



Build vs Buy? Exploring your B2B eCommerce options

Should you build a custom eCommerce solution or buy it from a vendor?

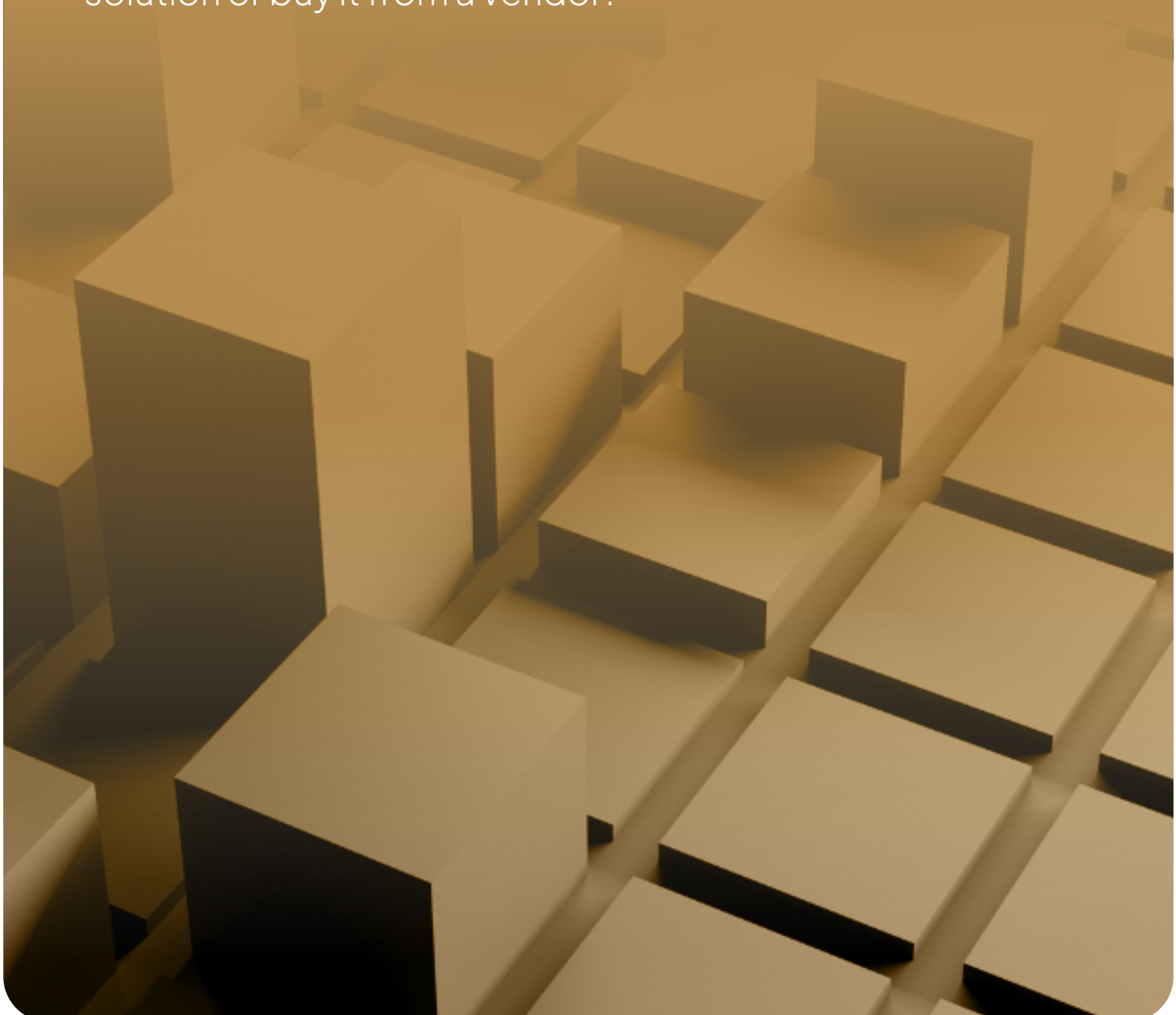




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Introduction

Choosing the right eCommerce platform is critical for any B2B business. It's the heart of your online presence, handling everything from customer experience to backend operations. But with so many options available, the decision often boils down to this: build a custom solution in-house or buy a vendor-built platform?

