



From Purchase to Delivering Value

A Guide to Fulfillments for Digital Products





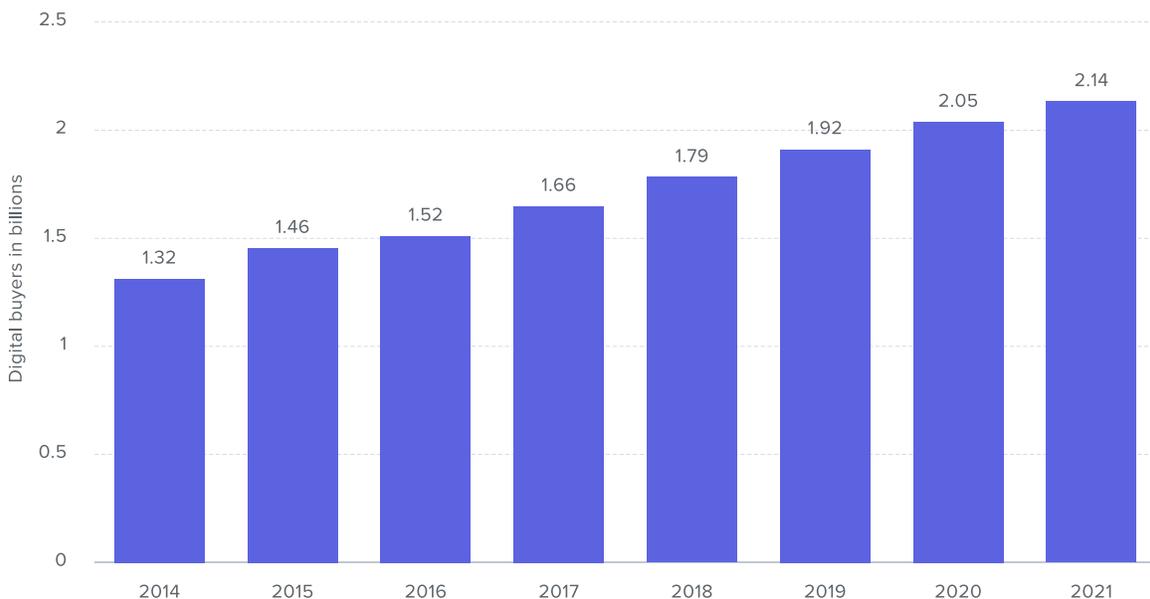
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The State of Selling Software Online

We're now living in a society where consumers are the driving force of how products are designed, delivered, and consumed.

They want to make their purchases on their terms, and they want their products available as soon as their payment has cleared. Vendors are answering the call from customers through digital product offerings.



According to Statista, there will be over **2.14 billion people** worldwide buying goods and services online by 2021. Some buyers will make online purchases for convenience, others because of the competitive price offered by ecommerce platforms.

When it comes to the US market, 80% of internet users are expected to make at least one purchase online by the end of this year. **Products like apps, ebooks, music software, and e-learning have become huge revenue earners for retailers.** The ebook industry in the US alone was worth more than \$1B in 2018, and global software revenue is expected to reach \$500B by 2021.

In many ways, delivering products digitally is a modern way to fulfill orders on a customer's terms. There are lower barriers-to-entry to create digital products and instant fulfillment methods eliminate obstacles like shipping.

Key benefits of selling digital products:

Low Overheads

As digital products are held in the cloud or on a server, the warehouse/shipping costs that exist with physical products don't apply

High-Profit Margins

Once a product is developed, there are no recurring costs associated with selling it

Easy to Change Product Offer

If a product, such as ebook or piece of software, becomes outdated, it's easy to change the offering to bring it back up-to-date

The Process Can Be Automated

With the right provider, the entire buying process from payment processing to order fulfillment can be automated

Yet selling digital products is an incredibly competitive business. Customers are demanding more, and when they're researching, they're expecting to find a solution that truly fits their needs. Digital products are now taking society to places that were unimaginable ten years ago.

Companies like Slack, WhatsApp, and Dropbox have changed the way we work and communicate. It's these companies who have set a certain standard for products, where customers expect more (and demand more) from their purchases.



The Basics of Selling Software Online

Whether you're selling software or a digital product you've made yourself, there are two fundamental aspects you need to address.

