



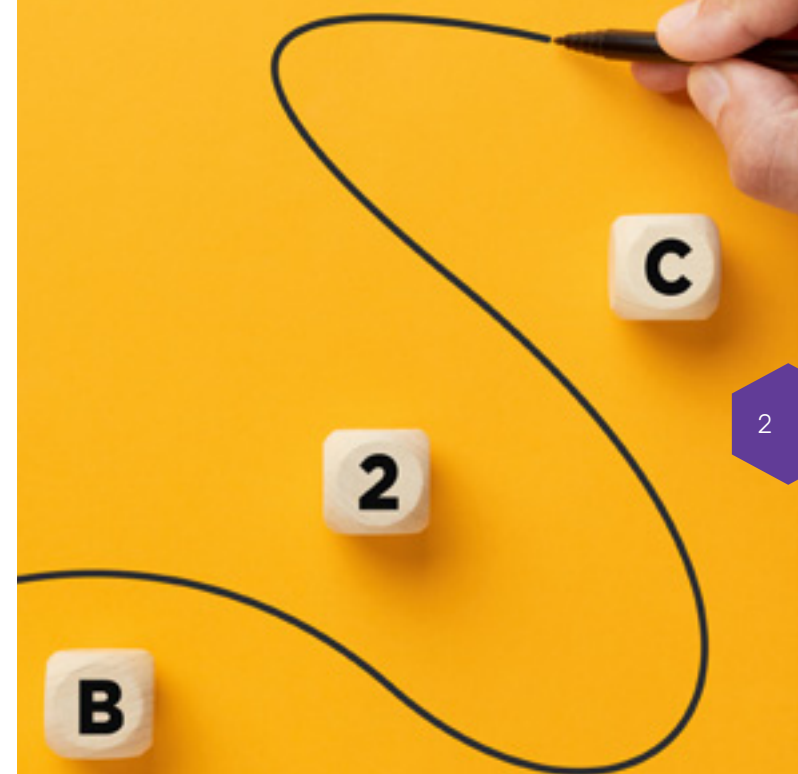
How eCommerce is **Transforming** the B2B Buying Experience

eCommerce—Not Just B2C Anymore

eCommerce has fundamentally transformed the consumer experience and lowered the barrier to entry for thousands of businesses aiming to bring new products or brands to market. From small digital storefronts to global brands, businesses around the world are leveraging the power of the internet to effectively drive sales, build lasting relationships with customers, and lower overhead. And as once proud anchor tenants shutter their doors for good and the once proud mall becomes a sad monument to the commerce of yore, eCommerce is booming—with little sign of slowing down.

Still not convinced? Some eye-opening stats for you: *in 2021, it's estimated that over 25% of the global population made a digital purchase* ([Oberlo, 2021](#)). One in four people worldwide—or 2.14 billion—is already making at least some purchases online. In 2020, buoyed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the global eCommerce market grew 25% to \$4.2 trillion—and has posted double digit growth each year since, as customer expectations continue to be permanently reworked by the eCommerce experience. Currently, eCommerce accounts for nearly 21 percent of all retail sales. By 2025, it's forecasted that one in four retail purchases will be handled via eCommerce channels ([Global eCommerce Forecast, 2021](#)).

You may be wondering why this matters to the B2B market—with longer sales cycles, a more sophisticated clientele, and a different purchasing experience, you're selling to businesses—not consumers, and the B2B buyer is vastly different from the B2C consumer, right?





The truth is that the B2B purchasing journey is coming to mimic the B2C space more than ever—thanks to those pesky millennials. The workplace is now comprised of more digital natives than ever before, and they have clout. According to a study by Merit, 73% of 20- to 35-year-olds are involved in product or service purchase decision-making at their respective companies, with one third reporting that they are the sole decision maker for their department ([Merit B2B Report](#)).

It's important to remember that while your company may be selling to businesses, at the end of the day, businesses are comprised of individuals—individuals who have grown accustomed to a purchasing experience, whether they're buying a new pair of shoes, a software, or a wholesale order of parts. Those expectations do not just disappear when a consumer shifts from purchasing for an individual to purchasing for a business, and B2B businesses are now faced with needing to leverage eCommerce channels if they want to provide a positive customer experience and keep pace with their competition. But just how much of an impact is B2B eCommerce having?

