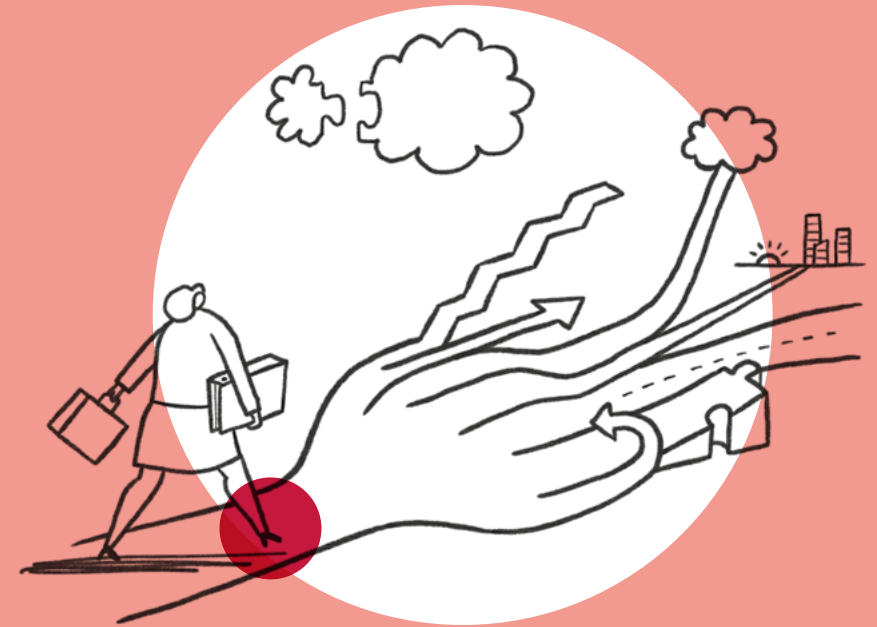


# Replatforming in B2B commerce: Success factors and best practices



Answer these 4 vital questions to help you deliver a future-proof commerce platform

🕒 17 min read

QUICK ANSWERS

🕒 2 min read

How do I respond to changing customer needs?

What do I need to make my online shop distinctive and flexible?

How do I prevent system instability and poor performance?

Can replatforming help me save time and money?

THIS IS AN  
INTERACTIVE  
WHITEPAPER!  
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READER

Replatforming (the changeover to a new, more powerful e-commerce platform): For some e-commerce managers it is a word that causes anxiety. Replatforming is very often believed to be (too) expensive and time-consuming. Yet this is an inaccurate and dangerous assumption. Replatforming is a necessary next step in digital transformation. If replatforming is delayed too long, it can be harmful in the long term because legacy systems often no longer meet growing digital commerce needs. Since they are also not flexible enough to easily be adjusted, they become an obstacle to business development. Sustainable success can only be achieved by meeting the constantly growing customer requirements in B2B, comprehensively digitalizing sales and service processes, and creating the right foundation for future developments. What is holding **you** back?

## THE EXPERT

**Robert Neumann**

Chief Digital Officer, CSS Commerce



The ideal e-commerce platform meets the needs of your business today, and enables future innovation and advancement. Because technological development nowadays is relentlessly fast and customers always expect the latest features when selling through an e-commerce platform. And if they don't get what they expect, they will look for it elsewhere. This whitepaper is a practical guide for your replatforming project and provides you the ammunition to convince stakeholders in your organization that replatforming is a necessary step.

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## RESPOND TO CHANGE

# How do I respond to changing customer needs?

Future-ready companies with sustainable business models rely on technologies that adapt to growing requirements today. This not only ensures future security but also satisfied customers.

[Read more](#)

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## RESPOND TO CHANGE

# How do I respond to changing customer needs?

B2B e-commerce develops rapidly. New market players regularly establish new functionalities to enhance the customer experience which quickly become table stakes for customers. In addition, new business models emerge that also require innovative solutions. Rigid, legacy e-commerce solutions with limited functionality can't keep pace and therefore dampen entrepreneurial spirit.