Historically, building was the only option. Companies invested significant time and resources to create custom solutions tailored to their exact needs. While this offered complete control, it often came with challenges like scalability and integration issues.

Today, the landscape is different. The rise of sophisticated vendor-built platforms offers compelling alternatives. Businesses no longer have to choose between building and buying; they can adopt a hybrid approach, leveraging pre-built solutions for some functions and building custom solutions for others.

This ebook explores the build vs. buy dilemma in detail. We'll examine the pros and cons of each approach, helping you determine the best fit for your B2B eCommerce needs. We'll also explore why, despite the availability of robust vendor solutions, many B2B businesses still gravitate towards custom development.

Let's dive in and explore the exciting world of B2B eCommerce solutions.



When Should You Build and When Should You Buy?

The decision to build or buy your B2B eCommerce platform hinges on a delicate balance: the resources you can commit, like time and budget, against the value you expect in return. This careful calculation often becomes the deciding factor in choosing the right path for your business.

Rent or Own?

Think of it like investing in real estate, but in the digital realm. You can choose the convenience of renting a pre-built solution from a vendor or take the plunge into ownership by building a custom platform.

Vendor solutions offer a tempting proposition: a ready-made digital storefront that caters to a wide range of business needs.

While some degree of customization is usually possible, these solutions often come with limitations. Proprietary platforms, in particular, can significantly restrict your ability to tailor the platform to your unique requirements.

Choosing this path means accepting the role of a renter, relying on the vendor for updates, support, and future development. And like any renter, you might face increasing costs or the need to "move" (migrate to a new platform) if you outgrow your current space.

Building a custom solution, on the other hand, is like constructing your dream home from the ground up. You own the entire asset, from the codebase up, allowing you to maximize its value to your company.

Maintenance, updates, and customizations become internal matters, potentially saving time and money in the long run. However, finding the right developers and consultants to build and maintain a custom platform can be more challenging than finding specialists for a popular vendor solution. Ownership, in this case, comes with the full weight of responsibility.



Find Your Fit: Which eCommerce Solution Is Right For You?

Custom-built solutions are great for...

Companies that work in regulated industries with complex restrictions placed on sales, storage, or shipping of their products.

Businesses that accept different payment methods, terms, invoicing, or just want more control over their transactions.

Organizations with specific workflows regarding pricing, negotiations, and ordering.

They can also have complex product bundling requirements and value-added services.

Complex business structures, with multiple brands, sub-brands; or businesses serving multiple verticals.

Companies having enough time and budget to enter a technology business now and being able to support the solution in the long run.

Vendor solutions are great for...

Businesses with a simple selling model without unusual product or customer requirements.

Those looking to get to market quickly. Vendors invest in onboarding, making it easy to set up your storefront and product libraries.

Brands that want to avoid dealing with hosting or upgrades. Many vendors are SaaS or cloud-hosted, meaning feature updates and maintenance are included.

Companies on a budget. Creating your own software will take months or even years, with costs rising to astronomical levels.

Companies that need to integrate their eCommerce platform with existing solutions such as ERP, CRM, and PIM.



Factors to Consider When Crafting Your Strategy



Timeframe

Building a custom solution is a marathon, not a sprint. If a swift launch is critical, a vendor solution offers a significant head start.



Budget

Both building and buying come with costs. Factor in development, licensing, implementation, and ongoing maintenance to determine the most cost-effective approach for your business.



The Voice of the Customer

Your customers are your best guide. Gather feedback on their needs and expectations to ensure your chosen platform delivers a seamless experience.



Planning for the Future

Anticipate future growth, market shifts, and evolving customer demands. Your platform should be agile enough to adapt and scale alongside your business.



Stakeholder Buy-In

Secure buy-in from all stakeholders, especially those on the front lines. Marketing, sales, and IT should be integral voices in the decision-making process.



