HOW RETAILERS CAN BECOME GOOGLE TRUSTED STORES

Assessing the Viability of the Program & Certification Process Breakdown

We Turn Browsers Into Buyers
Introduction

As experienced ecommerce marketing professionals, CPC Strategy has helped a variety of retailers through the Google Trusted Stores application process. The following white paper takes a closer look at the latest changes in the Google Trusted Stores application process with insight from our in-house experts as well as feedback from brand name retailers.
What is a Google Trusted Store?

Google Trusted Stores is a free certification program that highlights a businesses’ great shopping experience. Once qualified, a retailer will be recognized with a badge that is displayed on their site and on Google Shopping results.

As of January 2015, applying to become a Google Trusted Store is easier than before.

With the most recent updates, applicants only need to create an account and add two snippets of code to their website.

**They no longer need to submit separate feeds for shipments and cancellations - an often time-consuming and tedious process.**

Approved merchants can specify a custom position for the Trusted Stores badge on their site and display it on HTTPS pages as well.
Why Become A Google Trusted Store?
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Shoppers want to know they are going to receive reliable shipping, excellent customer service and free purchase protection. The Google Trusted Store badge helps shoppers identify which companies they can depend on and in turn, companies have the potential to increase conversions based on this heightened level of trust.

There are a variety of factors that may push retailers to obtain the GTS badge.

Below we will discuss why the program matters, a step-by-step guide to the application process and feedback from retailers who have obtained the GTS badge.

What Are the Advantages of Becoming a Google Trusted Store?

Increase Brand Authority to Target Market

As a Google Trusted Store, a retailer’s customer service and shipping metrics are transparent to all shoppers. This in combination with purchase protection (on eligible orders up to $1,000) can increase a shopper’s confidence in ordering from a retailer.
Purchase protection holds GTS retailers to a set of guidelines including **accurate item billing** and **timely item shipment**. If these guidelines are violated (package doesn't arrive on time or the customer is billed an incorrect amount), Google is available to work directly with the retailer and the customer to resolve the issue.

It is important to note, in the event there is a customer problem - Google encourages consumers to reach out directly to the retailer to resolve the matter (if they have not already done so). If the problem cannot be resolved, at that point Google will step in to help formulate a solution.
However, purchase protection does not apply to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purchase Protection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✗ Retailer’s return policy and terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ Endorsements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ Identity theft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ Credit card theft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Helps Product Ads Stand Out on the Google SERP and the Shopping Tab

GTS are highlighted on the Google SERP and Shopping tab results which can lead to higher conversion rates and larger average order size on a retail website.
Accelerates Seller Review Generation

If retailers do not currently have seller ratings on Google Shopping, their store’s eligibility will be evaluated by additional signals during the qualification period.

Retailers do not need to meet a minimum number of seller reviews to apply for GTS.

If retailers do qualify to become a Google Trusted Store, Google will collect GTS customer surveys for free, which will be used to determine the store’s seller ratings on Google Shopping.
Highlight Review Extensions for Adwords Text Ads

Retailers can enrich AdWords ads with a GTS status through review extensions. Review extensions are displayed on a separate line in the AdWords ads and can increase their click-through rate.

![Search results for US Mattress with review extensions highlighted](image-url)
Is Your Business Eligible?
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Merchants participating in the program are required to adhere to the rules and requirements in Merchant guidelines. Google monitors several aspects of a Merchant’s performance and defines minimum performance standards for the Program.

Failure to comply with these guidelines or to meet the minimum standards may result in revocation of a Merchant’s eligibility for participation in the Program and termination of the Merchant’s Trusted Stores Program Agreement.

Historically, this phase in the application process is where some merchants experienced issues or delays. In the past, hiccups in the data feed collection process were considered one of the biggest barriers to entry in GTS.

Other basic eligibility guidelines to keep a close eye on for GTS approval include:

- Average monthly online order volume must be greater than 200 orders per store.
- Stores cannot sell restricted products/services (e.g. weapons, tobacco, some pharmaceuticals and supplements).
Additional eligibility guidelines:

**One Account Only**
Merchants may not create or maintain duplicate, back-up, replacement, or reserve profiles in the Program. Merchants may register only one Program account per domain.

**Multi-Domain Merchants**
Merchants who operate multiple domains and/or redirect their customers to a subdomain to make a purchase **must register each domain** in the Program, in which case Google may treat each domain as a separate Merchant.
Merchants may aggregate multiple domains into one Program account.

In the case of an aggregated account, it will be at Google’s sole discretion to determine which metrics to display for each such aggregated account service, privacy policy, and return policy at the Program’s website.