## 1 Offer a wide range of B2B features

Modern B2B e-commerce systems offer end users a wide range of functionalities tailored to the specific requirements of B2B businesses right from the start. This goes far beyond what is standard for B2C platforms. Today, with rapid communication between groups of buyers and sellers, complicated B2B transactions have to span many individual

## Success factors

- 1 Offer a wide range of B2B features
- 2 Get ready for new touchpoints
- 3 Create personalized customer experiences
- 4 Sell and support multichannel
- 5 Provide comprehensive, tailored information
- 6 Leverage the potential of digital customer portals

interests and motivations. The trick is to strike the right balance between digital and human interaction in these more complex relationships. In addition, there are special requirements when trying out new business models or expanding internationally.

## 2 Get ready for new touchpoints

Mobile devices are being used for over 50% of digital commerce, so the design must take that into account. Voice assistants like Alexa and Siri are adding additional customer touchpoints which B2B platforms must plan for to keep pace with the market. Future-proof e-commerce solutions can no longer do without appropriate conversational commerce interfaces.

## 3 Create personalized customer experiences

Tailored, repeatable shopping experiences increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, lower price sensitivity and ensure long-term sustainable business relationships. People buy the experience! In e-commerce this individualization is made possible through data analytics driven by business intelligence gathering.

## 4 Sell and support multichannel

Even though a large proportion of purchases in B2B are made online today, personal contact with sales staff remains a high priority—especially for complex products that require intensive consultation. This means that customers today expect personalized shopping experiences across different sales channels. Whether on a mobile device or a laptop, on the phone with a customer service hotline or speaking directly with a sales representative: All data must be identical in every channel and on every device.

## 5 Provide comprehensive, tailored information

Online research is a daily routine for B2B buyers. This is where the companies that present all facets of their products and services really stand out. Make this information easily accessible via powerful search engines: Instructions, CAD data, 3D views with augmented reality, explosion graphics—to name just a few. This saves valuable time and provides reliable, facts that help buyers make confident, well-informed buying decisions. Here, too, personalization leads to time savings when users can store information in the customer account and do not have to search for it repeatedly.

## 6 Leverage the potential of digital customer portals

Even though B2B businesses know about the potential of personalized, yet standardized processes, they still lack the basics such as individual customer accounts to show purchase history, return options, smooth checkout processes and saved payment information which has been the standard in B2C for a long time now. Recurring orders, payment, discount and delivery conditions, approval limits for buyers and many other functions can be configured once and then used again and again. Digital customer portals, in which all customer information is stored centrally, offer the optimal solution.

**E-commerce solutions and services for your entire commerce value chain**

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STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

# What do I need to make my online shop distinctive and flexible?

What you need is to have all subsystems interact seamlessly together. Only then can all the information and processes be synchronized so that both employees and customers will experience the benefits.

[Read more](#)

## QUICK ANSWERS

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## STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

# What do I need to make my online shop distinctive and flexible?



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**To make your online shop and website stand out from the crowd, you need more than just a shopping cart. That is why third-party applications must be integrated into the overall system as easily as possible. The individual requirements for B2B commerce platforms can differ fundamentally in each individual case—depending on the industry, product portfolio, target group, or target market.**

Since no e-commerce platform, no matter how mature, can perfectly map every imaginable scenario, the so-called ‘best of breed’ solutions from other software vendors must almost always be integrated and used. In other words: High-performance systems can implement third-party platforms and apps seamlessly.

But also beyond these requirements flexibility is a quality of utmost importance for e-commerce platforms, because it enables users to develop and grow their business—no matter what the future holds. It must always be possible to extend and change the solution easily to meet changing customer expectations or different requirements in different parts of the world.

## Third-party systems for internal processes

Other business systems such as resource planning (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM), payments, or logistics providers, may not directly visible to the customer but are highly relevant for smooth e-commerce processes. If these systems don't communicate with the e-commerce platform properly, important information is lost or has to be maintained manually. This can have massive negative consequences for the efficiency of business processes and should therefore be avoided.

