



# The B2B Digital Commerce Playbook

Strategies for manufacturers that work



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## Overview

In an era where 83% of B2B buyers prefer ordering or paying through digital commerce manufacturers are reaching a tipping point.<sup>1</sup> It's time to redefine how you go to market, interact with customers and partners, and deliver value.

Future-focused manufacturers are leveraging digital commerce solutions to empower sales, automate processes, enrich buyer research, and strengthen brand loyalty.

But there's no one-size-fits-all approach to digital commerce. Each organization has its own goals, challenges, and resources. This guide explores four key ecommerce strategies for manufacturers to help you identify which one works best for your business and start creating a roadmap for transformation.

Join us as we explore the vision behind each strategy, the key results you should aim for and align with your strategy, and the initiatives that will help you get started.

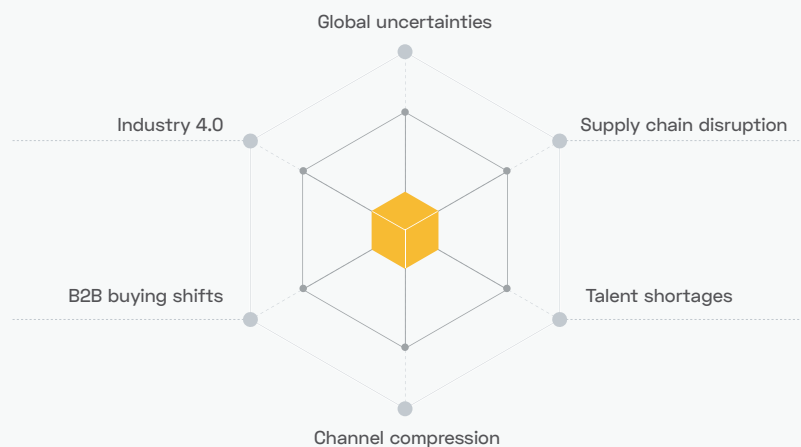
Change and innovation require effort, but also offer great rewards. By reading this guide, you'll gain a clear understanding of how to initiate change for your organization and reap the benefits of the modern way of doing business.



# Understanding the Current B2B Commerce Landscape in Manufacturing

To develop the ecommerce strategy for your business, you need to have a clear understanding of the current situation, both within your company and in the market. We've identified the key trends shaping the manufacturing landscape today. By knowing the challenges and opportunities that your company faces, you'll be able to choose the best direction for your strategy.

## The B2B commerce landscape in manufacturing



### Inflationary pressures and worker shortages

The global economy is experiencing large-scale worker shortages and inflationary pressures forcing businesses to do more with less. With budgets tight, organizations are rethinking their operations, resource allocations, and strategic investment plans. In many cases, that means investing in technology to improve productivity and competitiveness in the short term and future-proof their business for the long haul.

### Supply chain crisis and shipping disruptions

When the demand for goods rebounded, supply did not. China's Zero COVID policy and Russia's attack on Ukraine further strained supply chains that were already struggling. Demand for raw materials, microchips, and agricultural products quickly exceeded supplies. Rising energy prices are driving higher transportation costs.



## Channel consolidation

The growth of online marketplaces, social commerce, and direct-to-consumer (D2C) channels has reduced barriers to entry and provided manufacturers with opportunities to engage with customers directly, build brand loyalty, and capture higher margins. However, going D2C creates perceived channel conflict and a sense of competition with the dealer network.

