



Whitepaper:

Building a Winning B2B eCommerce Team



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Introduction

Global B2B eCommerce has reached the multi-trillion dollar mark. By [2020, B2B eCommerce sales are projected](#) to be double B2C eCommerce sales. It's time to hit the field if you want to stay competitive. And if you're going to win at the B2B eCommerce game, you've got to build the right team and the right team leadership. While some of the players may look the same as your regular B2B team, eCommerce requires some special players.

Building the Team Starts with the Coach

Just as any new team starts with hiring a coach, your digital endeavor begins with hiring the right leadership. Get this wrong and the rest of the team will never take the field. Support for eCommerce begins in the C-suite. The actual job title and place on the organization chart may vary from company to company, but the leader of eCommerce must be clearly supported from the very top. Their box on the org chart may be labeled Digital Marketing Manager, B2B eCommerce Director, or VP of Digital. Whatever you label the box, the person that occupies the seat must possess a few key characteristics if they are going to be successful in managing your website(s), digital sales channels, online branding, and all related areas. Look for a leader with:

Broad eCommerce experience. Your leader should have experience in several areas of eCommerce and specialize in at least one area such a technical site management or digital marketing. Believe it or not, this person isn't necessarily an IT genius and may not even have a data processing related degree. However, they should understand the digital environment and be able to work with B2B logistics, operations, and processes. You are looking for a person with a deep understanding of customer experience, marketing, and brand positioning. They should be skilled at data analysis and have experience with digital marketing, as opposed to traditional marketing. They should understand what's possible during a digital transformation and are comfortable with an omni-channel environment. They must understand that data is an asset that requires unique security and eCommerce has its own set of rules and regulations like PCI compliance and GDPR (for countries in the EU).

Team management skills. The B2B eCommerce function is generally handled by both in house and contract teams. Your coach should have proven experience fostering in-house teams and managing external contractors. Technical gurus and savvy digital marketers must work together on projects and these types of teams are not always the easiest to manage. So, you need someone that is business-minded, technically savvy, and able to work through others.

Regardless of whether eCommerce is a new business endeavor or you're looking to revamp your existing processes for your online store, fostering change management within your organization will be critical. eCommerce isn't an easy as flipping a switch and selling you products online. Many team members and departments in marketing, sales, customer support, logistics, warehouse management, and accounting will be involved. Finding a leader who can speak to both the executive group and general team will be crucial to the success of your online business.

Once your leader is in place, it's time to put together the team. It may look quite different than you think.

In-House vs. Outsourced

As your eCommerce business grows and changes, your staff requirements will grow and change as well. At any time, you may find your team populated with members that work in-house and others that just put on a jersey when specific tasks are needed. Most B2B eCommerce teams are a blend of full-time staff and hired guns and the team composition fluctuates with company needs.

For example, building the website is a technical job. But, the content on the website needs to be consistent with your brand's vision, goals, and mission. You may have outsourced developers working with in-house digital marketers to get the site up and running. Or, you may outsource research insights and A/B testing while keeping your user experience (UX) team in-house. As your eCommerce business evolves, the mix of in-house employees and outsourced contractors may change. For example, the in-house technical team may be responsible for maintaining and updating the website while you outsource integration work with your ERP.

When it comes to in-house talent, look at the strengths and weaknesses of current staff in other areas as well. For example, the Finance Department may just have the data analyst that would excel when challenged with website analytics. The person that puts together your print materials maybe perfectly suited for developing digital materials with just a bit of software training.

B2B Can Hire B2C

Don't dismiss potential team members just because their experience is in B2C. These are experienced eCommerce professionals that have the deep digital commerce, online marketing, web merchandising, eCommerce technologies, and other associated skills you need. It will be up to your company to teach them the nuances of B2B selling as part of the onboarding process. The chances of you finding the

person that knows your product, knows your market, and knows digital commerce may be slim. By broadening your search to consider B2C pros, you increase your chances of building just the right team. However, when hiring someone with experience in B2C, just be sure that they understand that while B2C may be built upon one-time purchases with few repeat buyers, the lifeblood of B2B is repeat sales.

Be patient. Like any new project, it takes time to put together just the right blend of eCommerce pros and product specialists from B2B ranks for maximum effectiveness.

