

Creating or Elevating your B2B Digital Commerce Powerhouse

A comprehensive guide to navigating supplier selection

Due to the unique nature of their interactions, B2B (business-to-business) organisations prioritise distinct factors compared to B2C (business-to-consumer) organisations. It's important to understand these key differences when selecting suppliers who will be key to the success of your online presence.

This guide aims to unveil a checklist for identifying the ideal partner, emphasising factors such as expertise adaptation, customisation capabilities, collaborative ethos, and an industry-aligned approach.



Introduction

B2Bs seek to simplify procurement for their clients, often through personalised portals, integrated catalogue management, and seamless reordering mechanisms.

An efficient, high-performance environment is paramount for B2B transactions, focusing on streamlined processes, bulk ordering, and automated systems to handle complex orders swiftly.

In terms of their customer experience, B2Bs often require tailored solutions to meet their specific needs so customisation, configurable pricing, volume discounts and a personalised customer experience which fosters long-term relationships, after sales support and value added services.

In contrast, B2C businesses emphasise consumer experience, branding, and emotional appeal to drive individual purchases.

While efficiency, customisation, and relationships also matter in B2C, the dynamics are distinct as the focus is on reaching a wide consumer base and catering to individual preferences.

It's worth mentioning there are some obvious requirements both B2C and B2B businesses share. These include features such as a user-friendly interface, secure payment processing, product catalogue management, responsive design for various devices, and an efficient checkout process.

Both often use content management systems (CMS), databases and analytics tools to manage and optimise their online presence.

Beyond that, there's a world of difference.

While B2C digital commerce or full-service agencies may seem an alluring choice for your B2B digital commerce proposition, your success requires your chosen suppliers to have a keen understanding of the intricacies of B2B sales and operational dynamics.

Not all agencies are created equal. There are many potential pitfalls where selecting a B2C specialist agency may not be the right choice, despite their credentials around the shopping element and user experience.



Here are the key differences between these two types of digital commerce sites which can help form the selection criteria when choosing the right marketing and/or development agencies to help with your journey.

Feature	B2B	B2C
Target audience	Businesses and professionals, collaborative	Individual consumers, personal choice and action
Transactions	Bulk orders, long-term partnerships, catalogues	Smaller in scale simpler purchasing decisions
Purchase complexity	Complex, multiple stakeholders, custom quotes, approvals	Simpler, based on individual preferences. Focus on the user-friendly experience, fast checkout
Relationship building	Long-term, personalised and tailored solutions	Exceptional customer experience to encourage repeat purchases
Product Catalogue	Extensive, range of products and services specific to needs	Cater for individual preferences and lifestyles
Pricing structure	Accommodate volume discounts, tiered pricing, negotiation	Fixed and straightforward or with universal discounts and promotions
Content strategy	In-depth product information, and technical specifications to help inform business decisions	Emphasis on visual content, product imagery, customer reviews and user-generated content
Payment methods	Credit terms, invoicing, flexible payment options	Immediate, involving credit and debit card payments
User experience	Complex transactions, self-service features, seamless integration with procurement systems	Ease of use, intuitive navigation, persuasive elements for quick purchases
Attracting buyers	Account-based marketing, personalised and sector-specific personalisation	Mass marketing, influencer marketing and social media

Integrations

A site often requires a variety of integrations to streamline operations, enhance user experience, and meet the specific needs of businesses.

These integrations enhance the efficiency, accuracy, and overall functionality of your B2B digital commerce site, all of which contribute to delivering a seamless experience to your business customers whilst maximising profitability.

The specific integrations you need will depend on your industry, business model, and its operational model.



Integrations

Here are some common integrations that a B2B digital commerce site may need and the expertise your chosen agency will require:

1. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Integration:

This helps synchronise orders, inventory, customer data, and financial information. This ensures accurate and real-time data across your business processes.

2. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Integration:

CRM integration allows you to manage customer interactions, track sales leads, and gather insights about customer behaviour to enhance customer relationships.

3. Payment Gateways and Payment Processors:

Integrating with payment gateways and processors enables secure and seamless online payments, including credit card processing and electronic fund transfers.

4. Shipping and Logistics Integration:

Shipping carriers and logistics providers help automate shipping calculations, generate shipping labels, and provide real-time tracking information to customers.

5. Tax Calculation Software:

Tax calculation software ensures accurate tax calculations based on location, product type, and applicable tax rules.

6. Inventory Management System Integration:

Integrating with an inventory management system helps manage stock levels, updates inventory in real-time, and prevents overselling.



Integrations

7. Supplier and Vendor Integrations:

Integrations with suppliers' systems allow you to manage drop-shipping, automate procurement, and maintain accurate supplier-related data.

