifully in-stock and their rivals are out of stock. What this means is game-changing: The brand can then

invest their advertising budgets in those local markets where their competitors are vulnerable...

...and gain precious market share.

Ultimately, it's all about finding new shopping carts, as we explore on the next page.



**Field Agent is a Walmart-approved
vendor of Ratings & Reviews
to Walmart.com.**

GET REVIEWS →

The Key to Success with Walmart.com

Get. In. The. Shopping. Cart.

Whether it's shifting ad spend or running promotions, make every effort to get your SKUs in the online shoppers' shopping cart at least once. Pull those levers to make it happen!

With B&M retail, shopping carts hit refresh—start over—every time a customer shops.

But with ecommerce, the shopping cart keeps record of previous purchases—and shows the shopper “previously purchased items” with each return trip. And this allows her to simply reorder items at the click of a button.

One purchase, then, can result in years of influence over shoppers and their online purchases.

**Get in the shopping cart.
At least one.**

The Devil's in the (Content) Details

As you'll see in the next section, content—we're talking titles, descriptions, photos, etc.—found on Walmart.com item pages are handled mostly at the national level.

But mostly isn't the same as entirely.

There are key differences—call them details—that differ from one retailer.com to another.

As we pointed out in our ebook, **How to Build Ecommerce Product Pages that Win Sales**, “no two ecommerce platforms are alike.”

And, no two retailer.coms are exactly alike either.

At the specialist level, you have

to account for details in style guides, balanced scorecards, and, generally, technical details.

“Eighty percent of what you do with item page content and the like is going to translate across all retailer.coms,” Wight said. “Yet the devil's in the details, and going from the proverbial good to great is in the details.”

By way of illustration, consider just one important difference between Walmart.com and Target.com:

Whereas Walmart allows brands to edit photos of their product packaging (to make it easier for online viewing), Target doesn't permit photo-editing, because they

want the package in the raw—fine print and all.

And that's just one isolated example. Many others exist.

While your brand probably can't afford to specialize on “the details” for every retailer.com site, they can and should know the ins-and-outs across ecomm platforms deemed strategically imperative.

Style guides, agencies, and analytics software, like Webata, can help brands navigate the many detail-level differences that exist across retailer.coms.

It takes specialization, after all.

Generalist Principles for Winning on Walmart.com

First, Get Your Base Content Right

Now we come to a fork in the Walmart.com road. While there are plenty of considerations—listings, in-stocks, prices, advertising—that should be handled at the specialist, store-specific level, there are other matters that can and should be handled much more efficiently—at the generalist, national level.

Thank goodness, right?

Of these, it all starts with base content.

In Wight's assessment, one of the top mistakes made by brands doing business on Walmart.com is that they rush past base content. Before getting their foundational content right, they start trying to either...

1. Outsmart the system - By jumping right to SEO strategy or user-generated content like reviews

2. Buy their way to the top of the system - By spending money on ads prematurely

Both approaches, Wight believes, are bound to fail.

"You've got to have base content that already scores, or you're sending a knife into a gun fight," Wight said. "If you don't have enough images, for instance, all the SEO in the world won't help. The search engine will be penalizing you because of those images."

"Some brands will also try to buy their way in. They'll start market-

ing before they have that base-level content. It's a first things first deal. Get your base content out there, then layer in your SEO, user-generated content, and advertising."

By base content, Wight means, for instance...

- A product title, short description, and long description that fit within Walmart.com parameters for length and structure
- At least four high-quality photos that conform to Walmart.com's image standards

If you don't first get your base content right, you're pouring water into a bucket with a hole at the bottom.

Get the base content right. *First.*

Cross the “Critical Threshold” with Your Content Quality Score

The content quality score (CQS). A crucial consideration in doing business on Walmart.com.

As a brand, the CQS of your item pages directly influences the amount of traffic you’ll receive and the number of sales you’ll make, in a couple of ways...

- › **First, according to a Webata analysis, lower CQSs on Walmart.com result in lower overall search rankings - in “page ones” and “top 10s”**
- › **Second, there is a definite positive correlation between CQS and ecommerce sales on Walmart.com**

So it’s imperative: Roll up your sleeves and win a high CQS for your item pages.

But we didn’t say earn the highest possible CQS you can. That would be a waste.

Even at the national, generalist level, which is naturally more efficient than the specialist level, brands still need to know where to invest time... and where not to.

“

It’s imperative:
Roll up your
sleeves and win
a high CQS for
your item pages.

The truth is: Not every content addition or improvement on Walmart.com will be worth your company's precious time, money, and effort. In other words, not every content upgrade will be a, well, upgrade.

As Wight stresses, at some point, there has to be a diminishing return to all your Walmart.com content creating and polishing.

Consider video, for example.

Depending on the category, video may help a brand drive sales, especially if the item is a durable, shopping good like electronics.

But what about video and CQS? If a video will boost an item's CQS, is it a foregone conclusion that the

brand should invest in it?