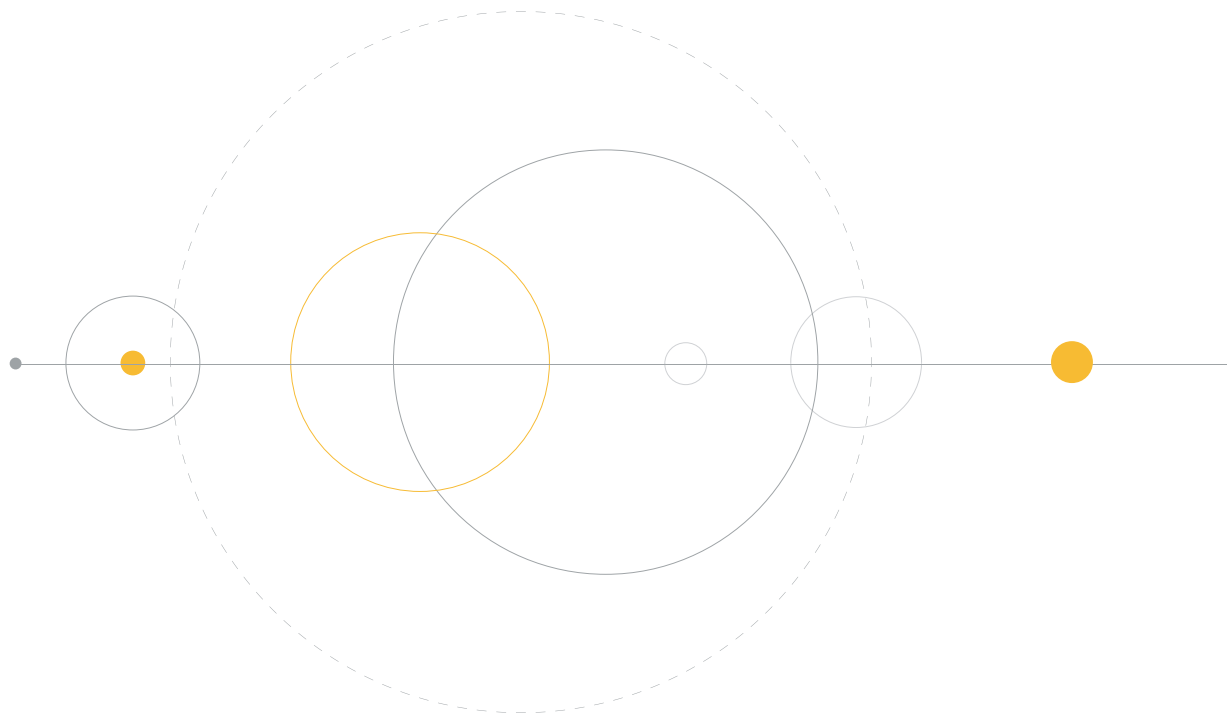
## Online selling & shifting buyer expectations

The online market for B2B sales is booming. More than two-thirds of B2B buyers opt for remote human interactions or digital self-serve for ordering. And about 70% of decision-makers are prepared to spend up to \$500,000 on a single ecommerce transaction.

These trends confirm Forrester's forecast for the growth of B2B ecommerce. They estimate that US B2B ecommerce will reach \$3 trillion by 2027. This means that B2B ecommerce will account for almost a quarter of all US B2B sales in the near future.

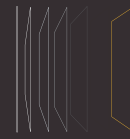
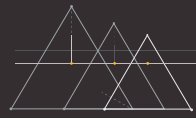
## Industry 4.0

The manufacturing sector is thriving and innovating with Industry 4.0, which leverages digital technologies such as AI, smart sensors, additive manufacturing, and data analytics. These technologies, along with digital commerce, enable companies to undergo digital transformations that enhance their efficiency, quality, and sustainability. By adopting more automated and streamlined, data-driven processes, companies can boost their performance and competitiveness in the market.



# eCommerce strategy defined

An ecommerce strategy is a plan that guides your online business to achieve its desired future state. It has four key components:



1

## VISION

A vision is your long-term goal that inspires and motivates your team. It answers the question of 'why' you do what you do. A vision statement should be clear, concise, and compelling.

2

## KEY RESULTS

Key results are the measurable outcomes that show your progress toward your vision. They help you track and evaluate your performance.