## Added value for customers

Only if all subsystems interact seamlessly with each other, all information and processes can be synchronized in such a way that employees and customers can benefit from valuable information in real-time. This includes inventory data, order history, account balances, order status, or product details. Legacy systems are often not flexible enough to integrate properly and therefore deliver inconsistent information to the customer. In such a scenario, a replatforming can deliver major efficiency benefits. A platform that provides the necessary amount of APIs saves you costly development work.

## Diversification on one platform

Creating and offering new brands on an existing e-commerce platform will lead to new groups of buyers, greater reach, more sales, higher revenues, and a spread of risk. These great results can be achieved through projects which can be implemented quickly and easily with a powerful e-commerce platform. These platforms allow for easy channel setup for new brands, new markets and even new countries. Imagine how easy it will be to enter even a niche market since the cost of entry is so low. This flexibility will inevitably increase the entrepreneurial spirit.

## Managing demand

Additional products and product variations, more buyers and transactions, new touchpoints, and sales channels in e-commerce are often disruptive and force companies to react quickly to keep up with the competition and remain successful in their respective markets. E-commerce platforms must therefore be highly flexible and scalable to meet changing requirements instantly. This is where cloud solutions are far superior to on-premise scenarios: They are constantly developed and updated by their providers and therefore always adapted to current demands.

## Developing new markets efficiently

E-commerce enables companies to expand quickly and with low risk into new international markets by eliminating the need to invest in brick-and-mortar infrastructure like stores and warehouses, logistics, and local staff. This requires a centralized e-commerce platform that can be adapted to country-specific conditions with minimal effort, from language, currency, and tax systems to the localization of unique cultural features. So, again it's all about the scalability, flexibility, and compatibility of an e-commerce platform.

### Great online ordering experience, more customers

Highline report





KEEP THE PACE

# How do I prevent system instability and poor performance?

Two basic requirements for a good user experience are the unlimited availability of goods and services online and the shortest possible load times. Both depend on various factors. The e-commerce solution itself, and the underlying hosting and hardware.

[Read more](#)

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## KEEP THE PACE

# How do I prevent system instability and poor performance?

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Two basic requirements for a good user experience are the unlimited availability of online goods and services and the shortest possible load times. For example, 65% of online shoppers worldwide abort their purchase if the page loads for longer than three seconds. Against this background, it is easy to imagine what the complete collapse of an e-commerce website means for sales and the company's reputation. Anyone facing these problems should consider replatforming.

## Several factors

How quickly a page loads and how stable it runs depends on various influencing factors. In addition to the e-commerce solution itself, the underlying hosting, in particular, has an impact on the time it takes to complete the page load. Furthermore, the hardware can have a negative impact on speed and stability if it cannot cope with a large amount of data. If a powerful e-commerce platform is hosted in the cloud and provided with automatic updates, such problems are a thing of the past.

## Determine the performance requirements

If you are purchasing an e-commerce platform for the first time or planning to replatform, you should first be clear about the requirements that the new platform has to meet. Here are a few points to keep in mind: Consider future growth plans. If your business develops faster than your e-commerce solution it will slow you down, eventually. Make sure the platform scales and meets future requirements. You should also be aware of the number and frequency of marketing campaigns, and, last but not

least: Always be prepared for unexpected peaks in traffic. One of the best things that can happen is to have a marketing campaign greatly overperform or perhaps your product gets a favorable review in a trade magazine, yet all that goodwill can go away in a second if your systems are not built to dynamically scale.

## Headless API commerce: Deliver what customers demand

Customer centricity means providing good customer services and an e-commerce platform with an architecture that allows you to work in a truly customer-centric manner. Given the rapid increase of mobile and voice devices, it is obvious that an e-commerce platform must be able to connect and integrate with new technologies quickly and easily. The solution is often referred to as “headless commerce” in which the “head” or presentation layer (frontend) is connected to the e-commerce backend functionalities via REST APIs. This allows independent changes to the frontend without affecting the backend. Such an API-oriented platform follows an integrated architectural approach that natively supports multiple sales channels and data sources such as voice devices, sensor technologies for predictive maintenance, the Internet of Things (IoT), or for AR.