Why Can’t Google Track Shopping Platforms With a Purchase Redirect?

Google does not view purchase redirects as a favorable check out process for customers. Merchants on shopping platforms with purchasing redirects or cross domains such as Yahoo, Shopify and CoreCommerce, may encounter additional difficulties because Google cannot track the purchase properly as a result of the redirects.

If you’re having issues with cross-domain / multi-domain reach out to Tara Johnson at tara@cpcstrategy.com
Walkthrough Of The Certification Process
Walkthrough of the Certification Process

The process to become a GTS has in many ways become easier for retailers. Merchants who initially neglected to undergo the approval process should reconsider due to the recent updates.

Prior to the changes, many merchants were hesitant to hand over sensitive information about their shipment and cancellation feeds to the advertising giant.

Now, Google no longer requires data on shipping and order cancellations through Trusted Store. Instead, Google’s Consumer Survey program helps to solicit consumer feedback on shipping, product selection, and pricing. The information / data generated from those surveys can show up in customer rating extensions.

Also with Google’s new code snippets, retailers can custom position their GTS badge on their site. Previously, the badge had to be placed in the bottom right corner.

The main steps of account setup are:

Create an Account  Complete Technical Integration for Each Store  Qualifications Period
Create an Account

To create a Google Trusted Stores Merchant account:

2. If you have multiple stores, (see below)
3. Select the country that your store(s) operate in.
4. Click **Start account setup**.

If a retailer has already completed Account Setup and would like to add a store to their Google Trusted Stores account:

1. Sign in to the account at http://www.google.com/trustedstores/sell
2. Within Account Management, click on Stores.
3. Click the Add Store button.
4. Complete and Save all store information.

Each new store will be reviewed for eligibility and compliance with program requirements, even if the initial application has been approved.
Complete Technical Integration for Each Store

The next phase is to implement the **Google Trusted Stores badge JavaScript** on every page of the retailer's site. This will allow the Google Trusted Stores badge to show up on site pages if the store is approved to become a Google Trusted Store.

```html
<!-- BEGIN: Google Certified Shops -->
<script type="text/javascript">
    var gts = gts || [];
    gts.push(['id', "GOOGLE_TRUSTED_STORES_ID"]);
    gts.push(['badge_position', "USER_DEPTNB"]);
    gts.push(['badge_container', "GTS_CONTAINER"]);
    gts.push(['locale', "PAGE_LANGUAGE"]);
    gts.push(['google_base_offer_id', "ITEM_GOOGLE_SHARING_ID"]);
    gts.push(['google_base_subaccount_id', "ITEM_GOOGLE_SHARING_ACCOUNT_ID"]);
    gts.push(['google_base_country', "ITEM_GOOGLE_SHARING_COUNTRY"]);
    gts.push(['google_base_language', "ITEM_GOOGLE_SHARING_LANGUAGE"]);

    (function() {
        var gts = document.createElement("script");
        gts.type = "text/javascript";
        gts.async = true;
        gts.src = "https://www.googlecommerce.com/trustedstores/api/js";
        var s = document.getElementsByTagName("script")[0];
        s.parentNode.insertBefore(gts, s);
    }());
</script>
<!-- END: Google Certified Shops -->
```

Then, implement the **order confirmation module code** on the site's order confirmation page. This order confirmation module will allow customers to opt in for free purchase protection from Google, as well as send order- and item-level information to Google in case of customer escalations as part of the program.
Additionally, this module will invite customers to take a survey about their shopping experience on the site.
Qualification Period

Once technical integration is complete, a store will be in the qualification period for a minimum of 30 days while Google collects data and assesses eligibility to participate in the Google Trusted Stores program.

If a store meets all performance standards and the application is approved, Google will contact the retailer to let them know when the Google Trusted Stores badge will appear on the site. If a store does not qualify, the retailer will be notified.

How to Manage Your Account

Once retailers have setup their account, they can make changes to their account settings at http://www.google.com/trustedstores/sell by clicking on any of the links under Account Management in the left-hand navigation panel.

Merchants can modify their settings after they have completed account setup and technical integration. This is where merchants can add, edit, or delete additional store URLs, and account emails.

Some account updates, such as notification, administrator, and customer support emails, require email verifications in order to be applied on the account.
3 Retailers Weigh In On The Pros & Cons Of Google Trusted Stores
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Parag Patel, CTO at AutoAnything, Inc

AutoAnything, Inc., an AutoZone Company, is a San Diego-based E-Commerce Company that merges the high-speed lane of custom automotive accessories and performance parts with cutting-edge internet technology and industry-leading customer service.