Typical Team Members

Once you have your coach, it's time to enter the draft and start building your winning team.

Website development. Developing your website requires people skilled in front-end and back-end technology. While some people may be skilled at both, they are as rare as a unicorn. That's because they require two very different skill sets.

Your back-end developer is concerned with the basis of your website. This consists of the server, the actual application software, and the database. The back-end developer builds and maintains the technology that uses these components to enable the existence of the website. Think of this person as the website general contractor. Their goal is to deliver a website with clean, well-documented code. Not only do they have technical skills, but they also possess the ability to work with their business partners to understand needs and then develop the architecture that serves those needs. Your back-end developer is also responsible for integrating your eCommerce technology with your existing ERP and other technologies so that data flows smoothly and everyone has access to the information they need.

Your front-end developer is mostly concerned with how your website visually appears to your audience. They have a deep understanding of user experience. These team members create the initial wireframes and prototypes of an eCommerce site. If the back-end developer is the contractor that built the house, the front-end developer is the designer that decorates the interior. A highly skilled front-end developer has the ability to identify specific issues in user experience and provide design solutions to these problems before the site even launches. They have a balance of technical and visual design skills. It's important that they understand the difference between B2B and B2C buyers and tailor the experience accordingly. For example, in a B2C transaction, the buyer may be making an impulse purchase, or they may be surfing the web looking for ideas. When they are ready to make a purchase, they complete a shopping cart and pay with a credit card. This scenario requires a front-end tailored to the needs of this buyer. In a

B2B transaction, the buyer is a purchasing agent that is probably placing an order similar to one placed many times before. They are doing a job and want to get it done. The front-end needs to allow the buyer to place orders quickly and pay with pre-established terms. For example, a quick order form is a common feature that enables B2B buyers to quickly and efficiently submit orders. Your B2B front-end developer understands this difference.

A true **full stack developer** is skilled in both front-end and back-end development. This position evolved with Web 2.0 as technology became more streamlined and simplified. However, these days it's almost impossible to find a single individual that can wear enough hats to be considered a true full stack developer. That's because the skills needed to develop an iOS app for the website are quite different from the skills needed to maintain servers on AWS.

As technology becomes more powerful and complex, finding a person with deep understanding of each layer becomes more difficult. But it is important to have at least one person that understands how the layers come together. Whether it's the project manager or a full stack developer, this is an essential role.

If your company is long on product vision and customer experience and short on technology, you may consider hiring an external partner or Solution Integrator to develop your initial website and keep the digital marketing efforts in-house. Outsourcing also allows your company to focus on what it does best while your external partner can supply the front-end and back-end developers to get the site off the ground. You may also decide to outsource the back-end development and keep front-end in house. It completely depends on the make-up of your team, their strengths, and their experience. For companies that do not have these technical resources in-house and would like more guidance from an industry expert, it is recommended to partner with a seasoned Solution Integrator that has deep knowledge your specific industry.

"You can't just open a website and expect people to flood in. If you really want to succeed, you have to create traffic."

Joel Anderson, CEO of Walmart

Digital marketing. It's important to note that your work is just starting when your new website is built. Simply having a working website is not enough to gain new online customers. You will need to market it to new customers and invest in teaching your existing customers to start purchasing online. Depending

on your budget, this area may be a combination of in-house and external partners. In digital marketing, people tend to focus on specific areas but you may find that one person may fill more than one of these roles:

Your **SEO expert** knows the ins and outs of increasing your website's organic ranking from search engines like Google and Bing. That's crucial because [74% of B2B buyers say they start their product search online](#). So, this role includes researching and identifying keywords that leads and customers use in their searches, optimizing landing pages and content pages for those targeted keywords, and making content recommendations to increase search engine optimization. This is an on-going effort.

“Create content that teaches. You can't give up. You need to be consistently awesome.”

Neil Patel, co-founder KISSmetrics and Crazy Egg

Your **content manager/writer** works closely with the other digital marketing team members to create the content needed to reach team goals. Your content needs to be fresh, relevant, and a source of information your customers want. Content should ideally be shareable.