3

## INITIATIVES

Initiatives are the actions that you take to achieve your key results. They involve identifying the roles, processes, and technology that you need to implement your strategy. To do this, you need:

- Conduct gap analysis: compare current and future state
- Plan and prioritize projects: address the changes needed
- Estimate capital and operational expenses: allocate resources
- Align initiatives with a roadmap: show how they support the vision

4

## ROADMAP

A roadmap outlines the steps that you will take to execute your initiatives. It shows the timeline, dependencies, and milestones of your projects. It helps you communicate your strategy to your stakeholders and keep them updated on your progress.



# Getting Started: 4 Key eCommerce Strategies For Manufacturers

There are four key ecommerce strategies we see implemented by manufacturers.



## 1. Bring your business online

### Vision Statement:

Thrive in the new digital environment shaped by customer needs.

### Key Results:

- Achieve x% of sales through an online channel
- Acquire a set number of new customers
- Increase average order size by x%
- Increase Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) for your digital business from x% to y

### Initiative #1: Build an impactful B2B ecommerce presence

When visitors come to your ecommerce website, they're looking to solve a problem or business need. Everything from website design, layout, and content should make it easy for site visitors to learn about your products and make a purchase. You must pay attention to every detail, from design choices to navigation and individual product listings.

To make your B2B ecommerce site work well, start with small steps. Here are some ways to launch your ecommerce site incrementally:

- Narrow the product scope or market served during the initial phase. This will let you focus on delivering the ideal customer experience in the most visually appealing way. For example, you can focus on enriching product data to improve the self-serve experience.
- Import your product catalog using the 20/80 rule. Begin by offering the top 20% best-selling products on your website. Or you can choose products that are the easiest to configure or ship.



- Your platform is not an island—it must operate in an ecosystem of technologies. However, resist connecting multiple systems from the start. In the project’s early stages, select systems central to day-to-day operations and relatively easy to integrate.

### **eCommerce site best practices:**

- Boost the up-sell/cross-sell of other products and provide a steady flow of promotions.
- If it suits your market, establish a strong social media presence to sell your products/ services.
- Product data should be accurate, complete, relevant, and consistent.
- Give your customers a positive, smooth, and personalized user experience on your storefront.
- Provide a robust on-site search and extensive product catalog filtering.
- Automate ordering within your website to streamline administering contracts, price negotiations, and requests for quotes (RFQ).

### **Initiative #2: Improve or replatform your existing site**

You might be already using an ecommerce platform, but it’s outdated and unsuitable for modern B2B online selling. A legacy ecommerce platform can limit your growth and frustrate your customers and employees. But how can you tell if that’s the case? Below, we’ve listed eight obvious signs that you need to switch to a new ecommerce platform:

- Your customer service team is getting swamped with requests because customers can’t find what they need or complete a sale.
- If your website is slow to load and visitors are leaving after just one page, it’s a sign that they’re not happy with the user experience.
- IT maintenance is taking forever, and every little update feels like rolling a rock uphill like Sisyphus.
- Your current platform doesn’t allow you to connect with other systems, limiting your flexibility.
- You’re paying more and more in software fees, but you’re not getting any additional value from your solution.
- Your current technology is hindering your ability to scale.
- The security of customer data is a crucial aspect of your business, but you lack the necessary measures and standards to protect it.

Learn more about how to take on the ecommerce replatforming project with minimal frustration.

**CHECK OUT THE GUIDE**



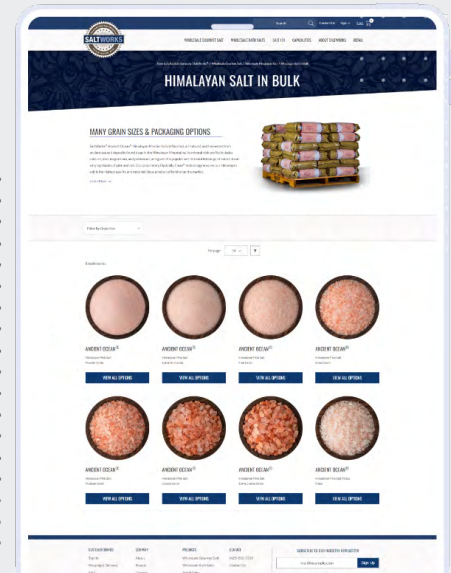


## How Saltworks formed from Magento 1

Saltworks is the US's largest salt manufacturer, serving both wholesale and individual customers. They used Magento 1, a B2C platform, for their B2B needs. As a result, it required costly and complex customizations that failed to deliver a dedicated B2B experience.