8. Pricing and Discount Integration:

Integration with pricing and discount systems ensures the accurate application of negotiated pricing, bulk discounts, and promotions for different customer segments.

9. Catalogue and Product Information Management (PIM) System:

PIM system helps centralise and manage product data, making it easier to update, organise, and display accurate product information.

10. Accounting Software Integration:

Integration with accounting software streamlines financial processes by automatically recording sales, transactions, and revenue data.

11. Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) Integration:

For larger B2B operations, EDI integration facilitates the seamless exchange of business documents such as purchase orders, invoices, and shipping notices.

12. Content Management System (CMS) Integration:

Integrating with a CMS allows you to manage and update content, blogs, articles, and marketing materials on your digital commerce site.

13. Marketing Automation Integration:

Integrating with marketing automation tools helps execute targeted marketing campaigns, lead nurturing, and personalised communication.

14. Analytics and Reporting Integration:

Integrating with analytics platforms provides insights into customer behaviour, conversion rates, and sales performance.

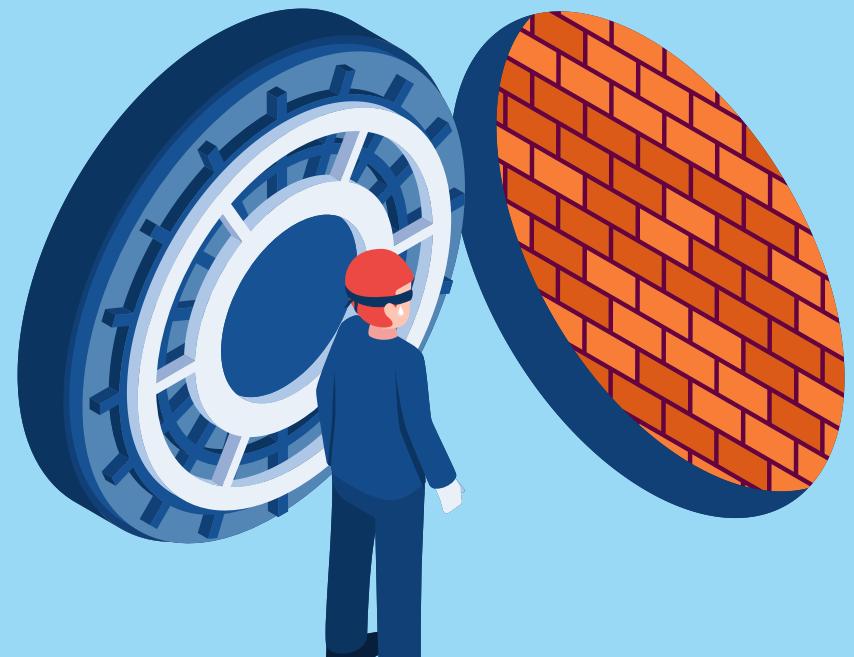


Security

Due to the sensitive nature of business transactions and data, creating a secure environment requires a comprehensive set of cybersecurity and compliance tools to protect sensitive data, prevent breaches, and ensure regulatory adherence.

Your chosen agency should have experience in collaborating with cybersecurity experts, legal advisors, and compliance professionals to ensure that your platform is capable of protecting sensitive data and transactions.

Regular audits, maintenance, monitoring, and updates are essential to maintain a strong cybersecurity posture.



Security

Here's a summary list of the types of tools you could need, depending on the types of environment you're operating:

1. Firewalls and Intrusion Detection/Prevention Systems

These tools monitor network traffic for suspicious activities and unauthorised access attempts, blocking or alerting when potential threats are detected.

2. Web Application Firewalls (WAF):

A WAF specifically targets web-based threats by filtering and monitoring HTTP/HTTPS traffic to prevent attacks like SQL injection, cross-site scripting (XSS), and more.

3. Encryption Tools:

Implement both transport layer security (TLS/SSL) for data in transit and encryption for data at rest to safeguard sensitive information from unauthorised access.

4. Multi-factor Authentication (MFA):

Require users to provide multiple forms of verification (e.g., password, SMS code, biometric) to enhance login security.

5. Vulnerability Scanning and Penetration Testing Tools:

Regularly scan for vulnerabilities and simulate real-world attacks to identify weaknesses in the system.

6. Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) System:

Collect, analyse, and correlate security event data across the network to detect and respond to threats.

7. Data Loss Prevention (DLP) Tools:

Monitor and control data transfers to prevent unauthorised sharing of sensitive information.

8. Identity and Access Management (IAM) Solutions:

Manage user identities, permissions, and access to resources, ensuring only authorised personnel can access specific parts of the system.