You need to plan out how you'll be accepting payments and currencies from a worldwide audience, localizing content, handling refunds, and other financial transactions. **Once you have a plan for the financial side of your digital product business, you can put together a strategy for finding customers and solving their problems.**

First, some key questions:

- How will you sell your digital products? As a user license, or a download?
 - What does your target buyer look like and how are they accustomed to paying for similar services?
 - Do you have staff in-house that will be able to fulfill customer purchases?
 - What is the total cost of your proposed ecommerce platform?
 - What experience does the platform offer for your customers?
 - How will ecommerce integrate with your end-to-end customer experience?
-

Selling digital products requires a lot of work behind the scenes before you can reap the rewards. The biggest challenge, however, is demonstrating and providing proof of how your solution will solve the customer's problem. Building a customer-centric approach to selling, and having the right platform to fulfill purchases, can be game-changers in how successful your efforts are.

There are four essential parts of selling software online, from purchase to fulfillment, that you need to master:

Part 1: The Buyer Journey

Part 2: The Checkout Process

Part 3: Types of Fulfillments

Part 4: Digital Rights Management Software

Part 1:

The Buyer Journey

The first step to selling digital products online is exploring your buyer journey.

If you map out how your customers will find your products and make a purchase, it's easier to give them exactly what they want. Planning your customer's buyer journey helps you provide customers with exactly what they're looking for when they're making a purchasing decision.

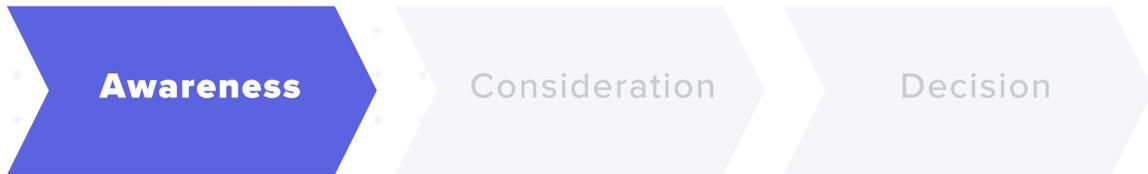
The buyer's journey is the active research process a buyer goes through leading up to a purchase.

That might be an educational blog post or a demo of your product. Anything that will help a customer's decision to buy can be plotted on a buying journey.

In general, the buyer's journey is made up of three main stages:

1. The Awareness Stage
2. The Consideration Stage
3. The Decision/Purchase Stage

1. The Awareness Stage



The first part of your customer’s buying journey is becoming aware of your digital products.

Statistics show that [72% of buyers turn to Google during the awareness stage](#). It’s here where your customers begin researching for a solution to their problems. They’re usually on the hunt for material like product options, customer reviews, and testimonials to broaden their awareness of their options.

As an example, you may be selling internet security software. Your target audience might be small business owners with limited budgets.

Potential customers might be asking questions like:

- What security measures should I be taking online?
- How much does internet security software cost?
- What is a budget-friendly way I can make my website secure?
- Is my website at risk of being hacked?
- What will happen to my business if my website is insecure?

And, these potential customers are using Google to find their answers.



To get your product in front of customers in the awareness stage, you need to find a way to answer their questions. You can do this by creating educational content that answers these questions, and in turn, builds a level of trust in your business.

For example, the questions asked about internet security software could be answered with content like:

- 5 ways to make your website secure
- The real cost of a business's website being hacked
- Warning signs your website has been hacked

Reports, blog posts, ebooks, whitepapers, and guides are the best formats to use here to attract potential customers to your site. Then, your business can promote these through paid advertisements and on social media to draw in relevant traffic and encourage them to explore your products further.

2. The Consideration Stage



At some point in their research, after your potential customer finds your product, they're going to start comparing it to others.

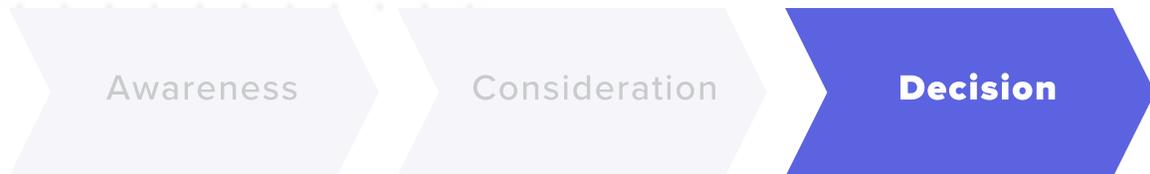
It's in this stage of the buying journey where customers start researching products that can solve their problems. They may start reaching out to sales reps or searching for more in-depth information on your site about your products.