Saltworks switched to OroCommerce, a B2B ecommerce platform, to meet the growing demand for a better digital customer experience. 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.



### Initiative #3: Leverage existing assets

If you're like most B2B sellers, you may welcome customers at a physical location. Blending the online ecommerce experience with offline interactions can be as simple as supplying sales reps or warehouse workers with tablets with the correct inventory numbers on hand. Whether it's your customer-facing or back-office staff, they can use your ecommerce platform to streamline all types of transactions.

Allow customers to pick up online orders in-store. Use this opportunity to upsell and build important personal relationships. By combining ecommerce technology, integrated inventory data, and reliable logistics you can deliver the ideal experience online and offline.

### Initiative #4: Sell on marketplaces

Marketplaces will remain the fastest-growing B2B sales channel. Within the next two years, there will be as many as 750 B2B marketplaces, and within five years more than 1,000, according to Digital Commerce 360 projections.<sup>4</sup>

A B2B marketplace is an attractive path for those looking to create their own branded marketplace, engage in a multi-vendor marketplace, or streamline procurement for partners.

Whether you're building an online marketplace business from scratch or replatforming, you'll be faced with either building a custom solution or working with a marketplace vendor. An integrated, B2B-focused solution, like OroCommerce Marketplace, is the easiest and fastest way to get started with an enterprise marketplace.

It provides everything to get started: a storefront, vendor management features for the operator, brand management tools for vendors, workflow capabilities, shopping cart and order split functionality, and a powerful customer-facing self-service portal.





## 2. Expand to new markets and geographies

### Vision Statement:

Be the leading force in your current and/or adjacent market segments.

### Key Results:

- Increase the share of your customers' wallet from \$x to \$y
- Increase average order value from \$x to \$y
- Increase your customer base from x to y

### Initiative #1: Increasing reach through new geography

The global B2B ecommerce market is currently valued at a staggering \$7.9 trillion. This means that there are huge opportunities for businesses that can sell across borders.

If you want to sell in other countries, you need to start with solid market research. Find out if there's a demand for your product or service, or if you can create one. You also need to evaluate your company's readiness and ability to overcome the challenges of global selling. Here are some key questions to ask yourself before going global:

- **How will you handle the delays that come with global commerce?** Delays are inevitable when you sell across borders. You may face customs clearance, regulatory barriers, or local political situations that can change at any moment. You need to be prepared for these uncertainties and have contingency plans in place.
- **How will you adapt to the different business cultures of your foreign customers?** The buying journeys of foreign purchase managers may differ from those of your local customers. They may have different decision-making processes, involving third parties such as peers and industry analysts. You need to understand their pain points, motivations, and expectations, and tailor your sales and marketing strategies accordingly.
- **How will you manage your international operations?** Selling across borders requires more than just translating your website. You need to have a clear vision of who your target audience is, how to enable your sales teams, how to set prices, collect payments, and manage taxes.

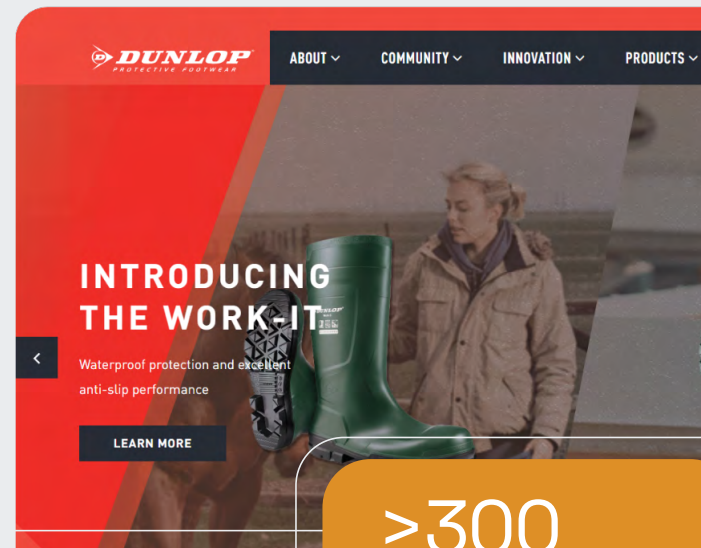




## How Dunlop strengthens its global presence with ecommerce

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.



