



5 KEY QUESTIONS

When
Searching
for Your
Next
Ecommerce
Platform

INTRODUCTION

The Future of Ecommerce Post-Pandemic

The global pandemic has forced many companies to elevate their ecommerce strategy. With steep declines in retail traffic and wholesale distribution channels, many small-to-mid-size businesses (SMB's) were left scrambling to reach their customers via direct ecommerce channels in 2020. Online traffic grew exponentially overnight and the ability to transact via ecommerce became crucial for many companies' ultimate survival.

For many SMB companies, there is now a realization that ecommerce is simply not another sales channel, but rather that it needs to be at the center of your long-term sales planning. However, this can pose a significant challenge for many SMB companies. They may lack the strategic expertise, technical capabilities and/or internal resources to compete at the same scale with their larger competitors. And they need to deploy a solution that maintains the agility and speed inherent in their size to be successful.

With that in mind, we explore the 5 key factors an SMB should consider when choosing an ecommerce solution.

1 Will it be Fast Enough?

The speed of business is accelerating and your ability to take advantage of market opportunities is crucial to your long-term success. That's why it's imperative to choose an ecommerce solution that will allow your business to get up and running, react to changing market conditions and serve your customers quickly and reliably.

There are 3 distinct elements of speed to consider:

Q: How fast can the solution be implemented?

A: Ideally, you should be up and running within 4-7 months, if not sooner. The longer the timeframe, the more disruption (and cost) to your business.

Q: How quickly can I make adjustments to my site?

A: Price changes, product modifications and content updates should be self-directed by your business teams and occur within a matter of hours. Solutions that require IT intervention for basic marketing and merchandising activities will slow your ability to react to market conditions and take advantage of revenue opportunities.

Q: How fast does the site perform?

A: Studies have shown that a 1 second increase in page load speed will equate to a 7% decline in conversion rates. Customers are becoming increasingly restless, and it takes only one click for them to leave for a competitor. Website speeds are also a key ranking factor for Google in determining your organic search rankings.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

For many small-to-mid-sized businesses, speed is a key, contributing, success factor. Large, complex, ecommerce platforms can often turn simple tasks into lengthy endeavors. Choose a solution that balances the right mix of speed and capabilities.

2

Can It Be Customized to Fit My Business?

Is your business a “snowflake”? Do you do something differently that has resonated with your customers and helped you gain traction in the marketplace?

If so, then why would you choose a one-size-fits-all ecommerce solution?

No matter the size, there are distinct aspects to every business. Subsequently, your ecommerce presence should be as unique as your brand.

Pre-ordained page templates and established purchase flows, while easing the initial set up, may not provide the flexibility or functionality you need from your online storefront. They can be a starting point, but make sure to seek a solution that allows you to tailor the look, experience, and capabilities of your ecommerce business.

The days of complex customizations that take months and many thousands of dollars are a thing of the past. Today’s modern, ecommerce platforms enable you to “be you” and will grow with your business over time.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

Choose an ecommerce solution that fits your business, not the other way around. The ability to customize your appearance, user experience and shopping capabilities are critical success factors when differentiating your ecommerce offering.

3

Will It Work With My Existing Business Infrastructure?

Upgrading your ecommerce capabilities shouldn't mean having to replace your entire business infrastructure. No business, especially SMB ones, can assume the risk, cost, and disruption to their organization of undertaking such an endeavor.

However, sophisticated ecommerce solutions do not work in isolation. Often, it's required that they integrate with several internal systems to provide a seamless shopping and online customer experience. These systems can include:

- Product Information Management (PIM)
- Order Management Systems (OMS)
- Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
- Warehouse Management Systems (WMS)
- and others

Ecommerce platforms based on limited, or inflexible, data architectures can pose real problems when integrating with 3rd-party, internal, systems. Oftentimes, this type of platform can require lengthy and complex workarounds (which can be difficult to modify down the road) to communicate with other systems. Some simply are incapable of any workaround. Platforms that employ flexible data architectures and can handle multiple messaging protocols will be better suited to integrating across several systems.

Integrations can make or break an implementation. An ecommerce solution that can leverage your internal systems will help maximize your opportunities while reducing your overall cost and complexity.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

Select an ecommerce platform that offers a flexible data architecture and robust integration protocols. The ability of your ecommerce platform to integrate seamlessly with your existing internal systems is one of the most important aspects in selecting an ecommerce partner.

4

Will It Tax My Internal Resources?

Building a successful ecommerce website can pose a significant challenge for small-to-mid-sized businesses. In addition to the time, cost and energy associated with such undertakings, many SMB's often lack the requisite technical resources to fully tackle such projects. This can be a stumbling block for many companies needing to enhance their ecommerce capabilities.

With demand for IT talent at an all-time high and companies combating frequent employee turnover, it can be more economical, and dependable, to rely on a dedicated external partner who can bring the IT expertise required for upgrading your ecommerce capabilities. Over time, such a partner will gain an intimate understanding of your business and can often serve as a source of long-term institutional knowledge, reducing the risks associated with internal staffing resources.

For many SMB's, this type of arrangement will often allow them to deliver an advanced ecommerce experience at a lower cost and with less risk to their organization.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

Selecting and working with a trusted 3rd-party ecommerce solution partner can help mitigate your internal costs while reducing the risks associated with employee turnover. Finding and hiring the right technical resources to build a robust ecommerce experience doesn't need to be a difficult and costly endeavor for SMB's.

5

Will It Grow With My Business Over Time?

Successfully launching a new website is just the start of your ecommerce journey. How long that new website lasts though, will ultimately depend on a number of factors. To maximize your investment, you'll want to select an ecommerce platform that can scale, add new capabilities over time, and keep up with the latest industry standards.

SaaS-based ecommerce solutions, hosted in the cloud, offer SMB companies a flexible and scalable architecture. Utilizing a subscription-based model, these solutions also offer SMB's a lower upfront cost and eliminate the need for expensive hardware and software purchases. SaaS solution providers also manage the IT infrastructure supporting your ecommerce site, allowing you to focus your energies on the business aspects of running your website.

Lastly, choose a platform that offers you the architectural flexibility to incorporate new functionality and expand in size as your business grows. Done correctly, you'll be able to evolve your website over time, adding new features and scaling up for increased volume, all while maintaining your upgrade path. Instead of a limited lifespan, a modern, SaaS-based architecture can put you on a continuous improvement cycle that allows your website to stay best-in-class over time.

And then you can say goodbye to the ecommerce replatforming cycle.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

SaaS-based solutions offer SMB businesses a lower cost of entry and reduced operational complexity. These solutions, built with architectural flexibility in mind, are designed to add new capabilities and will grow with your business over time ensuring that your website never becomes outdated.



For SMB catalog and multichannel retailers seeking to expand their e-commerce opportunities, Kalio is the singular solution they'll need to help them succeed. Unlike other e-commerce platforms, Kalio is the only one that delivers a 100% unified solution (e-commerce platform + cloud management + professional service resources) that reduces risk, increases speed to market, and delivers revenue faster.

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