



## Ezra Firestone Goes Behind The Scenes at the Shopify HQ



I'm going to give you the history on Shopify, but before I do, it makes sense to understand where we are in the life cycle of e-commerce platforms. Right now in our community, we have 3 big new shopping cart platforms: We have Shopify, Big Commerce, and Volusion, and they've emerged after the legacy era of shopping carts. I look at it the same way that



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the electrical grid in the United States is not quite as good as the electrical grid in Asia because they got to see us build our electrical grid, and then they built theirs from there. They got to look at all the problems we were having, and then build their grid with all of those problems in mind.

When I started in e-commerce, there were only legacy platforms: It was Yahoo!, there was Magento, there was X Cart, and there was ShopSite. There were these platforms that are not quite as good as the platforms that we have today for a number of reasons. **The way Shopify came into existence is the initial developer, the initial coder, the owner, one of the owners of Shopify, was looking at these platforms for his own e-commerce business. He found them lacking, so he built Shopify out of that.** He built this platform based on his own needs as an e-commerce merchant.

The cool thing about Shopify, as I mentioned, is that their focus is on making sure that they have the best product out there. They understand that they're not the best at email marketing; AWebber is better than Shopify in email marketing. Shopify doesn't try to build that into their tool, they don't try to build that into their system. **They just have an open third-party app network where you can layer on all of these things: Email marketing, live chat, and follow-ups. They have a really wide open third-party network and things plug easily into Shopify. They also have, in my opinion, the best pre-**



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**done theme network.** If you want to start an e-commerce business and you want a pre-done, predesigned, high level e-commerce theme, Shopify has the best platform, or the best marketplace, for those themes.

I follow up here to shoot some video for Shopify's E-commerce University, which is there a way of providing educational content for e-commerce merchants that use Shopify. I'm getting a chance to look behind the scenes at their company culture, how they treat each other, at how they work together, at their platform in a way that I wouldn't have a chance to just by logging in and playing around with it. I'm getting to look behind the scenes at what they're actually up to and what they have coming down the pipe. **I can tell you that I'm very, very, very impressed with Shopify.** I want to take you now behind the scenes, show you a little bit of their headquarters, show you some of the cool things that are going on here, and just give you a look into what's going on in this really cool e-commerce company in our community. I think this is fun to have a look at the companies in our community that are doing innovative and cool things. Their goal is to do that, so for us, they want to come up with the best possible product for e-commerce merchants. They want to have the best product so that we have the best experience, and have the best chance of being successful with our e-commerce businesses. Let's go now and have a look at the Shopify headquarters.

I'm at the first stop. We're going to do multiple stops around



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Shopify because the way they have this done is they've got the 2nd floor, and the 3rd floor now, of a building here in the downtown marketplace. By the way, I'm in New York City, I had no idea how close Ottawa was and how cool it is here. They've got the 2nd and 3rd floor of this building and they have it broken up into the circle where it's a center in the middle, and then you go around this circle and there's all these different meeting rooms. We're at the first stop away from the video studio where we just were shooting that intro. **This is a sleeping room. I think they even hire massage therapists to come in and give their employees massages. What's cool about a company like this, you can tell a lot about a company when you look at how they treat their employees, about how they are to the people who work for them.** One of the interesting things I think about Shopify is that they're not super-focused on 'You must work 9 to 5. You must work X-number of hours.' What their focused is on is if you're an employee or if you work with this company, from what I gather and from what I've been told; it's more about 'Can you get your job done?' This is how I run my business as well, this is how I run my employees; I don't care how long it takes you, I don't care how you do it or when you do it, just that this is the goal we want to accomplish, and are you going to be able to get there before our deadline?

They've got cool stuff, like a nap room. Maybe you're having a tough day and you need to take a little 15-minute power nap; they've got a place to do that and I think that's really



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cool. This is the nap room, now we'll move on. I think the next stop is going to be in the lunchroom, and there may even be people eating lunch. I think I hear them. Let's head on over there.

That didn't go quite as planned. They have a slide. This is . . . they have a slide in this . . . we're in their lounge right now where the lunch is over here. They've got a slide up there. It took a lot, from what I've heard, it took a lot to get the slide put in. There's zoning issues we're going to have a slide in a business, but they've got a slide in their lunchroom. When you're having lunch, if you want to go play . . . and I think the point here is that they have some focus on play. **Play is such an important part of putting together a good work environment, allowing people to play with each other and having some level of fun. I just ate it on that slide.** I'm not going to cut that out, but I was not intending to fall down like that. Let's take a look at this lunchroom that they're in. I want to show you the lunch; they do catered lunch every single day.

Check this out. I'm a fan of sushi, so every day if you work at Shopify, you come in, they've got fresh lunch for you made, hot, all kinds of fancy stuff. What's cool about this is I'm a vegan, I'm a vegetarian; I think any diet is awesome. I choose the vegetarian. I've been here 2 days now; there's been vegetarian food, so they're catering to everyone. Sushi is pretty fancy. I'm just going to grab a piece, avocado sushi. What else is cool is that they don't waste this food, at the end of the day, they'll pack it all up and they'll put it in



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this fridge over here, and you can take it home. You can have lunch made for you, hot and fresh every day, and then you have dinner catered for you.