**40%**  
increased in sales

**>300**  
hours of routine work saved each month.

## Initiative #2: Move into an adjacent market

Entering an adjacent market means finding related or niche product areas or industries where your business can grow. One way to do this is by adding more products/services that are related to your core offering and enhancing its value. These products may not be your usual ones, but they make your customers appreciate your comprehensive solution.

For example, suppose you're a B2B manufacturer of industrial cleaning equipment. You can expand into an adjacent market by:

- Targeting the hospitality sector, which has a high demand for hygiene and sanitation, and creating an offering that suits their specific needs, such as portable, eco-friendly, and easy-to-use equipment.
- Offering additional products/services that complement your cleaning equipment, such as detergents and disinfectants.





## 3. Focus on customer-centricity

### Vision Statement:

Become a customer-centric brand, offering a unique value proposition.

### Key Results:

- Increase the number of product/service categories customer revenue is generated from
- Increase customer lifetime value from \$x to \$y
- Improve customer satisfaction from x% to y%
- Increase ecommerce adoption rate from x% to y%

### Initiative #1: Turn your ecommerce site into a multi-channel powerhouse

To deliver additional value to your customers, you can transform your ecommerce website into a digital hub that offers more than just online transactions. It can provide information and services that support your customers throughout their journey, from research to purchase, implementation, and support.

In this way, you make your site the ultimate destination for your customers to find the tools and knowledge they need to achieve their goals, whether or not they are directly related to ecommerce.

To create such a hub, you need to understand your customers' unmet needs related to their research, purchase, implementation, and support journey with your company and products. Here are two steps you need to take to achieve this:

1. Define the jobs they're trying to achieve at each step, understand their experiences, desired outcomes, and where they're unsatisfied with the results.
2. Then, see where your ecommerce site can step in with new features, products, info, or services, to address the critical unmet needs.



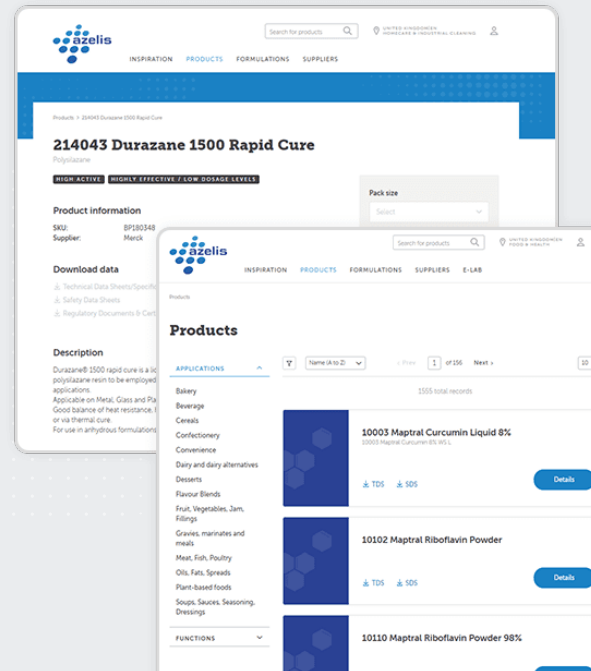


## How Azelis provides added value with a B2B customer portal

Azelis is a sustainability, digitization, and innovation leader in the chemical and food additives industry. Their digital transformation strategy included being the first to offer customers a completely online buying experience in a traditionally offline industry.