B2B eCommerce can't afford to overlook social media. It's where sharing creates social proof. According to Meg Whitman, past CEO of eBay and Hewlett-Packard, “Communications is at the heart of e-commerce and community.” And your **social media specialist** is a communications expert. They design the strategies that connect your social media presence with your target audience and then manage, create, and publish original, high-quality content on these social platforms. Monitoring your social media is a joint-responsibility of your customer service and marketing teams. That's because social media is a two-way conversation and many times it may be more important to listen than speak.

“When you say it, it's marketing. When your customer says it, it's social proof”

Andy Crestodina, Co-Founder & Strategic Director at Orbit Media Studios

Your **email marketing manager** creates and implements strategies to use email marketing to stay engaged with your audience and bring them back to your store time and time again. This person works with the content writer to reach customers through email campaigns and keep them up-to-date on new products, services, and events. They do this by running email marketing campaigns, managing the email databases, and creating newsletters and other email marketing materials. Many times, marketing emails are used to announce discounts and promotions. This means your email marketing manager needs to be aware of promotions and discounts offered offline as well as online. Online promotions can be cyber-Monday specials that offer 50% off the entire store but it could also promote offline offers that target specific audiences or in-store promotions.

One of the best things about entering the eCommerce arena is the wealth of data and information that will be available to you about your customers and prospects once your site launches and marketing begins. Analyzing this data is the job of your **marketing analyst**. Their responsibilities include tracking advertising costs, researching consumer behavior, and exploring market trends and opportunities. They deploy data to make sure that the marketing budget is used effectively and efficiently, and the audience is targeted with successful campaigns. The analyst works closely with other team members to assess the effectiveness of their efforts. For example, the analyst may work with the front-end developer to [split test or A/B test](#) different elements of landing and content pages to see which are the most effective. They may run the same tests with various variations of your pay-per-click campaigns as well. Your analyst is intimately familiar with the site's data gathered by Google Analytics and knows how to correctly interpret this data.