With the support of AutoZone, the leading retailer and distributor of automotive replacement parts and accessories in the United States and annual sales over $8 billion.

Q: How Long Did it Take to Become a Google Trusted Store?

The integration took about 3 weeks. The badge started appearing pretty much right away as we were one of their first customers.

Q: What Were Some of the Difficulties You Faced in the Approval Process?

Google requires the app integration and a shipment feed to assess the performance of the retailer. We needed to create a shipment feed which was not initially in scope.

Also, the pop-up on the order confirmation page was competing with other surveys that were designed to be fired. We cleaned up the interface to support both. Although, nothing was particularly difficult.
Q: How has the Google Trusted Store badge impacted your shopping performance?

This is unclear. We cannot validate the benefit as the Google terms and conditions prohibit you from running A/B tests.

Travis, E-commerce Director at (Established Flower Retailer)

Q: How Long Did it Take to Become a Google Trusted Store?

It took us about one year.

Q: What Were Some of the Difficulties You Faced in the Approval Process?

We had a hard time setting up the shipping and cancellations feeds. Once we finally got them going, GTS changed their format, and the feeds were no longer necessary.

Then, I had a hard time passing data to them and getting the GTS stores verified through their code checker. That took some time. However, once that was working, it only took about four weeks to get approved.

Q: How Has the Google Trusted Store Badge Impacted Your Shopping Performance?

Too soon to tell. I've only been approved for about a week. Our badge has been on the site for about a week, but has not yet began appearing in our PPC ads.
Jonathan Long, VP at RockyMountainTrail.com

RockyMountainTrail.com offers outdoor gear from backpacks, jackets, tents, sleepingbags to camping accessories, stoves and more.

Based in Buena Vista, CO they carry top name brands such as The North Face, JanSport, Columbia, Patagonia, Marmot, Mountain Hardwear, Dakine, Kelty and more.

Q: How Long Did it Take to Become a Google Trusted Store?

It took us less than a month. We started in November and were approved right around Black Friday.

Q: What Were Some of the Difficulties You Faced in the Approval Process?

Initially we had some data syncing issues. We were not informed there was a dashboard to follow. At first we were told our numbers were not good enough. Later, we saw where the issues were.

About 10 percent of our orders are drop ship and we weren’t sending all our tracking info. Once we figured that out we were were able to close the loop. At the time we were disappointed because we weren’t able to start over but had to wait until the good data could catch up. That caused some delays.

Q: How Has the Google Trusted Store Badge Impacted Your Shopping Performance?

Once we were approved we did see an initial spike and an increase in conversions but its hard to know if that was due to GTS because we are a seasonal company. It was right around Black Friday when we got approval.
When it came back down - the ability to evaluate wasn't clear. We were hoping to have the same experience as Amazon but were somewhat disappointed by the recent changes.

All they really tell you is your customer reviews. Don't track things like time shipping anymore and that was one of the features I was most excited about in the beginning.
Final Takeaways
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Do We Recommend the Program?

“I pretty much always recommend that retailers do it,” Jeff Coleman Director, Account Management at CPC Strategy said. “It’s an impact that’s hard to measure because it’s usually in conjunction with other things like strategy adjustments - which are also going to influence your numbers.”

“It can be hard to measure the before and after impact but the one thing I always tell retailers is that you want to try and think about it from a customer’s perspective. For a customer that’s looking for something, GTS is just one more indicator that you are a trustworthy retailer. Google’s vouching for you essentially,” he said.

“By no means is it going to impact everyone that’s looking at your store but it’s another indicator of trust and that’s the hardest thing to build in a customer’s mind.”

How Long Will it Take to Get GTS Approval?

Since the updates in January, the approval process is much faster than before now that retailers don’t have to work through the data feed red tape.

The amount of time it takes for a retailer to receive GTS approve is dependent on a variety of factors. For some of the clients listed above - the old process took up to a year, now the process can be completed (considering all qualifications are met) in a matter of weeks.
Key Factors to Keep in Mind About GTS Approval

- Has the potential to (but cannot guarantee) conversion increase
- Badge has the potential to strengthen business credibility
- Google provides a mediator during problematic business / customer situations
- Can help retailers stand out in the Google SERP and Shopping tab
- Offers Purchase Protection, a program favored by consumers
- Enhances the amount of Customer Review / Ratings
What Now?

Identify the Weaknesses in Your Account

Schedule Your Retail Search Audit

CPC Strategy's Retail Search Audit is a complimentary **60-minute analysis and assessment** of a retail advertiser's existing AdWords account, product pages, product feed attributes, and business KPIs. The Audit is conducted by a professional Retail Search Strategist over a screenshare and conference call.

Schedule My Audit