The company launched a robust B2B self-service portal to educate customers and offer solutions to help them make informed purchase decisions. The portal enables Azelis' clients to find high-quality technical data, request samples, order, reorder, and place support requests from a single platform.

By offering all informational assets online, customers can now educate themselves before speaking to a sales rep, which in turn allows the sales team to more efficiently walk their customers through the rest of the buying process and collect customer data automatically.



## Initiative #2: Improve customer experience across different touchpoints

B2B customers expect more than just a transactional relationship with the companies they buy from. They want sales reps to be their trusted advisors, who understand their goals and offer personalized solutions.

But sadly, this is not the reality for most business buyers. Nearly 73% of business buyers feel that the selling relationships lack depth and customization. And 80% are also unhappy with the customer experiences, especially when they see how much data companies collect and use.<sup>6</sup>

To avoid becoming a part of this statistic, your B2B customer experience strategy should focus on every touchpoint the customer has with your brand, from the first contact to the ongoing support. Customer service is only a part of this journey.

**“Almost 80% of B2B customers are ready to pay more for a better experience. By using customer data to tailor the customer journey, we boost customer loyalty and satisfaction. Ultimately, the winners of tomorrow are the people that are capturing the data today.”**

**STEVEN JAVOR**

Director of eCommerce North America at Schneider Electric



To improve your overall customer experience, consider these tips:

- **Make product search easy and fast.** Your products should be searchable not only on the internet but also on your website. Visitors should be able to find your products by category, SKU, description, or problem. The bigger your product database, the more important it is to make search smooth and simple. Put search boxes at the top of the page and use search auto-complete and fuzzy search features to help users type less and find more.
- **Provide complete and accurate product information.** Connect your ecommerce site with a product information management (PIM) and ERP solution to avoid displaying wrong information. Also, make sure all the relevant manufacturing information, such as product data sheets, specifications, user and installation guides, MSDSs, etc., are available online. If customers or leads ask for information by phone or email, add it to your website as well.
- **Personalize every interaction.** Show your buyers that you value them by creating a personalized experience that starts with their preferred language and currency. Then, show them a customized product catalog that matches their needs and preferences. Prices should include any discounts you have agreed on and checkout should display their preferred shipping and payment options.



## Braskem's steps to a customer-centric ecommerce adoption

How to turn customer needs into digital innovation? That's the question Braskem answered with their digital commerce transformation project. Braskem's goal was to improve how it attracts, engages, and services customers in the petrochemical industry.

Since the launch of its ecommerce site, Braskem saw a 300% growth in customer adoption and a 274% increase in sales entries. Here are the key learnings from their ecommerce success:

- Before committing to full-scale development, Braskem built a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) to prove there's a demand for online purchases.
- By collecting customer feedback every six weeks, Braskem was able to discover which features were missing and then add them before the platform went live.
- Gradual onboarding of small groups of customers enabled the team to test for bugs and workflows, therefore improving the customer experience and satisfaction before launching to a wider audience.
- Braskem built its site on OroCommerce, and thanks to its out-of-the-box B2B ecommerce features, achieved a cost-effective implementation that took less than eight months.

274%

increase in  
sales entries

300%

growth in customer  
adoption





## 4. Enhance operational efficiency

### Vision Statement:

Create operational improvements.

### Key Results:

- Improved margins
- Lower cost of entering and servicing orders
- Improved employee retention and satisfaction

### Key Initiative: Introduce operational and process efficiencies

Deloitte’s research reveals that over 3 in 4 B2B companies said their customers demand a digitized sales process. But surprisingly, 71% of B2B companies admit that their own sales processes are still mostly manual.<sup>7</sup>

This shows a huge gap between what customers expect and what companies offer. And this gap can hurt your business in the long run.

Digital commerce helps bridge this gap. Your B2B ecommerce platform can become the basis of a digitized B2B ecosystem, enabling you to automate many manual internal processes.