What is B2B eCommerce?

Learn more about the different types of B2B eCommerce and how to make them work.



B2B eCommerce: Poised for Growth

If the growth opportunity of eCommerce in the B2C segment is eye-opening, the growth opportunity in the B2B segment is so bright, you might need sunglasses.

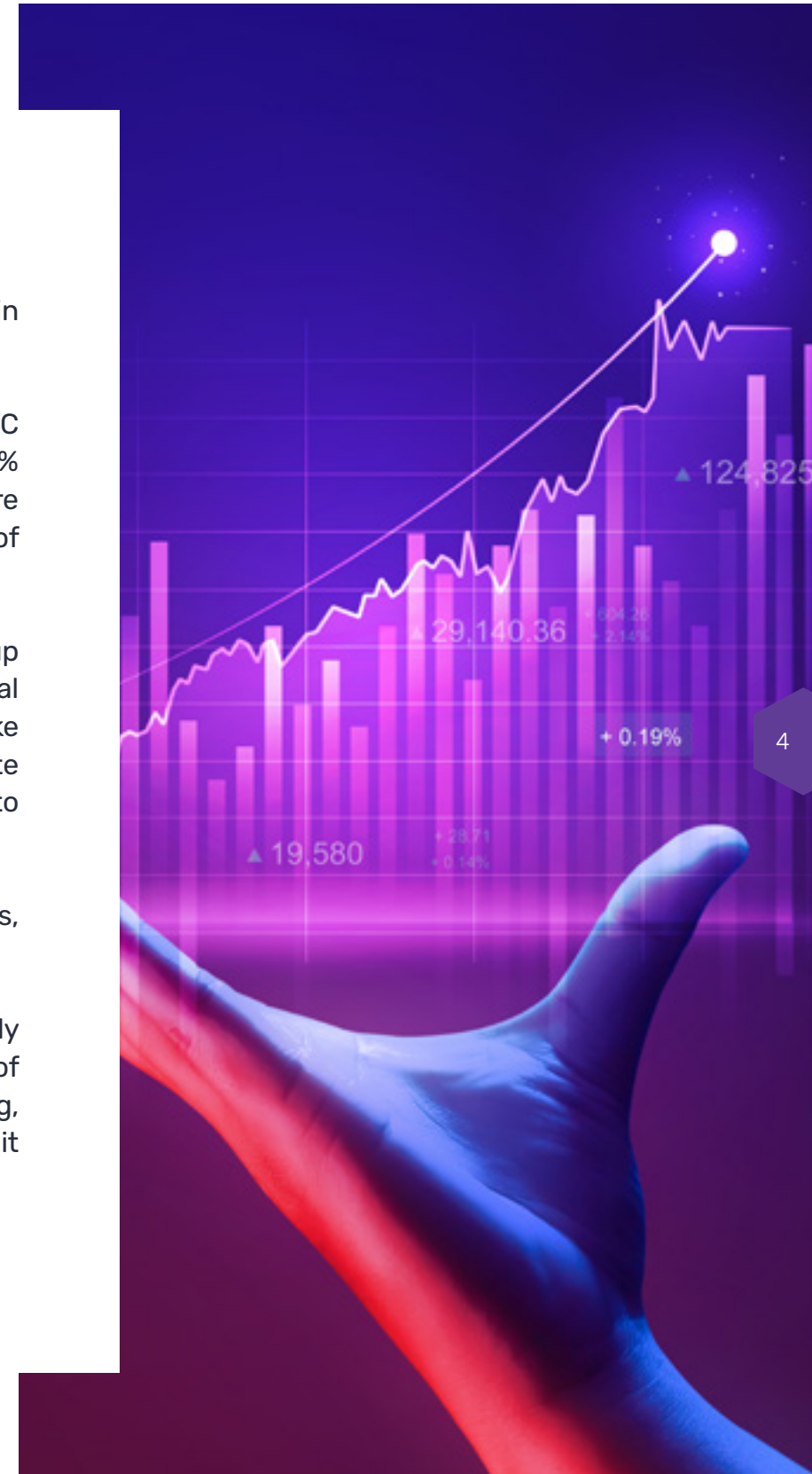
While the global B2B eCommerce market was valued at \$7.7 trillion in 2021—significantly more than the B2C market—the B2B eCommerce market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 18.7% between now and 2028, to a total market value of over 25 trillion dollars ([Grand View Research, 2019](#)). More than one in ten B2B products will be sold via eCommerce channels; yet, despite this, only around 19% of B2B companies say they've received more than half of their revenue via eCommerce ([eMarketer, 2016](#)).