Not necessarily, according to Wight.

The question is: *How much* will the video move the needle on CQS?

Are we talking moving from, say, an 85 to a 95 on Walmart.com's balanced scorecard, or a 95 to a 96? Are we taking a leap or making a budge?

If only a budge, why do it? Unless that budge pushes you over a critical CQS threshold.

More isn't always better, in other words.

And Wight says the industry at-large hasn't learned this lesson yet. For too many, the "best practice" is...more content, more content, more content.

Moreover, while some slow-moving products are worth keeping online, they're not worth an investment of brand resources—particularly after the critical CQS threshold has been crossed. "Some items are just dogs," Wight said. "Whatever you spend on CQS, you're not going to make up in sales."

But even for "dogs," Wight said it might make sense to achieve a critical mass on CQS—not because you'll get more sales, but because you may build or preserve relational capital with your retail buyer.

Which leads to the next point...

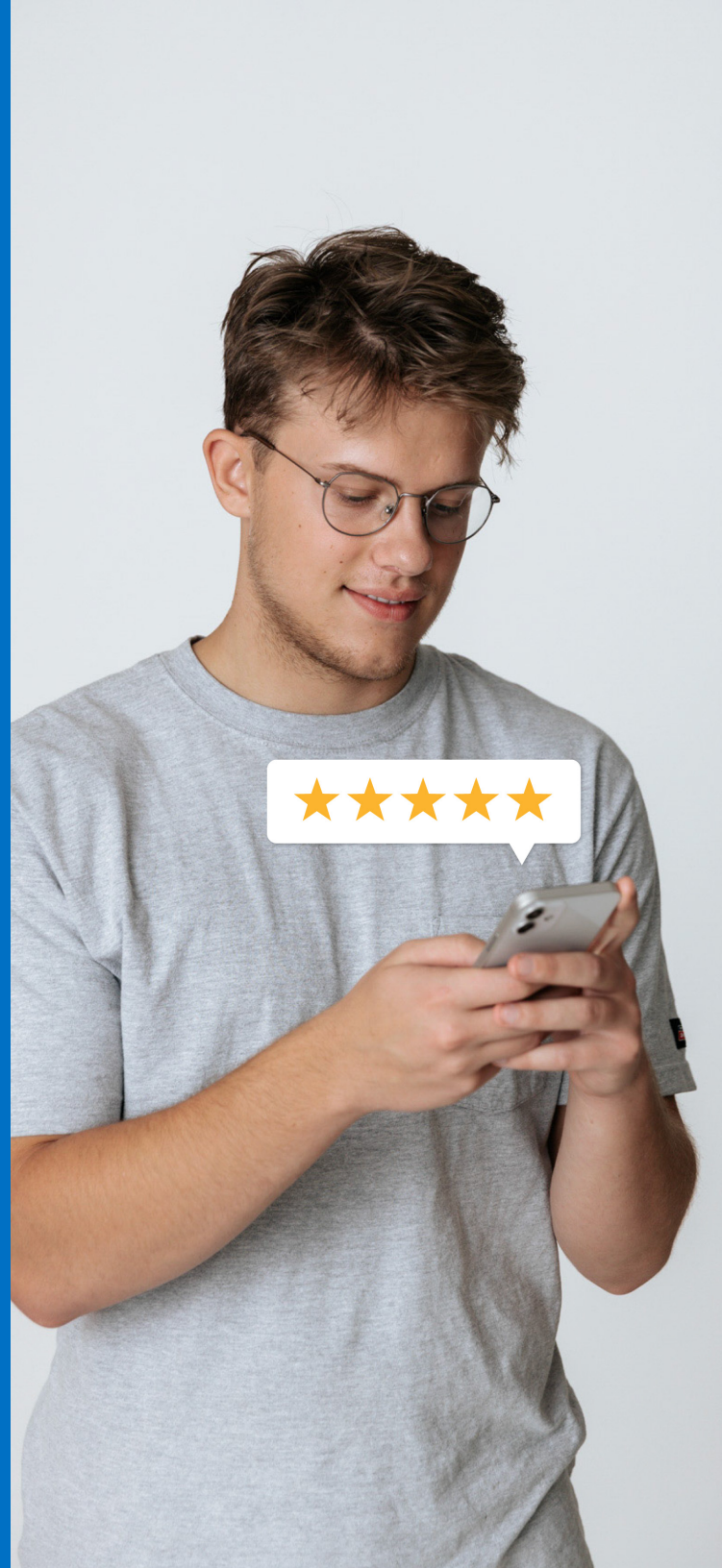


Walmart-Approved Ratings & Reviews

Need more ratings and reviews on Walmart.com? Field Agent's Ratings & Reviews solutions are approved by Walmart, for Walmart.com.

Best of all, they're fast, easy, and affordable to launch.

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Use Content Quality Score to Build Your Relationship with Retail Buyers

Item pages and CQSs are more than they appear. They're not just ecommerce assets for landing more traffic and generating more sales.

