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A shop that holds up: what to do before you open

Online Stores

CODE	VERSION	COUNTRY · LANGUAGE
RLX-MZ-KB-666	v2026.10.18	Mozambique · English

Interweb Mozambique
RLX Holdings, S.A. · Group RLX Holdings
Tax ID (NUIT) 401 191 607 · Legal entity no. (NUEL) 105 045 974 · Economic activity code (CAE) 62022

https://www.meu.interweb.co.mz/knowledgebase/666

A shop that holds up: what to do before you open

Online Stores · Created on **September 27, 2026** · Updated on **October 18, 2026** · 4 min read



A shop that is idle is a website. A shop that is selling is a system, and it fails in ways an ordinary site never does: the order e-mail that never arrives, the cart showing somebody else's, the stock counting down with nobody watching. This is the list worth going through before you tell anyone they can buy.

The pre-opening list

1. **One complete test order**, placed while logged out of your admin account, on a phone, from cart to confirmation e-mail.
2. **Shop e-mails genuinely arriving.** Order received, processing and complete, to a mailbox that is not yours.
3. **A padlock on every page**, with http sent to https: **redirecting HTTP to HTTPS**.
4. **A backup taken and already restored once**, so you know it is good: **making and testing your own backup**.
5. **The legal pages written**: terms of sale, returns, privacy and cookies.
6. **A visible contact on every page**, with somebody on the other end.
7. **The shop opened on somebody else's phone**, not yours. Yours has a warm cache and will lie to you.

E-mail is what fails most

It is the commonest fault in a new shop, and the quietest: the customer pays, gets no confirmation, and assumes it went wrong. WordPress sends its automatic e-mail through a route many receiving servers do not trust.

What to do	Why
Send over authenticated SMTP	An SMTP plugin makes WordPress use a real mailbox instead of sending unidentified
Use an address on your own domain	Sending as another domain's address is the recipe for landing in spam
Have SPF, DKIM and DMARC on the domain	They are what tells the recipient the message really is yours: **SPF, DKIM and DMARC**
Test to three different mailboxes	What lands in one can go to spam in another

Speed, where it counts

Measure	Effect
A current PHP version	The cheapest change and the most noticeable: **changing PHP version**
Images shrunk before uploading	In a shop, images are most of the page weight
Page caching, minus cart and checkout	Everything else can be served from cache without trouble
Few plugins	Every plugin runs on every page. In a shop that multiplies
A tidy database	Drafts, revisions and old orders pile up and weigh

! **Badly configured caching is the most expensive fault a shop can have.**
Cart, checkout and customer account always stay out of the cache, and that goes for the caching plugin, for any server-side cache and for Cloudflare: **the cache that fools you**.

Security, because a shop is a better target

1. **Lock the WordPress login.** Three steps, in order of effect: **protecting the WordPress login**.
2. **Update core, themes and plugins.** On a shop, a postponed update is money at risk, not just a website.
3. **Delete what you do not use.** A deactivated theme is still code on the server.

4 **Review who holds an administrator account.** A forgotten admin from an old job is an open door.

5 **Never store card details on the site:** **selling online: PCI and card data**.

After you open

Put it in the diary, once a week: look for orders stuck in odd statuses, confirm the e-mails still go out, glance at the statistics and place one test purchase. Five minutes. It is what separates the shop that works from the shop that stopped a month ago with nobody noticing.

Never experiment on what is selling.
Big updates, new themes and payment plugins get proved somewhere else first: **a test site before touching what is live**.

NEED A HAND?

Shop has grown and you want to know if the plan still fits?

Talk to us →

Where to see it in your account

- **CPU, memory, processes and I/O:** Resource Usage in cPanel plots them against your limit and marks when you reached it. Look at it right after a campaign or a busy day.
- **Space and number of files:** the Statistics sidebar, each with its limit. A shop with many product photographs fills both.
- **Backups:** every plan has a daily automatic backup with free restores. JetBackup (or Backups) in cPanel shows the restore points you have.

If one of them keeps reaching its limit, you can move up a plan without losing the shop, or talk to us. We do not state how long backups are kept; the restore points listed in JetBackup are the answer for your account.

SEE ALSO

- **Restoring a backup yourself, without opening a ticket** →
- **The site is slow: what to measure before you change plan** →

- **Visitor statistics: where they are and what they mean** →
- **See the hosting plans** →
- **Getting paid: connecting a payment method to WooCommerce** →
- **WooCommerce: what it is, and what you need before you start** →

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TAX ID (NUIT)	401 191 607
LEGAL ENTITY NO. (NUEL)	105 045 974
ECONOMIC ACTIVITY CODE (CAE)	62022
REGISTERED OFFICE	Bairro 7 de Setembro Vilankulo 1304 · CEP 0411-02, Inhambane, Mozambique
CONTACT	info@interweb.co.mz · +258 84 635 1111 · +258 86 635 1111 · www.interweb.co.mz
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RLX-MZ-KB-666 · v2026.10.18 · Generated on 21/10/2026 17:22