Consider the benefits of *going hybrid.*

How to choose the best e-commerce platform when you're adding B2B to B2C (or the other way around).

It's time.

You're ready to explore new channels and grow your business. That might mean adding a wholesale business to your B2C company—or maybe you're a B2B business ready to sell direct to consumers. Either way, you need a new set of e-commerce functionality.

If you're already running an e-commerce platform designed for only B2B or B2C, you'll have some tough choices to make. Your options are making extensive customizations to your existing platform or migrating to a new "hybrid" platform that combines full B2B and B2C feature sets. (If you don't have a digital business, you're in luck. You can choose a hybrid platform at the beginning of your e-commerce journey.)

Selecting the right hybrid platform for your business can feel like a lot of work, because you'll be evaluating two sets of features. But it's worthwhile in the long run. You can reduce costs, improve efficiency, simplify product management, and more.

This eBook highlights some of the best practices for choosing a platform for your hybrid B2B-and-B2C business model.

Check for a comprehensive feature set—*especially for B2B.*

B2B and B2C are two different flavors of e-commerce, each with different requirements. Your hybrid platform should be strong in both areas. It should have features designed for both types of selling while also providing a unified product catalog and back end. Because B2B is more complex, you'll want to take a close look at B2B features. If a platform doesn't have a lot of the features on the checklist, it will probably need many customizations to support B2B.

B2B feature checklist.

A solid hybrid e-commerce platform should have most of these B2B

Customer-specific catalogs and pricing: You should be able to customize catalogs and pricing for different customers.

Volume discounts: You should be able to create special discounts for large purchases.

Special taxation status for B2B buyers: You should be able to configure virtually any tax rules, or easily integrate with a third-party tax service in complex cases.

Easy reordering: You should be able to let customers reorder based on previous orders and send reminders via text or email.

Flexible payment and checkout: You should be able to offer fast and flexible payment, and checkout options, including multiple payment gateways, payment on account, and mobile-optimized checkout.

Flexible shipping: You should be able to offer shipping through many carriers and automate your fulfillment processes.

Quote support: You should be able to automate price quote requests and negotiations with buyers.

Automated up-selling and cross-selling: You should be able to integrate marketing automation tools that drive up-sells, cross-sells, and repeat purchases.

Company account management: You should be able to give your B2B customers an account management dashboard where they can see everything—including active quotes and orders, order history, credit status, and more—in one place.

B2B-specific reporting: You should be able to analyze your business with reports that blend data from your e-commerce platform as well as ERP, CRM, and other critical systems of record.

Remember that *mobile is mandatory.*

Both B2B and B2C buyers are increasingly using mobile to research your products and make purchases. According to the Boston Consulting Group, 50 percent of B2B search queries today are made on smartphones, and mobile drives or influences more than 40 percent of revenue in leading B2B organizations. And eMarketer reports that mobile commerce already accounts for 58.9 percent of digital retail sales worldwide.

Progressive Web Apps (PWAs)

A new approach to mobile design.

Most businesses rely on either responsive web design or native apps to deliver mobile commerce. Responsive designs have their limitations. They can be accessed via browser, but they can't access smartphone features like the camera and push notifications. And while native apps provide a richer experience, they must be developed and maintained for all mobile operating environments.

Progressive web apps are a seismic advancement in mobile web design because they blur the lines between mobile app and mobile site. They provide a rich, app-like experience inside a mobile web browser. Read more about PWAs here.

Opt for content-powered *commerce.*

Content, especially personalized content, is critical for both B2B and B2C sales. According to Salsify, 87 percent of consumers rate product content very highly when deciding to buy. However, most businesses struggle to quickly add new content and make content updates. Often, they have to tap IT to make even seemingly simple updates.

Personalization can be even more challenging. Content—such as specifications, product recommendations, and targeted promotions—must be served at the right stage of the customer journey and tailored for different customer profiles. B2B buyers in particular will want easy access to more detailed information, including supporting documentation (manuals, certifications, how-to videos) and product ratings and reviews.

Your hybrid e-commerce platform should provide solutions for rapid content creation and deliver a personalized, content-powered customer journey for both B2B and B2C buyers.

Fast, personalized content to go.

Page Builder

Content updates are a headache for B2B and B2C companies alike. When new content is available, you may have to contact IT and add your request to the development queue.

Magento Page Builder is designed to accelerate content creation. It lets non-technical users create new pages and preview their designs without a single line of code. It also supports customer segmentation, so content is served only when it's relevant.