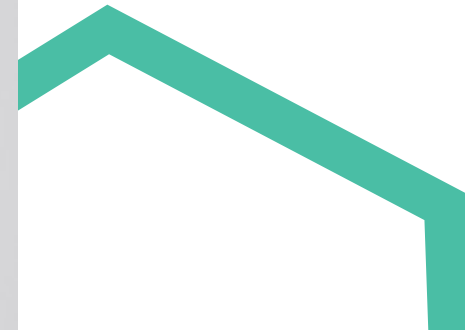
In research conducted by Accenture, 68 percent of B2B buyers had purchased goods or services online, up from 57 percent the year before ([Accenture, 2020](#)). Another Accenture survey found that 74% of industrial purchasers research at least half of their purchase online—and that 20% of all industrial purchases will take place online by 2025 ([Accenture, 2020](#)). Based on these growth projections, it's impossible to overstate the opportunity to businesses that invest in reliable eCommerce channels, processes, and strategy to serve their B2B customers.

And yet despite this, there seems to be a collective foot-dragging on the part of wholesalers, manufacturers, and service providers to meet their clients with B2B eCommerce solutions.

Introducing an entirely new channel to meet customer needs can seem daunting to SMBs, particularly those with well-staffed sales teams who are doing well enough via traditional sales channels to be wary of expanding to another. Yet in a world where economic pressure is mounting, buyer power is concentrating, and businesses must always be vigilant for solutions that will allow them to remain competitive and limit overhead, B2B businesses will be forced to adapt to the eCommerce revolution or become irrelevant.

Let's look at why in the next section.





Why eCommerce is Transforming the B2B Buying Experience

These days, a number of businesses are claiming the mantle of 'customer-centricity'. They do this because they know, at least on the surface, that in today's highly competitive business market, anything less than a relentless focus on providing the most frictionless experience for your customers can be a death knell for their company. This is as true in the B2B market as it is in the B2C world.

An eCommerce platform is, at its core, an opportunity to provide your customers with a better experience while simultaneously capturing data that will help you continually iterate and improve on it, adding ongoing incremental gains to sales, customer service, and even inventory management and logistics. With that in mind, here are three reasons why eCommerce is transforming the B2B buying experience:

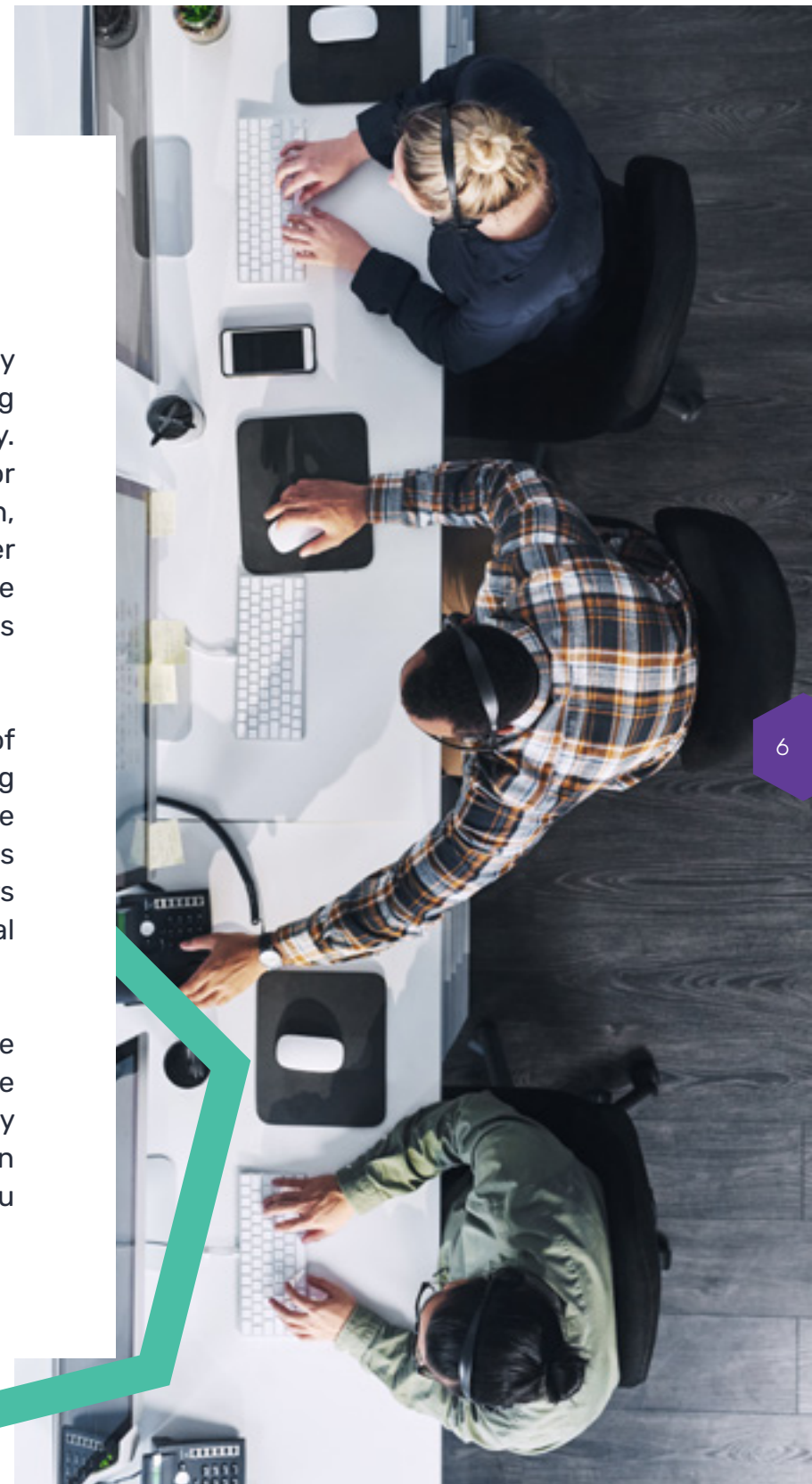


1. Long Live the Sales Department

The reason eCommerce has exploded in popularity is really due to one cold, hard truth: nobody really likes talking to pushy, quota-driven salespeople— even interactions with the most helpful, hardworking salespeople come with a subtext: they're trying to pry your money from you through any means necessary. Everyone knows it, which is why there has been a fundamental shift in how sales are conducted. For starters, customers now own a greater portion of the sales journey—conducting their own research, evaluating vendors, meeting with their buying group, and so on. According to research from Gartner ([Gartner](#)), when B2B buyers are evaluating suppliers, only 17% of their time is spent meeting those suppliers. When multiple suppliers are being evaluated, that amount of time spent speaking to sales reps drops to 5-6%.

It doesn't matter how good your sales team is—if the customer is only engaging with them over 5% of the buying process, they aren't closing the sale alone. But by shifting to an eCommerce model—giving customers access to research, reviews, recommendations, and competitive research, businesses are learning they can take back control of more of the buying process and influence customer purchases without the subtext. In fact, B2B customers who perceived the information they received from vendors to be helpful to them in their evaluation process were three times more likely to purchase a bigger deal and experience less regret.

This isn't to say that sales departments are no longer necessary or required. By offering an eCommerce channel to your customers, you can make your sales team more effective—by integrating eCommerce with your CRM, sales teams will have full visibility into the customer journey and be able to proactively solution against potential objections for new customers and have a complete understanding of an existing customer's purchase history and preferences for reorders. No matter who you are (even if you work in sales), that's a win/win.

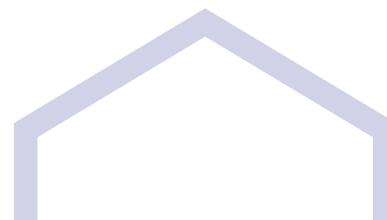




2. Buying From You Shouldn't Be Difficult

The entire philosophy of business is built on the fundamental idea that customers will give you money in exchange for goods and services. The B2B space in particular involves lengthy buying processes with multiple stakeholders that can be unnecessarily complex. From RFPs through to POs, from stakeholder meetings to evaluation criteria to solution implementation, the B2B buyer journey can be fraught with confusion and friction—and yet, even knowing this, many B2B vendors fail to take the necessary steps to make it easier to purchase from them. Over three quarters of B2B buyers say their last purchase was very complex or difficult.