They're also symbols; symbols of how much you value and respect your relationship with a retailer. That's true of Walmart.com and every other retailer.com across the landscape.

In other words, item pages and CQSs either win or cost you points with buyers as discussed in our ebook, [The Buyer Meeting Success Kit](#), building trust and confidence with your merchant is a fundamental element of winning at retail.

As Wight said, "There's a relational cost to not having great content quality; there's also a performance cost."

So, are your item pages—and their CQSs—building relational capital with your buyer, or eroding it?

But this is more than psychology. There are real, tangible, bottom-line benefits of recognizing and managing your Walmart.com content as a trust-building opportunity.

"When you meet with the merchant," Wight said, "the last thing you want is to spend half your time talking about content quality score."

"You need to get down to business, but, because of your poor content, the merchant just keeps beating you up over CQS. You have important matters to discuss, but the merchant can only talk about your item pages. This hurts your relationship with the retailer."

It also hurts sales—online and in-store. Because the buyer might not trust you with more opportunities.

To get and stay right with your buyer, get your content right.

Picture Your Way to Success

For Wight, photos are a foundational component of succeeding on Walmart.com.

Shoppers, too, make a big deal—a very big deal—of product photos.

As discussed in our article [7 Reasons Photos Make \(or Break\) Your Ecommerce Product Pages](#), 9-of-10 survey respondents identified product photos as extremely or very important to their online, non-grocery purchases. Moreover, exactly 3-of-4 said product photos are extremely or very important to their online, grocery purchases.

In our guidebook, [How to Build Ecommerce Product Pages that Win Sales](#), we emphasized the importance of well-edited, high-quality photos. To quote Heather Paul, director

of content for ecommerce agency [OneStone](#):

“When people are browsing pages they’ll sometimes stop right at the images. If they’re seeing poor quality images or if they’re not seeing enough information in those images, they might just skip that product and go on to the next one.

“High-quality images convey you have a high-quality product.”

For online shoppers, photos are the closest they can get to actually interacting with the product.

So you have to get your photos right.

Ecommerce photo packages, like this one [from Aisle 9](#), offer an affordable, streamlined solution for brands that don’t have time or money to waste.



Walmart.Com Photos At a Click

Aisle 9 makes it easy to furnish Walmart.com item pages with stylized, professional photos.

Look good, drive sales, and improve your content quality score—all at once.

[CLICK FOR PHOTOS](#) →

Win the Search Wars

The search bar is the go-to destination for online shoppers.

When we [surveyed 985 Walmart digital shoppers](#), 7-of-10 said the search bar is generally their first stop on the Walmart website or app—before the department menu, featured/suggested items, or previously purchased items.

There wasn't even a close second.

And, consider this: Only 27% said they always or often visit the second page of search results on Walmart.com.

What does this tell us?

You've got to get SEO right on Walmart.com. After all, if someone types "low-fat yogurt" into the search bar, they're not doing it for their entertainment.

They're doing it because they want to make a purchase, and your brand needs to be in those search listings—the higher the better.

As seen already, CQS has major implications for search ranking, according to an analysis conducted by Webata.

Of course, it's not just about the SEO. You have to write and optimize item-page content for the shoppers as well as the machines..

And that's a balancing act.

"You want bullet points and copy that are not only rich with keywords but easily understood by shoppers," said Heather Paul of OneStone.

"You want to fit in SEO in a way that doesn't make your content clunky."

But if you're not winning the search wars, you're probably not winning on Walmart.com.

Get your SEO right.

Be Proactive with Ratings & Reviews

Once your base content, photos, and SEO are accounted for, guess what?

It's time to go directly after ratings, reviews, and other forms of user-generated content.

“Ratings and reviews do make a big difference to your content quality score,” Wight said, speaking specifically about Walmart.com.

As described in our article [The Retail Essentials: Why Are Product Reviews Important for Brands?](#), reviews are word-of-mouth for the digital age.

They're not a nice-to-have; they're a *must*-have.

In a Field Agent survey of 1,174 shoppers who make an online purchase every month on average,

9-in-10 said they regularly read product reviews to guide their online purchases.

And so brands can't afford to be passive about ratings and reviews. They have to go after them aggressively.

Not only because product reviews generate sales, but also because Walmart demands—increasingly—that item pages contain a sufficient number of reviews.

Field Agent offers [a few Walmart-approved, on-demand R&R solutions](#). They're perfect for stocking Walmart.com item pages with authentic ratings and reviews.

But, however you do it, be proactive about ratings and reviews on Walmart.com.

There's no other option.

Win at Walmart. On-Demand.

Whether it's modular pics, price checks, ecommerce photos, or product reviews, Field Agent offers a wide variety of streamlined tools to help brands win at Walmart.

From our marketplace, you can launch one of our simple, affordable Walmart solutions—with just a few clicks, in just a few minutes.

It's a game-changer for Walmart Suppliers.

EXPLORE WALMART SOLUTIONS →