B2B Complexity

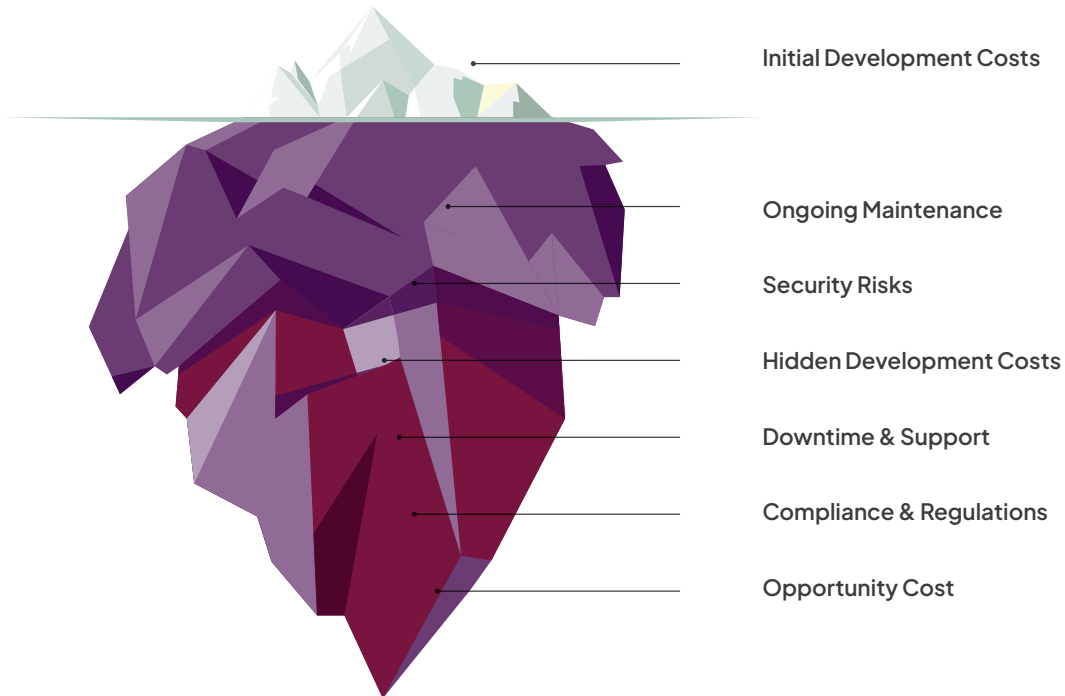
Don't underestimate the unique needs of B2B commerce. Beware of B2C-centric platforms that might fall short in handling complex pricing, ordering, and fulfillment processes.



Comparing the Costs

While the idea of a custom-built B2B eCommerce platform tailored exactly to your needs might seem appealing, it often comes with hidden costs and complexities that can sink your project before it even launches. Let's be realistic: building robust eCommerce software is not for the faint of heart (or budget).

Imagine an iceberg: you see the tip – the initial development costs – but what lurks beneath the surface?



Ask yourself these critical questions:

Are you an IT company? Building complex software demands specialized expertise and resources. Unless software development is your core business, diverting resources and capital away from your core competencies could harm your bottom line.

Can you afford the hidden costs? Beyond the initial price tag, consider the long-term expenses of maintenance, security, updates, and compliance. These often outweigh the initial investment and can balloon unexpectedly.

Is your team equipped for the long haul? Building and maintaining a successful eCommerce solution requires a dedicated team with specialized skills, from developers and security experts to legal and compliance specialists. Are you prepared to build and retain such a team long-term?

Vendor-built solutions, on the other hand, offer a faster, more cost-effective, and less risky path to launching your B2B eCommerce presence. But what if you could harness this power while retaining the ability to tailor the solution to your unique needs?

A hybrid approach might be the answer. Instead of reinventing the wheel, consider partnering with a trusted vendor who offers a customizable platform that acts as a powerful foundation for your specific B2B requirements. This allows you to focus on what you do best: running your business.



The Power of Hybrid: Customizing a Flexible B2B eCommerce Platform

Instead of forcing a choice between the complexities of building from scratch and the potential limitations of a strictly off-the-shelf solution, there's a compelling third option: customizing a flexible B2B eCommerce platform.

This hybrid approach offers the best of both worlds: a robust, vendor-built foundation tailored to your unique B2B needs. You get to leverage the expertise and resources of a trusted vendor while retaining the ability to fine-tune and adapt the platform to your specific requirements.

Start by identifying a vendor whose core B2B functionality aligns with your non-negotiables.

Think:

- Robust account management with granular access controls and permissions
- Multi-organization, multi-website, and multi-language capabilities
- Sophisticated pricing structures, personalized catalogs, and multiple shopping lists
- Streamlined order and inventory management, including support for multiple warehouses
- Powerful integrations with your existing tech stack (CRM, ERP, PIM, etc.)
- Advanced marketing and sales tools, such as email automation and segmented reporting
- Uncompromising security features and robust APIs for customization

A B2B-focused platform should deliver 70-80% of the features you might have considered building from scratch. This allows you to focus on your unique needs and find a vendor solution that closely aligns with them out of the box. The result? A foundation for growth, with the flexibility to fine-tune and customize as your business evolves.