A well-designed B2B eCommerce experience can take some of that complexity off of your buyers' hands. Through user experience design, thorough and informative product content, and a simplified ordering process, your buyers can feel like doing business with you is simple—regardless of what's happening with their purchasing group. Automated touchpoints that keep your buyer informed of order or fulfillment status can show attentiveness and transparency to your buyers, even if you aren't manually sending the messages yourself. And throughout the entire process, an eCommerce platform can track and measure what your buyers are doing and syncing to your business intelligence, ERP, or CRM tools, giving you the data you require to continue improving the experience for them.



3. Keeping it Personal

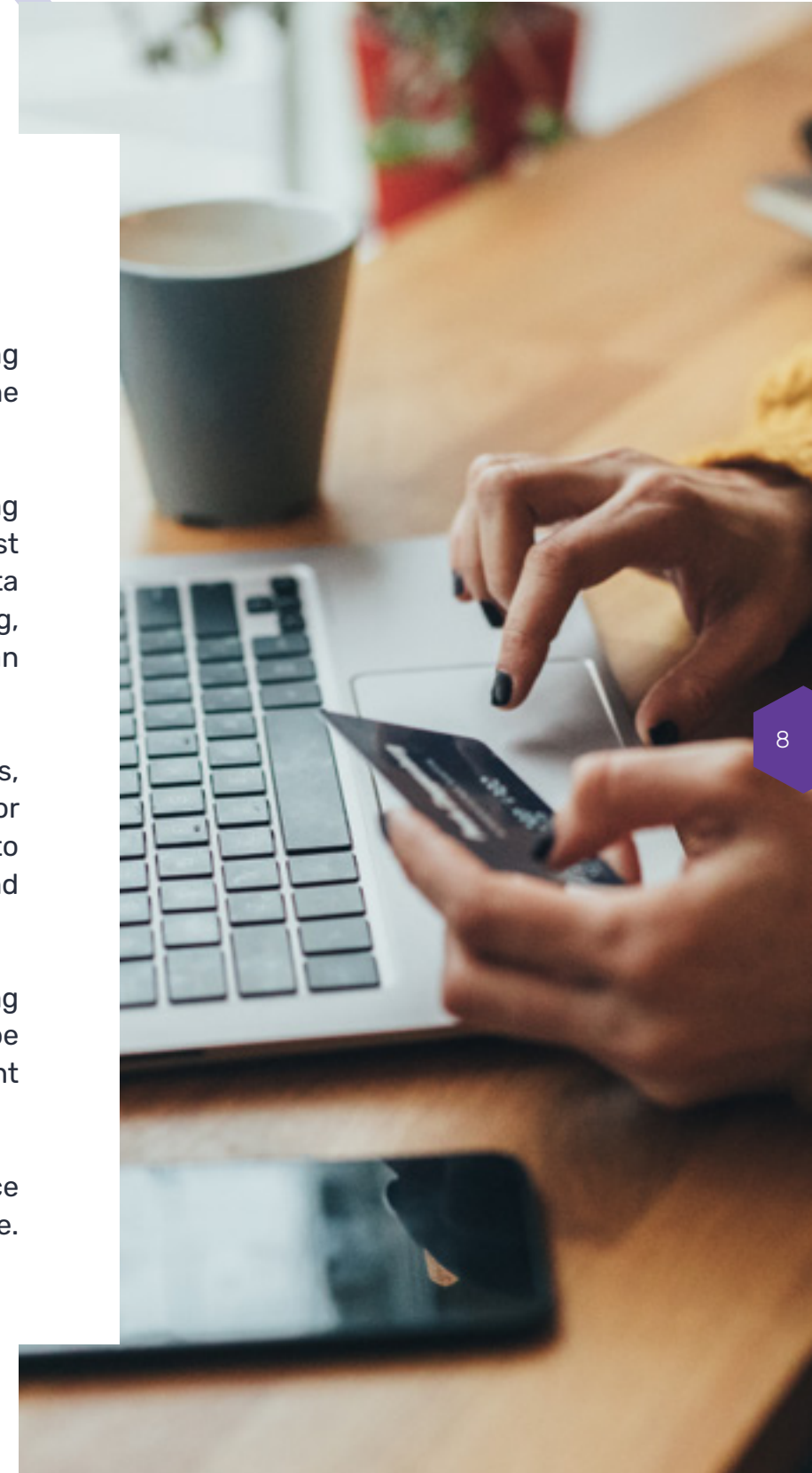
Back in the day, lifelong sales relationships were built by personal touches—shopkeepers remembering customers' personal preferences and history. By leaning into eCommerce, B2B businesses get the opportunity to craft a unique sales experience for every individual customer—at scale.