9. Endpoint Security Software:

Protect devices (computers, mobile devices) accessing the site from malware, ransomware, and other threats.

10. Patch Management Tools:

Ensure all software and systems are up-to-date with the latest security patches to mitigate known vulnerabilities.

11. Compliance Management Software:

Track and manage compliance with relevant industry standards e.g., PCI DSS, GDPR.

Security

12. Privacy Tools:

Implement tools to manage user consent, data processing, and privacy rights as required by data protection regulations.

13. Backup and Disaster Recovery Solutions:

Regularly back up data and have a robust recovery plan in place to minimise downtime and data loss in case of a breach.

14. Audit and Logging Tools:

Keep detailed logs of user activities, system changes, and events for audit and forensic purposes.

15. Incident Response Platform:

Have a predefined plan and tools to respond effectively to security incidents, minimising damage and recovery time.

16. Secure Development Tools:

Implement security best practices during the software development life cycle to prevent vulnerabilities from being introduced into the code.

17. Regulatory Compliance Tools:

Tools that help monitor and adhere to specific industry regulations and standards.

18. User Training and Awareness Platforms:

Educate your employees and users about cybersecurity best practices and potential threats.

19. Third-party Risk Management Tools:

Assess and manage the security risks posed by third-party vendors and partners.

20. Remote Access and VPN Solutions:

Secure remote access to the network and resources for authorised users.



Features and Functionality that Affect Pricing

Each digital commerce project is unique, and the pricing will depend on the specific features and requirements you need. It's essential to discuss your project in detail with potential development partners to get an accurate cost tailored to your business goals.

A fixed cost offers predictability in project costs, allowing for budget planning as it's possible to highlight any requests that are out of scope and can be appended if necessary whilst assessing the impact of any changes to delivery schedules.

A day rate provides flexibility for variable workloads and evolving project scopes. It accommodates changes in requirements without renegotiation, making it suitable for projects where time commitments fluctuate. Every change and additional feature requested must be documented otherwise unplanned costs and delays can escalate.



Features and functionality that affect pricing

Here are some key features that can impact digital commerce site pricing:

1. Platform Selection:

The digital commerce platform you choose (e.g., Shopify, WooCommerce, Magento) can significantly affect pricing. Some platforms offer different pricing tiers with varying features.

2. Design and Customisation:

Customised design, user interface (UI), and user experience (UX) enhancements. The more unique and tailored your site's design, the higher the cost.

3. Number of Products:

The total number of products you plan to sell on your site. Larger product catalogues may require more intricate product management and navigation.

4. Payment Gateways:

Integrating multiple payment gateways (e.g., PayPal, Stripe) or specific enterprise-level gateways.

5. Shipping and Logistics:

Integration with shipping carriers, calculating shipping costs, and providing tracking information can add to the development and ongoing maintenance costs.

6. Product Categories and Variations:

If you have complex product categories or variations (e.g., sizes, colours), it can increase the complexity of the site's structure which has a knock-on effect on pricing.

7. User Accounts and Roles:

Implementing features like user registration, different user roles (e.g., customer, admin, vendor), and personalised experiences.

8. Search and Filtering:

Advanced search functionality, product filtering, and faceted navigation can enhance the user experience but may add development costs. The importance of the user experience may, or may not, outweigh the need for performance.

9. Mobile Responsiveness:

Ensuring your digital commerce site is optimised for various devices and screen sizes can impact development costs.

Features functionality that affect pricing

10. Integrations:

Integrating with third-party tools such as CRM, ERP, accounting, or marketing automation systems can add complexity.

11. Security Measures:

Implementing robust security features, such as SSL certificates, encryption, and secure payment gateways.

12. Analytics and Reporting:

Integrating analytics tools to track user behaviour, sales, and other metrics.

13. Content Management:

If a content management system (CMS) is being used to manage products, categories, blog posts, and other content its features need to be considered as they can impact pricing.

14. SEO and Marketing Features:

Integration with SEO tools, meta tags, social sharing, and marketing features.

15. Scalability:

Consider whether the platform can easily accommodate future growth.

16. Support and Maintenance:

Ongoing support, updates, bug fixes, and maintenance are necessary for a functioning digital commerce site.

17. Choosing a fixed price or day rate

When it comes to providing a quotation, several key features and factors come into play. The cost can vary based on the complexity of your requirements, the chosen platform, design, development, integrations, and ongoing maintenance

Dangers of Compromising Performance over User Experience

Any business faces the strategic challenge of optimising its online sales, but a different set of dynamics prevails when comparing a B2B environment with a B2C shopping experience.

A B2C agency will be well-versed in optimising conversions, driving individual sales and fast checkouts.