Why is this hybrid approach often the winning strategy?



Resource Optimization

Building from scratch drains time, money, and manpower. Leveraging a vendor’s expertise allows you to focus on what truly differentiates your business.



Agility and Adaptability

The B2B landscape is constantly evolving. A customizable platform ensures you can adapt to new market trends, customer demands, and technological advancements.



Future-Proofing Your Investment

Avoid the limitations of B2C-centric platforms with bolted-on B2B features. A purpose-built B2B solution provides the scalability and flexibility to support your long-term growth.

By choosing a vendor that embraces customization and open integration, you gain the best of both worlds: a robust, reliable platform tailored to your unique B2B needs.

Compare your eCommerce software options using the table below

Requirements	Build	Buy	Customize
You’re a small business.	-	✓	-
You have a limited budget.	-	✓	✓
You don’t want to deal with integrations.	-	✓	-
Implementation speed and quick time-to-market is a priority.	-	✓	✓
You have complex corporate hierarchies.	✓	-	✓
You have complex workflows for customers, prices, and supply chains.	✓	-	✓
You need to manage quotes, contracts, and order approvals.	✓	-	✓
You need multiple checkout, payment, and shipping options.	✓	-	✓
You operate across different markets, regions, and verticals.	✓	-	✓
You are in a highly regulated industry with restrictions on ordering and shipping.	✓	-	-
You want full control of your development and licensing.	✓	-	✓



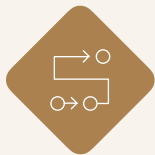
Beyond Build vs. Buy: Introducing OroCommerce

When you want the flexibility of a custom solution but building from scratch feels daunting, there's a smarter alternative: OroCommerce. It's the ideal platform for ambitious B2B businesses that need a robust solution today and the scalability to grow tomorrow.

What Makes OroCommerce Different?

OroCommerce is a B2B-first eCommerce platform designed specifically for the complex needs of mid-market and large enterprises. We empower manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and brands with a solution that adapts to their unique workflows and selling models.

Here's why OroCommerce stands out:



Built for B2B Complexity

From corporate account management and customizable pricing to multiple shopping lists and granular order workflows, OroCommerce handles the intricacies of B2B commerce with ease.



Ultimate Flexibility and Customization

Adapt the platform to your exact requirements, not the other way around. OroCommerce's flexible architecture empowers you to scale, innovate, and stay ahead of the curve.



Future-Proof Technology

We're committed to continuous innovation. Regular updates ensure you benefit from the latest industry trends, security enhancements, and customer experience best practices.