Personalization in the B2B world goes beyond just adding a merge field to an email—it means mapping the buying journey to customers by organization, role, purchase history, pricing, and more. A robust eCommerce platform can allow you to craft unique buying journeys for each customer, using the data you've collected on them, making them more likely to complete. Through customizations on pricing, process, promotions, and catalog availability, each and every buyer who interacts with your business can feel like they're interacting with a business made specifically for them.

As an example, look at the ordering process. Purchasing scenarios are rarely the same for all customers, even when they're purchasing the same item—at different times ordering through a salesperson, or through a manufacturer or distributor. Personalization of the ordering process is an opportunity to increase customer loyalty by ensuring they have access to all necessary information like order and payment history, invoices, reorder options, shipping and tracking, and recommended items.

eCommerce platforms also offer the opportunity to customize payment terms for future orders, depending on previous engagement or the role of the individual making the purchase. Item catalogs can even be customized by user role—for example, limiting manufacturing departments to ordering parts only relevant to their area of the business.

Similar to the shopkeepers of yesteryear, offering personal experiences to your buyers will not only reduce friction and increase the likelihood of a sale—it will also build a strong relationship that will last a lifetime.





Finding the Right B2B eCommerce Platform

These are just a few of the many of the benefits encountered when B2B sellers introduce a [B2B eCommerce](#) channel. Businesses that embrace digital B2B selling gain the opportunity to introduce greater efficiency, profitability, and more satisfied employees and customers alike.

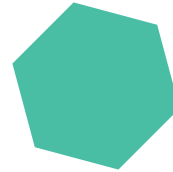
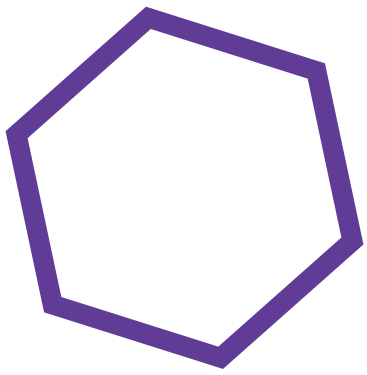
But in their rush to claim a segment of that \$25t market, businesses would be wise to partner with established B2B eCommerce providers with a history of success launching B2B channels. When executed poorly, B2B eCommerce channels can provide more harm than good. eCommerce isn't just simply adding a web interface to a manual and human-dependent sales process.

The right eCommerce platform for your business will integrate with your ERP and other backend tools seamlessly. It should provide Product Information Management (or PIM), enabling you to maintain a single source of truth for product information and push it to multiple channels concurrently. It should offer robust personalization options to best serve your customer base. And lastly, it should include data capture and reporting capabilities that will enable you to continually optimize the experience for your customers and increase lifetime value.

At commercebuild, we have helped dozens of manufacturers, wholesalers, and distributors in all industries move their businesses online successfully. With our affordable ERP-integrated eCommerce platform built in the cloud, we include all of the core functionality you need out-of-the-box with zero customization and webstore maintenance. From a B2B customer payment portal to personalized product pricing, our experts specialize in B2B eCommerce strategy and can help you go digital in 60 days or less.

Learn more about how a modern eCommerce solution can revolutionize your B2B selling





About commercebuild

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With commercebuild, you get a live, revenue-producing site in 60 days or less. Our flexible, user-friendly platform supports both B2B and B2C operations and includes all of the functionality required to build and manage an online webstore directly out-of-the-box. Once implemented, your commercebuild platform provides 24/7/365 sales and customer service capabilities that let your customers and prospects self-serve and place orders around the clock, find their last invoice, receipt for payment, or other routine administration tasks.

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