Adobe Experience Manager

For companies looking for more sophisticated content management capabilities, Adobe Experience Manager is a flexible solution that integrates with Magento Commerce.

This powerhouse marketing solution combines digital asset management with the agility of a sophisticated content management system. Create personalized, content-led experiences that scale with your business growth, and across touchpoints and team workflows.

Make <u>multichannel</u>
a priority.

Most B2C companies are selling in multiple marketplaces. Amazon Business reports that <u>49 percent</u> of retail e-commerce happens on Amazon. And the same is true for B2B. With $10 billion in sales, Amazon Business is a growing force with millions of business customers around the world, including 55 of the Fortune 100 companies. In addition, businesses of all kinds are blending online and in-store sales into a single, unified customer experience. Both B2C and B2B companies can have retail or branch locations that support "buy online/pick up in store" and endless aisle strategies.

A hybrid e-commerce platform should provide strong multichannel functionality for both B2B and B2C sales.

It should allow you to create a consistent experience across all the touchpoints in the customer journey. Multichannel capabilities to look for in a hybrid platform include the following:

- Comprehensive listing and inventory management across marketplaces.

- Support for integrated digital and physical shopping experiences, such as "buy online/pick up in store" and digital kiosks in stores and warehouses.

- Smart, flexible fulfillment that minimizes wait times and shipping costs.

- Account management options that allow B2B sales reps to place orders on behalf of their customers.

Investigate partner and *developer ecosystems.*

Solution partners can help you navigate new markets and tailor your new B2B or B2C store for your target customers. But finding the right partners isn't easy, and it's especially difficult for B2B companies. Research suggests that nearly half of B2B organizations struggle to find the right solution partners. Ideally, your hybrid e-commerce platform should have an ecosystem of solution partners that's both broad and deep. In other words, more is better.

The same is true for your platform's developer community. A large community of developers means extensions and plug-ins exist for thousands of different use cases—which just might include yours.

The bottom line? Your hybrid e-commerce platform should be the hub for a wider ecosystem including solution partners and developers.

Don't forget about *performance and security.*

Performance is essential for both B2B and B2C e-commerce. Why? Everyone gets frustrated by slow load times. For B2C, PR Newswire reports that a [100-millisecond delay](#) in page load times can decrease conversions by 7 percent. And B2B buyers may interpret your slow web pages as a sign that your infrastructure isn't reliable.

Your infrastructure should be both reliable and ready to grow. Make sure to have an architecture that offers high availability along with flexible server capacity that can grow with you and maintain performance during unexpected traffic spikes.

Security is another top consideration. *Security* magazine reports that e-commerce losses to fraud from Q2 2016 through Q2 2017 approached [$57.8 billion](#). According to *Forbes*, [23 percent](#) of canceled transactions occur because shoppers don't trust the website's security. When B2B companies start selling direct to consumers, they must secure the checkout experience while guarding against fraud—which may involve new processes for companies who have only sold to other businesses. Security tools like DDoS protection and a web application firewall are vital to keeping your store secure and protected from malicious traffic.

Both performance and security are must-haves for your hybrid e-commerce platform.

Look towards *the future.*

By supporting both B2C and B2B e-commerce, your hybrid platform lets you quickly support new business models like subscription services or Internet of Things-based services, as they emerge. In today's fast-changing marketplace, this is a competitive advantage. There are also other ways your e-commerce platform can set you up for future success:

International commerce: Your hybrid e-commerce platform should make it simple to add new country- and region-specific stores, whether they're B2B or B2C. It should support local languages, payment and shipping methods, tax rules, and so on.

Unified analytics: Your hybrid e-commerce platform should give you a holistic view of your entire business. It should let you analyze trends and drill down into specific KPIs across sites and customer segments, like return rates, repeat purchases, and lifetime spending, as well as B2B-oriented metrics like quote to order conversion rates.

When evaluating hybrid e-commerce solutions, think about what your business will be doing two, three, and five or more years in the future.

Adobe can help.

Adobe Commerce Cloud is built on Magento Commerce and comprises products from Adobe Analytics Cloud and Marketing Cloud. This flexible, scalable commerce platform is designed to optimize the customer journey from the first click to checkout, and beyond. Packed with integrated tools and value-added services, Adobe Commerce Cloud delivers experience-driven commerce at every touchpoint, reaching your customer anytime, anywhere.

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