Your customers are now asking detailed questions about their needs:

"I know I need internet security software. What are my options? Which best fits my budget and needs?"

Using the information they gathered during the first stage of their buying journey, customers are now considering their product options. **It's here that you'll need to provide content that's relevant to where your customers are in their consideration phase.** Webinars, videos, guides, and case studies are tools you can use to help them look at your products as a solution.

3. The Decision Stage



It's in the final stage of a buyer's journey where the customer knows they need your software, and they're looking for confirmation that it's the right choice.

Your customers are now asking questions such as:

"I have found three types of internet security software that fit my needs. One option is more expensive, but it also has lots of additional features. It is a good fit for my problem?"

Buyers will use the information they have collected in the consideration phase to support their final decision on which product to buy. **To entice customers into purchasing their product, vendors can use offers such as software trials, demos, product comparisons, and testimonials.**

By understanding the buyer's journey from end-to-end, vendors can map out each step and decide what kind of content and offers they want to give their customers.

The Journey is Different for B2B and B2C Customers

It's important to understand that a buyer's journey looks different from business-to-business (B2B) customers to business-to-consumer (B2C) customers.

Research by [LinkedIn](#) found B2B customers prefer a range of content types throughout their buyer's journey. They prefer to build a trusting relationship with the company they're purchasing from, and they're thirsty for knowledge; they want their vendor to be a "subject matter expert" in their field.

Like B2C customers, the preferred content channel for B2B consumers varies on their buying stage. However, [Gartner Research](#) shows [B2B buying](#) doesn't play out in a predictable, linear order. On the contrary, B2B buyers have a "checklist" they complete before making a purchase:

- ✓ **Problem Identification:** "We need to do something."
- ✓ **Solution Exploration:** "What's out there to solve our problem?"
- ✓ **Requirements Building:** "What exactly do we need the purchase to do?"
- ✓ **Supplier Selection:** "Does this do what we want it to do?"
- ✓ **Validation:** "We think we know the right answer, but we need to be sure."
- ✓ **Consensus Creation:** "We need to get everyone on board."

This added scrutiny means the B2B customer buying journey is more complex and involves more stages before they finally make a purchase.

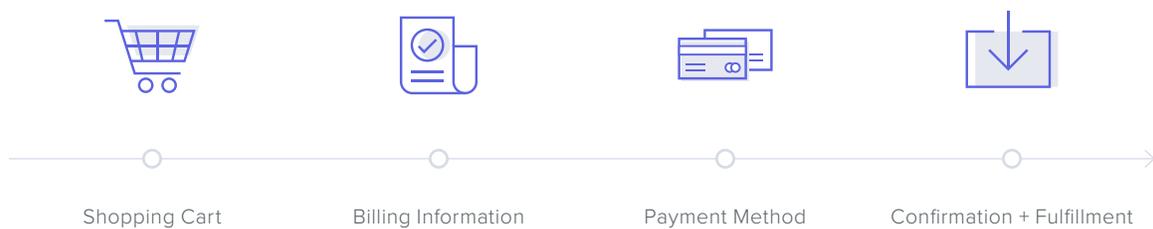
Part 2: The Checkout Process

Having the tools to sell directly from your website makes it easier than ever for your customers to complete purchases—from wherever they are.

However, this can only happen with a secure checkout in place.

The standard checkout flow for digital product fulfillment is simple:

- ✓ Shopping Cart (contents)
- ✓ Billing Information
- ✓ Payment Method
- ✓ Confirmation and Fulfillment





It's essential to keep your customer's experience in mind when they're buying your software.

Once they've decided to buy your product, their experience with your online checkout can make (or break) the purchase. There are several parts of your checkout process you need to consider when selling digital products, and they often differ depending on the ecommerce platform you choose:

Ease of Entry

How quickly can you set up your checkout platform and start selling your digital products?

Need

Does the platform have the ability to sell multiple digital products and subscriptions? Does the platform securely control access via license key distribution and download limits?

Support

If you have an issue with the platform, what kind of support does it offer? Does it also offer support to your customers?