## Leverage cloud technology for excellence

Keeping pace with today’s rapid technological developments becomes even more challenging when companies work with on-premise e-commerce solutions. Since it requires an entire IT department to stay up to date, on-premise systems are costly. But even though IT may be doing its best, the solution will decline in performance over time because of numerous adjustments, extensions, and point-to-point integrations. The online store becomes slow, updates take ages, and new features which customer demand cannot even be integrated because proper interfaces are not available.

**One way to avoid scenarios like the above is to replace on-premise systems with cloud solutions. Besides that, cloud solutions offer further performance benefits.**

- **Automatic updates:** With a cloud solution e-commerce site will always be up to date, so shop owners can leverage the latest technology and features that customers expect.
- **Scalability at minimal costs:** When occasional peaks in traffic occur, the cloud solution can easily be scaled up. For the rest of the time it can be scaled down to reduce costs.
- **Flexibility:** Cloud solution providers keep their systems as flexible as possible by providing their customers with API technology to extend their platform with third-party software.
- **Data security:** Cloud providers take safety extremely seriously and guarantee the highest security and legal standards. And they are in a far better position to adapt to changing laws and regulations than legacy, on-premise solutions.

## ABOUT ROI

# Can replatforming help me save time and money?

Legacy systems cause high (often hidden) costs for customization, updates, maintenance work, and fees when connecting third-party systems via interfaces. A fully integrated, API-driven e-commerce platform always leads to savings—both in the short term and long term.

[Read more](#)

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## ABOUT ROI

# Can replatforming help me save time and money?

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This question can be answered with a clear “YES”. As you can read in this whitepaper, **operating digitally has a massive impact on organizational efficiency. Automating repetitive tasks and offering self-service options for your customers will free up human capital that can be invested in other ways to support your customers. The communication will be more efficient, costs per contact reduced and the time to market will be shorter.**

## 1 Future proof, long term success

Companies that rely on their legacy systems to their legacy systems often are often confronted with situations in which they are no longer able to adapt to current market events and trends: A significant increase in the overall volume online sales of goods and services, rapid technological development, new customer touchpoints, and higher expectations of B2B customers when it comes to comfortable online shopping experiences. And although the

## Your benefits

- 1 Future proof, long term success
- 2 Lower costs, more revenue
- 3 One single source of truth
- 4 Automated processes



exact calculation of the total cost of ownership (TCO) and the return on investment (ROI) is highly complex, the experience of the last few years shows that legacy systems cause almost always high—albeit hidden—running costs: Individual adaptations, updates, maintenance work, point-to-point integrations, a lack of flexibility and scalability, high fees when connecting third-party systems via interfaces, and unhappy customers looking for alternative vendors.

On the other hand, a fully integrated, open e-commerce platform of the latest generation, always leads to savings the areas above. So, replatforming will pay off in any case.

## 2 Lower costs, more revenue

Operating digitally reduces your costs on different levels: You spend less on traditional marketing costs because you will likely print much less, send fewer snail mailings, and maybe even transform your paper catalog into a printable PDF version or—even better—digitalize it and make it ready for mobile

devices your sales force can use at the customer's site. Online sales will boost your margins because you will sell more (the buying process is much easier) *and* upsell related products. With e-commerce, you are open 24/7. Customers can place their orders anytime, anywhere and on any device.

## 3 One single source of truth

A powerful e-commerce platform will serve as a single source of truth by providing all business units with the same information. As a central information hub, the platform is accessible through one single frontend which can be configured for individual business roles. This will break up silos, so data does no longer have to be entered several times. Data becomes visible in real-time or can be processed directly by several departments such as the the warehouse and purchasing department.

Customer information from a CRM, product details from a PIM, or business data from an ERP are integrated and become more than the sum of their parts.