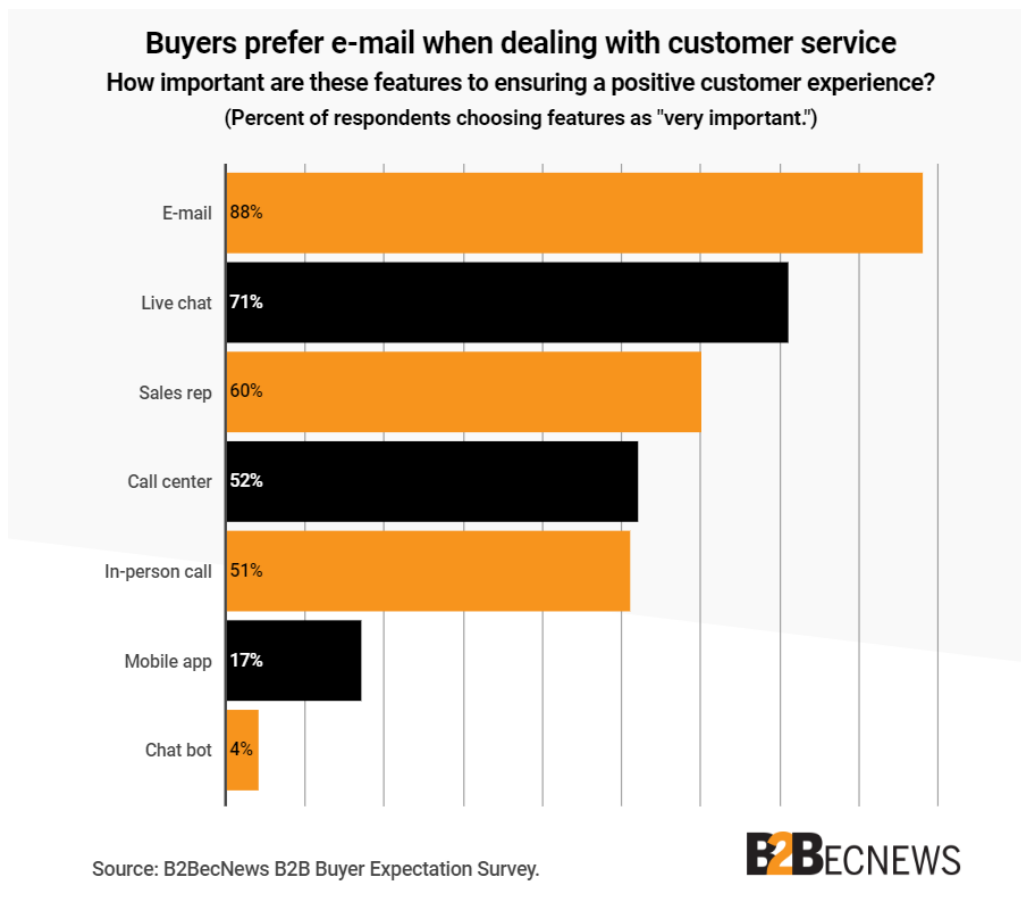
Supporting Teams

In addition to new team members, adding eCommerce will require changes to some of your existing supporting teams. Merchandising, customer service, sales, warehousing, order fulfillment, and logistics are impacted as well. The goal of your B2B eCommerce site is to increase business. So, these functions need to be ready to face the increased workload, meet new customer expectation levels, and take on some new responsibilities.

“If you have a business website, make it stickier; redo the merchandising often and try new things until you hit the right homepage. Then try and beat that.”

Morris Hite, Former Chairman, President, and CEO of Tracy-Locke

Merchandising. One of the most important roles in B2B eCommerce will be managing product content such as product descriptions, images, videos, technical documents, certifications, etc. For large organizations, this role can be assigned to someone on the merchandising team. Digital merchandising will probably be an extension of your current merchandising function if you have a brick-and-mortar presence. The digital merchandiser makes products discoverable and desirable to online customers. Responsibilities range from working with marketing and purchasing to develop pricing and products, creating a calendar of promotions, and keeping on-line and off-line efforts in synch. Merchandising may work with the content manager to create appealing product descriptions and the front-end developer to determine how and when eCommerce offerings are searchable on the site. Just as a physical merchandiser understands the importance of where a product is placed on the shelf, the digital merchandiser understands the important of where a product is placed on a page. For small to mid-sized businesses that may be working with a smaller team, merchandising duties can be performed by the marketing team as well.



Customer Service. Your eCommerce customer service will most likely be an extension of your existing customer service with just the addition of new tools and responsibilities. That's because eCommerce buyers are different. [50% of B2B buyers want a self-serve customer service model](#). But that doesn't mean you can ignore live, personal customer service. It does mean that your eCommerce site must provide self-serve tools backed up with customer service representatives empowered to handle problems. These individuals may provide on-line chat support or constantly monitor social media and customer service email accounts. The later is crucial because 88% of B2B buyers prefer email when dealing with customer service. Your customer service phone number should be prominently displayed on your site. 71% of B2B buyers also want the option for live chat but only 4% want to interact with a chat bot. Clearly, even when the transaction takes place online, B2B buyers still value relationships. But because your website operates 24/7, many of these same buyers expect customer service to be available 24/7. Whether you handle this function in-house or through a call center, it's important that it's staffed with people that care about pleasing the customer and are empowered to make this happen. So, be prepared to step up your customer service game.

“Customer service shouldn't just be a department, it should be the entire company”

Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos

Sales. Believe it or not, even with eCommerce, you still need sales support. When used properly, the website should help reps sell more as they focus on helping customers solve problems and deepen relationships. The modern sales rep understands that the website is not competition, it is a tool. Your existing sales force will be crucial to the success of your eCommerce site and should be considered vital members of the team. In the words of Bob Willett, CIO Best Buy, ““The sooner we drop the ‘e’ out of ‘e-commerce’ and just call it commerce, the better.” As part of on-boarding the sales force, stress the importance of keeping in touch with customers via emails and phone calls. Show sales reps how eCommerce has the capability to increase earning potential, as they spend more time booking new business and less time answering questions about existing orders.

Fulfillment. Is the fulfillment team in the warehouse ready for an influx of new orders? Are they ready to pull, pack, and ship promptly? Amazon has trained B2C buyers to expect rapid order processing and delivery. These expectations have spilled over onto B2B buyers when it comes to stock items. Purchasing

agents expect orders to be filled promptly and they depend on it when calculating the amount to order. B2B eCommerce transactions are time sensitive. The items ordered are needed for a key business activity or function. If you can't handle fulfillment, your customer will find someone that will. They simply can't risk a manufacturing shut-down while waiting on materials. So, make sure your fulfillment team and their technology are up to the challenge.