Consider Your Checkout Options

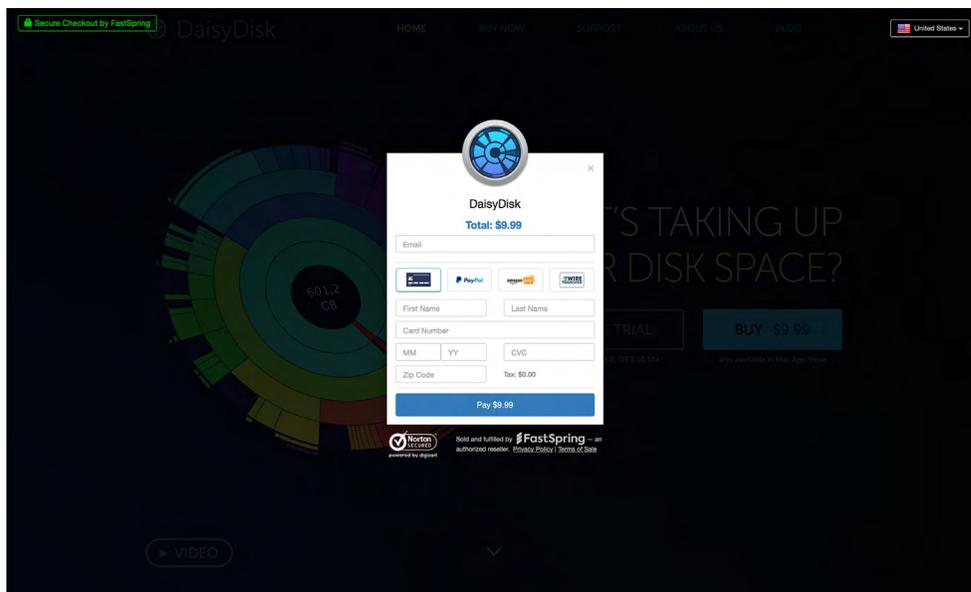
Today's technology gives merchants the power to sell digital products from any page on their website.

However, there are certain aspects of an online checkout every digital product vendor needs to have. An online checkout needs to be secure enough for customers to feel confident purchasing on the site, and comply with regulations in the country of the buyer.

A checkout must also:

- ✓ Integrate with payment gateways
- ✓ Provide instant, secure delivery of your digital products after purchase
- ✓ Be mobile-optimized

The simplest option for vendors is to sell their digital products with a checkout that fits seamlessly into their website. A solution such as [FastSpring's Popup Checkout](#) **integrates directly into your existing website** and displays a checkout payment process in a modal window on top of your page.



A Popup Checkout allows customers to stay on your website while they finalize their purchase. The checkout is also customizable to suit your branding, as well as offer any payment options you want to be made available to your customers.

The integration works by pasting two lines of code to create a checkout. After that, your buyers will be able to purchase digital products instantly from your website.

The Right Checkout Can Open Your Digital Products Up to the World

Selling digital products allows you to sell to anyone who has an internet connection, anywhere in the world.

Integrating a checkout into your website that allows customers to download your products, no matter where they are, is essential. FastSpring's branded checkouts are smart; they geographically pinpoint where your customers are. Then, the checkout dynamically updates fields like the language, currency, taxes, and pricing based on their location.



20+ Currencies



All Popular Payment Methods



15+ Languages

Part 3:

Types of Fulfillments

Online purchases have transformed thanks to digital downloads.

Instantly fulfilling digital product orders relies on your ecommerce platform. **Choosing a checkout integration that controls access to software and license keys as well as handling PDF rights management is essential.** If you decide to fulfill each order manually, it can create friction in the checkout process for your customers.

When a customer purchases a digital product, they expect to have instant access to their goods as soon as their payment has been processed.

Vendors selling digital products can meet these expectations through fulfillment methods such as:

1. File Downloads
2. License Keys
3. Signed PDFs
4. Custom Emails
5. Webhooks

1. File Downloads

Offering file downloads on your site gives customers the chance to purchase items and directly access them on their own mobile phone, laptop, or computer.

After you upload a file for download through your fulfillment provider, your customer will be given a download link to access their files after their payment has cleared. As a full-service partner, FastSpring allows vendors to upload single files (up to 5TB in size) to be securely downloaded by a customer.

Provide a File Download
Securely distribute a file download to the customer for a limited period of time.