## 4 Automated processes

Digitalization allows for the automation of numerous business processes that have previously been performed by humans. This leads to a higher degree of precision, frees workers from simple, repetitive tasks, and allows them to concentrate on more sophisticated jobs. For example, purchasing processes can be triggered automatically when the ERP system reports that the stock level for an item falls below a defined threshold. At the same time, the system can independently generate an invoice for the article sold, initiate its dispatch to the customer, and set an open item in accounting. Meanwhile, procurement can research markets for new vendors, negotiate prices and conditions, and intensify existing business relationships on a personal level.

## BENEFITS FOR BUSINESS

## More turnover through satisfied customers

E-commerce is one of the growth drivers of the global economy. If you want to be successful in B2B in the long term, you have to continuously develop your online business. Not only are technological innovation cycles getting shorter and shorter, but customer expectations of the user experience in digital commerce are also constantly changing. B2B shoppers are used to the high standards of B2C commerce they experience in their personal life and expect the same level of comfort in their professional environment. If you don't live up to this, you will quickly lose buyers and see sales decline.

Many companies that took a big step towards digitalization a few

years ago with the introduction of an e-commerce platform are now slowed down by outdated systems. They cannot react quickly enough to disruptive developments and changing requirements because their online sites don't scale and can't be adapted. As a result, they are gradually losing touch—and market share.

In such a scenario, only replatforming can help—the move to a modern B2B e-commerce platform designed to meet the growing needs of customers. It is flexible, scalable, and can easily be extended through APIs.

## BENEFITS FOR IT

## Fully integrated, flexible, scalable

Technological innovation cycles in B2B e-commerce are becoming shorter. To stay ahead of the competition, businesses need to be able to quickly adapt their digital shopping experience to changing customer expectations. In addition, an e-commerce platform must also be designed for swift growth and expansion into new international markets with potentially very different requirements which can make it necessary to integrate new features and possibly entire applications.

So, it is important that a B2B e-commerce platform is deeply integrated into the existing IT landscape and linked to all relevant business processes and the corresponding

software components (ERP, PIM, OMS, CRM, etc.). It is also critical that an e-commerce platform has an open architecture with pre-installed applications and API-based interfaces to ensure easy integration of best-of-breed solutions from other (third-party) vendors. Ideally, the platform is hosted in the cloud, so that it can easily scale and adapt to traffic peaks. The entire setup should be fast and agile, for which MVPs (minimum viable products) are particularly well suited.

## THE CUSTOMER

# Great online ordering experience, more customers

Experienced by Mike Quinlan

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Highline Warren, North America's premier distributor of automotive chemicals and products, needed to establish a scalable 24/7 online channel to meet growing demand for online ordering. The existing solution limited the growth of the business because it lacked easy management, flexibility, and the self-service and shopping features their customers needed.

## Quick ROI and fast growth

By moving their online shop to Intershop and implementing a comprehensive self-service platform, immediate progress toward ROI was made and monthly registrations increased tremendously. "Our initial growth goal for year one was to drive a 10% increase in new online customer registrations. After the first six months, we saw an increase of over 22%!", says Mike Quinlan, Director of Marketing at Highline Warren.





## ABOUT CSS COMMERCE

# Unleash your B2B potential



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As the US' leading B2B independent software integrators and consultancy company, we expertly tie all your software together to unleash the true value and potential in e-commerce.

#### What we do well

For the enterprise, we maximize your e-commerce platform to tie in an ERP, PIM, CRM, MDM, advanced B2B search for total integration with syndication, trading partners while providing complete supply chain visibility. The types of issues we solve include online sales performance issues, search abandonment, shopping cart abandonment, product data disbursement, dead inventory and inventory turn. Call us for your free assessment today. Scan and click!

ABOUT INTERSHOP

# Always nearby

Intershop is the engine that drives digital commerce. Our powerful B2B e-commerce platform enables the world's leading manufacturers and wholesalers to transform their business and increase revenue in a digital-first world.

Our cloud-based solutions give you an essential foundation for digital success, plus the flexibility to deliver unique experiences and quickly react to changing needs. With a global presence and extensive partner network, we support your success every step of the way—creating opportunities to scale, innovate, and gain a competitive edge.

Intershop is built to boost your business. Discover what we can do at [www.intershop.com](http://www.intershop.com).



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