The other thing that I think is interesting is that if we look around this lounge, and I don't know if we'll be able to pan that shot, is they have multiple little spaces where you can hang out. Let's say you're working really hard on a lunch meeting, you want to move and have your pod and eat lunch together and work together, it's not like a just big open cafeteria space. They've got a really well laid out. Whoever design this place was really smart and was thinking about the company culture and was thinking about people being able to eat and work together. When you send people out for lunch they . . . it's smart; they just detach from work.

**If you have lunch catered in, if you build that environment in here, it actually ends up being more productive and more fun for the folks in your company. It's something to think about your company. You may want to feed your employees lunch.** This is the lounge, the hangout area. Let's move on over into the offices.

One thing I didn't mention is that they have a video game system up in the corner of that room; more focus on play. I think the . . . if you look at what Google does, if you look at what some of these other big companies do, they have a lot of focus on play. I think that's an interesting thing to think about as a business owner, as someone who spends a lot of



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time working. We're business owners and we spent time working, we spend time with our teams. It's interesting to think about how we can include more elements of play into that and fun into our work life. Let's move around the office now, and we'll check out the different departments.

**Another thing that they have is skateboards to get around this office.** I'm not the best skateboarder, but let's say you want to move from design to development; you got a board that you can do that on. As we go through . . . I'm going to crash this thing. As we go through, what you're not seeing is that on the left and right . . . it's a circle and they've got these little pods, these little groups of people. If we look in here, this is a group of people working on something. This is one pod, one group working on one specific task. If we move around the building, there's more pods just like that. It's a pretty cool little setup where you've got privacy, yet everything is open. **You can access any part of the company, but you have your own private work spaces where you can really focus on development, design, the partner program, or customer service.** These different . . . your company has the same thing: You've got your customer service department, you've got your sales and marketing department, you have these different levels and these different parts of your company where people are focusing on different things, or maybe where your focus on different things. Brilliant how they have it setup where everything is open, yet you've got access, you can really focus on one specific task. I think it's a cool set up. Let's



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head on . . . I think we're going to head up and see what's going on up on the 3rd floor in customer service.

This is the entry lobby. I think this is cool too, when you have a lot of people your company. When you arrive, you type in your name and who you're here to see, and you get a little badge. I'll just put in my name, I'll put who I'm here to see, and I'll click Print. I get this little badge that pops out, and now everyone . . . a company is this big, there's so many people here, there's so many applicants for jobs here. There's 170 people in this building, so you never know who's who or what they're here for. This little badge will tell people who I am and what I'm here for. I think that's just smart if you have . . . I know this is not applicable, but I just think **it's interesting to look at how a company of this size operates and the systems they have in place to make things like knowing who people are easy for everyone here.**

We've got our headquarters. You should do some level of branding. I've got branding for Blue Ribbon E-commerce High-Performance Mastermind and SmartMarketer; I have all that branding in my work space. You'll notice they have also branded their welcome desk. **It's important to brand your work space, even if it's just you working there.** I think it's a good thing to do and you'll notice that all big companies do it. Here we are. We're just on the backside of that circle I was telling you about. What we're going to do is we're going to head upstairs. I think the stairwell is right



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here, we're  
going to check out the 3rd floor.

When they started, they were just on this . . . they actually had an office down the road, but then they bought this. They were growing so fast they came in and they got this second level. There's an organic market on the first floor, by the way, which is cool. You can come in, get a green juice, and then head up to work. They've now got the 3rd floor under development because they're growing so fast that they need more space. There's a customer services team up there working and the place is all being developed. Let's go check it out.

Here we are on the 3rd floor of the Shopify headquarters. This is where we'll end this tour. We can see that it is fully under construction. There are people painting, building, and putting up walls. Down here, there are people working, so no space is left unused. It's so fascinating to get a behind-the-scenes and look into a company that's growing this fast, that's working as hard as they are, that's doing as much innovative and cool things as they are. It was very nice of Shopify to let me come in here and just show you guys behind-the-scenes of what's going on in their company. They do a really, really good job with a lot of things, and everyone here . . . **the thing that I noticed, the thing that I take away, is that all of the employees and all the people who work here are happy; they're smiling, they're joking with one another, they feel like they're part of this team.**



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**That tells me that this company is going to continue to do well because the people here are enjoying themselves.** They're going to continue to innovate, and I think they're going to continue to be the leaders in the e-commerce platform space.

Thank you so much for joining me on this tour of the Shopify headquarters. Thank you Shopify, for having me here to shoot video for your E-commerce University, and also, to let me shoot a video like this for my blog, and take people through your headquarters here in Ottawa. Thank you. I'll talk to you soon.

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