File Name for Customer

Name of the file as it should be saved to a customer's computer after downloading. This should not contain spaces, slashes, commas, special characters, etc. Note: This is not the path to the file you will be uploading.

Upload from Web Browser
Upload using your browser (for older browsers Flash may be used).
To upload a file larger than 5GB, please choose Dropbox or Remote File URL option.

Dropbox File
Upload the file to your Dropbox account, choose the file, then click 'Next' below.

Remote File URL

FastSpring also limits the period of time when a file is available for download. Ideally, this limitation means the files should only be downloadable by the customer who paid for them and prevents distribution to non-purchasers. By default, the link expires in seven days, however, you can change the expiration with our [Extended Download Service \(EDS\)](#).

2. License Keys

If you're selling software, license keys help safeguard your product after it has been purchased.

Without a license key, the software will be locked and unusable. Fulfillment services combined with a Digital Rights Management solution (DRM) can allow vendors to provide customers with a unique one-off license key to each product they buy.

This can help in several scenarios, such as:

Limited Trials

If you offer limited trials for your software, customers can download it, and then access the full version with a license key. Alternatively, you can offer a limited version of your product and customers can unlock all of the available features when they purchase the product.

Stopping Piracy

With unique license keys, you can prevent buyers sharing their purchases.

Product Security

License keys demonstrate that a product is legitimate. Most customers will be happy to take the extra step of activating their product with a license key if it means their purchase is legitimate

Creating a system that generates and assigns license keys is tedious but possible. If you're looking for an easier way to offer license keys for your digital products, your best option is to partner with a full-service ecommerce platform—like FastSpring—that seamlessly integrates with a DRM solution.

Using FastSpring, you can decide how you want licenses distributed to customers. For example:

- One license per quantity purchased
- One license per order
- File-based licenses

Output Format

Single-Line License (Quantity Based)

One license per quantity/units ordered. Licenses may be separated by a line feed character (or a carriage return + line feed character).

Multi-Line License (Quantity Based)

One license per quantity/units ordered. Licenses may be separated by an empty line. The empty line separator should contain only a line feed character (or a carriage return + line feed character).

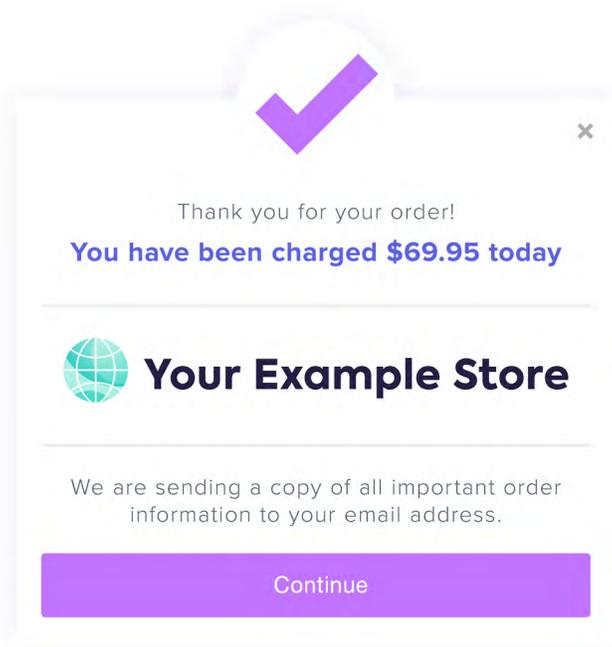
Single License Only

Output is always treated as a single license. The license may contain any type of character and span multiple lines.

Single File Based License/MIME 1.0

Supports binary data as a multipart/mixed MIME 1.0 file. The data is then downloadable via a URL. Contact us for information on format and correct use.

Once a customer's purchase is complete, they'll be sent to a follow-up page with their software download and a unique license key. The whole process is hosted by FastSpring, and the buttons and page design are customizable to fit with your branding. It's important to note that this is also possible in a popup thank you page as well. The point is that although the "Thank You Page" is hosted by FastSpring, the experience on your own site seamless so you have more control over the look and feel of the page on your own site.



3. Signed PDFs

Selling signed PDFs allows you to offer a range of documents to your customers. If you have an ebook or a walkthrough guide you want to sell, signed PDFs is the way to do it.

Verify Upload and Create License Configuration

The file has been uploaded. The final step is to perform a verification of the file, which also creates the license fulfillment configuration on the product.