B2B specialists are experienced in optimising operational efficiency, integrations and delivering cost savings. Offering the ability to function as operationally efficient business tools while also serving as effective marketing vehicles is an additional requirement.

In a B2B environment, balancing these two aspects is crucial for driving sales, enhancing customer relationships, and maintaining a competitive edge.



Marketing requirements

1. Branding and storytelling:

B2B catalogue sites can be potent platforms for conveying a company's brand identity and narrative. Prioritising the marketing aspect involves integrating compelling visuals, consistent branding, and engaging storytelling. Such an approach creates an emotional connection with buyers, reinforcing trust and loyalty.

2. Content marketing integration:

By leveraging the marketing potential of B2B catalogue sites, companies can integrate educational content, industry insights, and thought leadership materials. This establishes the company as an authority in its domain, drawing in potential customers seeking valuable information and solutions.

3. Customer engagement and interaction:

A marketing-focused approach encourages the incorporation of interactive elements such as live chat, virtual product demonstrations, and customer reviews. These features foster direct engagement, allowing buyers to seek assistance, gain clarity, and build relationships with the

Speed and Performance

1. Efficiency and streamlined transactions:

By emphasising the business tool aspect, companies can prioritise features that streamline order placement, inventory management, and payment processing.

2. Customisation and personalisation:

Implementation of advanced customisation options based on buyer preferences and purchase history, tailored pricing, recommended products and personalised account dashboards are just a few of the features important to B2B users.

3. Data-driven insights:

Inform decisions, optimise inventory and refine marketing strategies through the facilitation of robust analytics and reporting. Build in the functionality to gain insights into customer behaviour, popular products, purchasing patterns and more.

Choosing the Right Digital Commerce Partner

Acknowledging that B2C and B2B digital commerce projects have distinct characteristics and requirements, a B2C digital commerce agency could potentially succeed in a B2B project under certain conditions.



However, there are several factors to consider before committing to a digital commerce agency partner.

1. Understanding of B2B Dynamics:

B2B digital commerce involves complex transactions, multiple decision-makers, and often customised pricing and terms. The agency should have a solid understanding of B2B buying behaviours, procurement processes, and the specific needs of businesses.

2. Adaptation and Expertise:

The agency needs to adapt its approach to suit the unique requirements of B2B clients. This might involve developing expertise in areas such as account-based marketing, lead generation, custom pricing structures, and integrations with ERP and CRM systems.

3. Customisation and Integration:

B2B digital commerce sites often require more customisation and integration with backend systems compared to B2C sites. The agency should have the technical capabilities to create tailored solutions that meet the needs of B2B clients.

4. Relationship Building:

B2B projects often involve building long-term relationships with clients. The agency should be equipped to provide personalised service, account management, and ongoing support.

5. Pricing:

As mentioned in the previous section, ensure you agree on a pricing model and structure that fits your budget. Be aware that costs can spiral without keeping a tight reign on project management and deliverables, especially when working on a day rate basis.

6. Content and Messaging:

B2B content and messaging are typically different from B2C. The agency should be capable of creating content that addresses the concerns, pain points, and goals of B2B buyers.

7. Marketing Strategies:

B2B marketing involves strategies like lead nurturing, account-based marketing, and targeted outreach. The agency should be able to develop effective strategies to reach and engage B2B decision-makers.

8. References and Portfolio:

Review the agency's portfolio to see if they have successfully executed B2B projects in the past. References from B2B clients can provide insights into their capabilities and outcomes.

Conclusion

Whether you're crafting a new powerhouse or elevating your existing presence, we hope this guide serves as your compass, navigating the waters of supplier selection and empowering you to forge a B2B digital commerce empire of unparalleled excellence.

You're ready to embark on your B2B digital commerce journey with clarity and confidence.

9. Collaborative Approach:

If the agency is willing to collaborate closely with your B2B team and adapt its methodologies to suit B2B requirements, it can increase the likelihood of project success.

10. Industry Knowledge:

Understanding the specific industry in which the B2B client operates is essential. The agency should be able to tailor the digital commerce solution to cater to the unique needs of that industry.



About DWS

Our team specialises in creating high-end online B2B stores that combine operational performance with customer experience that outshines others in the market.



The best practice methodologies we deploy ensure the quality we deliver isn't compromised by the rapid turnaround our customers demand, even on the most challenging of projects. In our capable hands, you'll be streets ahead of your competition in no time.

We understand that budget matters to you and there should be no nasty surprises.

We work hard to make sure your website is both affordable and impressive and your customers return time after time.

Get in touch

Phone: 0330 133 5544

Email: hello@dws.limited

Website: www.dws.limited

Adobe
Solution Partner
BRONZE