Inventory Management. Effective inventory control for eCommerce is all about finding the right balance between customer satisfaction and company profit. Out-of-stock situations are frustrating to buyers and you can be sure they will vent about it using on-line reviews and social media. Your inventory manager is responsible for maintaining real-time inventory management information, setting stock levels that maintain minimums without building up excess or dated inventory, and minimizing inventory carrying costs. They should be prepared to scale quickly as eCommerce brings in additional sales.

Warehouse Management. Unless you're drop-shipping, the goods you sell online will be warehoused just as the goods you sell off-line. But is your warehouse ready for the increased volume and need for speed? As volume increases you will need a warehouse manager that is able to deftly renegotiate with shipping and transport companies, make changes to warehouse layout where appropriate, and constantly monitor feedback regarding quality of services provided. Fulfillment may pull and pack, but warehouse management works with customer service to monitor breakage.

Putting Together a Winning Team

A winning team comes together in just the right combination. It's more than just filling boxes on an org chart or cubicles in an office. It's putting just the right person in each role. And now that you've got an overview of the roles, here's a few tips for assembling a winning team.

Remember, team composition is key, and you literally need those that work and play well with others. Building an eCommerce business from scratch inevitably results in a few fumbles along the way and you need a team that will learn and recover quickly.

- Look for people that embody the digital mindset and culture.
- Embrace innovators.
- Think in terms of competencies. One person can fulfill several roles on a digital team.
- Don't be afraid to out-source to get the right skill set.

Companies with successful B2B eCommerce teams invest in leadership, resources, and cross-functional strategies. The most successful teams streamline the purchase journey, improve customer satisfaction, increase customer retention and in the process become a source of increased revenue.

Don't Forget the Equipment

You can't play ball without the ball and you aren't engaging in eCommerce without the right eCommerce platform. You can borrow some moves from B2C, but B2B has its own needs.

So, when it comes to the technology playbook, make sure that the eCommerce platform you pick is equipped to handle the nuances of B2B eCommerce.

CRM. A simple email address book won't do for B2B. You must have a robust customer relationship management system that gives every player on the team a 360° view of the lead or the customer. Because B2B is built on relationships, the CRM will help track the data you need to nurture and grow relationships. With B2B, you can have multiple touchpoints with the customer and it's important that every forward-facing employee have access to complete customer information.

Sales Force Enablement. The sales team needs the resources necessary to effectively engage with their target buyers. Sales force enablement isn't about selling, it's about meeting the needs of the buyer. Your enablement playbook may include content and information to share with buyers and leads as well as internal research, strategies, and best practices. If you sell through a reseller network, consider providing dealers with their own branded websites. These can be preloaded with products and content to help them get online easier.

Purchasing Workflows. Since B2B buying is a process, B2B selling needs to have a compatible process. When selecting your eCommerce platform, look for customizable and adaptable workflow engines that accommodate the needs of corporate buyers. Most B2C software isn't enabled to handle multiple roles with different authorities for each customer account. Consider how you will handle existing [ePurchasing needs of your customers](#).

Complex Pricing Models. In B2C, the price you see posted is the price you pay. In B2B, prices are negotiated as well as payment terms and method of delivery. Make sure your eCommerce platform can handle complex pricing models and individual prices for each contract. This isn't something you will find with most B2C software and you don't want your developers creating it from scratch.

Customer Support. B2B purchases are rarely one-off transactions. They are the result of relationships over time. Effective customer support depends on knowing the details of the relationship and the transactions. Forward-facing employees need access to detailed information about the account and sales history to provide high-touch, account specific customer support when needed.

When you pull together just the right human and digital resources you drive growth and customer satisfaction. That's a touchdown and the extra point.

About OroCommerce

The #1 B2B eCommerce Platform



Build Your Online Presence

It doesn't matter if you're a manufacturer, distributor, wholesaler, retailer, or brand. Expand your business into new markets with an online and mobile presence.



Get eCommerce & CRM. All-in-One.

Get a 360-degree view of all customer touch points across sales, marketing, customer support, and eCommerce with a fully built-in CRM.



One Platform for All Commerce Needs

Address all B2B, B2C, and B2X (B2B2B, B2B2C, etc.) scenarios in a single platform. Easily customize the platform to fit your needs.

[Try Free Demo](#)