License Name

Person Name

Configures the content of the #[name] variable.

License Template

Licensed to #[name], Order #[reference]

The format of the license stamped on each page of the PDF document.

License Y Position

30.0

The Y position of the license relative to the page bottom. Default: 30

License Font Size

8.0

Default: 8

A signed PDF is stamped with the customer's name on each page to deter sharing and copying. Using FastSpring, you can add a license name information to each page of a PDF file.

You can also upload your PDF file using two different methods:

1. Web Browser

Upload a PDF file located on a network or local computer

2. Dropbox

If your PDF is stored in DropBox, you can find and select it using FastSpring's integration

Once your customer has downloaded a signed PDF, it will be stamped with any field you choose, like their name, email address, and order reference number.

4. Custom Emails

After a customer purchases a digital product on a website, an email fulfillment is sent to the email address provided by the customer during the checkout process.

It is very useful for subscriptions due to the ability to apply advanced conditions like:

- Send email for all billing cycles
- Send email for rebills only
- Send email for first orders only

With FastSpring, software companies can customize the HTML and text of their emails in addition to setting specific conditions for sending the emails. This encourages a seamless experience extending beyond the purchase to fulfillment as well.



5. Webhooks

As subscription-based billing models continue to grow in popularity due to their ability to generate more predictable income than one-time purchases, the fulfillment of these subscriptions are essential to get right for SaaS companies. Many companies are focusing on building webhooks to automatically enable customer access to the application instead of license keys or download links.

Webhooks are automated messages sent from apps when a specified event occurs.

For example, when a customer purchases a subscription from a SaaS company, it can trigger a webhook on the backend that redirects to the application to enable access for the newly acquired customer.

From there, your system can then notify the customer via email that their account is ready for use in the application. It all happens behind the scenes so you don't have to worry about manually updating access to the application every time you acquire a new customer.

Part 4: Digital Rights Management Software

The last step of your digital product journey is protecting the items you sell.

Digital Rights Management (DRM) software gives vendors the technical tools to stop the unauthorized use of their content. DRM uses encryption technology to prevent content being shared, accessed, duplicated or distributed to anyone apart from the authorized users.

Using DRM, you can protect your content by preventing authorized users from disabling specific features until the product is fully enabled and controlling the usage.

You can also lock documents to specific devices, geographical locations, and even IP addresses. Watermarking documents, like a signed PDF, with purchaser information is also another form of DRM.

Software companies can use a DRM for digital products from music and software to PDF documents and games.

Some of the methods DRM uses to restrict content use are:

Encryption

Embedding code that prevents copying, specifies a time period in which the content can be accessed or limits the number of devices the media can be installed on

Licensing Agreements

Restricting the access of a digital download through licenses or keys when they are downloaded from a website

Protecting the sharing and distribution of digital products can be challenging, which is why using an ecommerce solution that integrates with DRMs is incredibly important when selling online.

For example, using an ecommerce partner like FastSpring, you can control how your licenses are delivered through:

Single-Line Quantity Based Licenses

Where your server generates a single license key per quantity purchased.

Multi-Line Quantity Based Licenses

Where your server generates a single license key per quantity purchased, but license keys may be separated by an empty line.

Single License Only

Where a single license key will be issued regardless of the quantity purchased by the customer.

Single File-Based License / MIME 1.0

Where binary data is used as a multipart/mixed MIME 1.0 file. The file is then downloadable by purchasers via a URL provided to them by FastSpring.

Now, It's Your Turn

Are you ready to start selling digital products online?

Partnering with FastSpring gives you access to our full-service fulfillment platform, branded web and popup checkouts, secure payment processing, and content protection services. Our service is designed to offer a seamless shopping experience for customers, and to support software companies like you—from product discovery to purchase and fulfillment.

About FastSpring

FastSpring is the trusted ecommerce partner for companies that sell software around the world. Companies using FastSpring's full-service ecommerce solution sell more, stay lean, and compete big. Founded in 2005, FastSpring is a privately owned company headquartered in Santa Barbara with an office in Amsterdam. For more information, please visit www.fastspring.com.

Sell More. Stay Lean. Compete Big.

Everything you need to sell software, SaaS, and digital products worldwide in one, easy-to-use platform. See FastSpring in action. Sign up for a free demo today!

Sign Up



Your Full-Service Ecommerce Partner

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