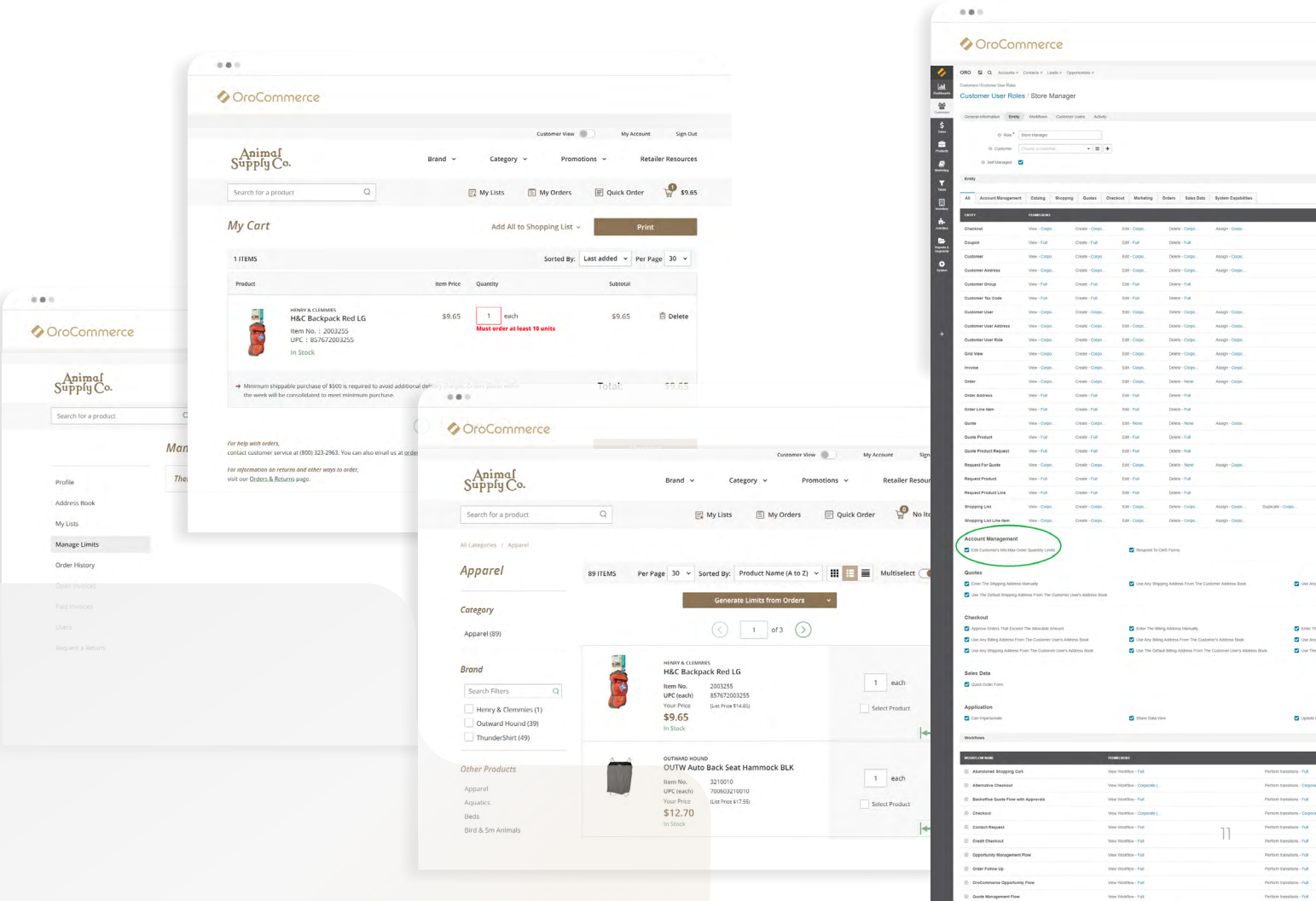
Let's explore some examples of OroCommerce in action:

Animal Supply Co.

Animal Supply

Animal Supply was founded 1987 and remains a leader in pet food supplies and distribution, boasting over 15,000 retail outlets as customers. They required a sophisticated solution that could address complex logic and restrictions according to retailers.

Animal Supply implemented OroCommerce as a headless eCommerce platform to connect to their multiple WHMs and ERPs to give business customers more freedom in designing their front-end experience. Their system now handles over 400,000+ monthly orders.





Saltworks

Saltworks is the largest salt manufacturer in the US, supplying wholesale customers like distributors, restaurants, gourmet retailers, as well as individual consumers. Saltworks invested in OroCommerce to provide personalized buying experiences for B2B customers while also managing its B2C sales.

They improved their website with:

- Customized B2B ordering and reordering.
- Flexible checkout for B2B customers to accommodate LTL, UPS, freight quoting, and self-arranged shipping methods.
- Amazon integration, enabling B2C clients to purchase products on Amazon and pay using PayPal.
- Detailed product pages with downloadable spec sheets and product certifications.



Dunlop

Dunlop Protective Footwear is a global manufacturer of protective footwear for industrial customers. They operate manufacturing facilities in the Netherlands, Portugal, and Maryland and sell their products in over 75 countries. As part of their digital initiative, Dunlop deployed OroCommerce with implementation partner Smile to launch multiple online stores in 12 countries in less than ten weeks. For their digital commerce project, Dunlop focused extensively on personalizing the customer experience with relevant products and promotions.

As a result, Dunlop increased its sales by 40% while saving staff over 300 hours of routine work each month.



OroCommerce eliminates the false dichotomy of building versus buying. It's the power of a custom solution with the speed and efficiency of a pre-built platform.

Ready to see your B2B eCommerce vision come to life?

Connect with OroCommerce and discover how the right platform can transform your business.

[Schedule a Demo >](#)