Manual processing  
cost upwards of

**\$70**/order

Digital order processing  
can cost less than

**\$1**/order

Over **69%**  
of B2B companies expect  
to stop printing catalogs  
within five years

Here are some common ways you can introduce efficiencies into your manufacturing operations with ecommerce:

- Dynamic ecommerce sites can use custom catalogs and pricing algorithms that consider purchasing volume, frequency, and long-term relationship value and display custom results. It frees the sales reps from compiling custom catalogs and price lists.
- In the field, sales reps can use mobile access to the website for demonstration videos, infographics, and other sales tools to help close the deal.
- eCommerce [workflow automation](#) enables you to automatically validate the order details, check the inventory availability, calculate the shipping costs and taxes, send an invoice to the customer, and update the order status. This way, you reduce the manual work involved in processing orders, avoid errors and delays, and improve customer satisfaction.



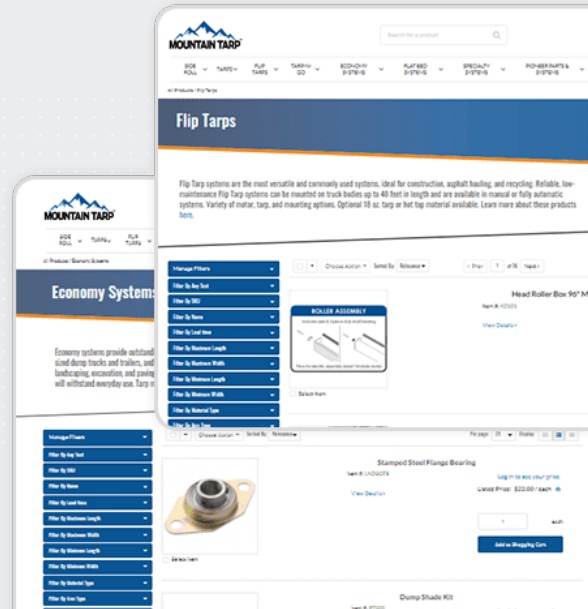


## How Wastequip embraced ecommerce for operational improvements

Wastequip is a leader in waste management solutions, with 12 sub-brands that offer everything from garbage trucks to essential services and parts. To make ordering easier and faster, Wastequip digitized its paper catalog of over 1,000 pages with an ecommerce platform. Customers can now browse, compare, and buy parts anytime and anywhere, using any device.

But better customer experience was not the only benefit. Wastequip also solved the challenge of managing product data for over 36,000 SKUs. By integrating ecommerce with a product data management system, Wastequip centralized and streamlined its data on specs, manuals, images, dimensions, and marketing copy.

As a result, Wastequip saved time and resources by eliminating bad and redundant data and increased sales team satisfaction by giving them easy access to accurate and consistent product information.



# A Roadmap to Digital Commerce Growth

Once you have identified the vision and initiatives, next you need to place those initiatives onto an ecommerce strategy roadmap. The roadmap defines the tactical path forward to incrementally achieving the future vision.

**Breaking the initiatives into smaller changes and creating small, tight releases, especially initially, will reduce risk, get positive visibility and momentum in the company sooner, and blaze the way for incremental improvements.**

The steps to creating the roadmap from the list of initiatives include:

- **Solutions:** Define people, processes, and technology changes to fill the gaps in your current capability.
- **Projects:** Translate the solutions into tactics, understanding cost, scope, duration, and resource requirements.
- **Roadmap:** Prioritize the projects, create phases/streams, understand dependencies and constraints, and plot onto a roadmap.



B2B ecommerce is here to stay and it's growing faster than ever. Whether you're just starting or have some experience, you can always benefit from digital transformation with ecommerce.

We hope this guide helped you explore possible directions to take your organization. Now is the time to gather your teams, brainstorm the strategy that works best for you, and kickstart the project that will take your company to the next level of innovation.

## About OroCommerce

OroCommerce, the leading cloud-based B2B digital commerce platform, fuels digital transformation for manufacturers, distributors, and wholesalers. Our solution facilitates launching multiple websites and portals for different brands, business models, territories, and core models. OroCommerce has unique capabilities including OroCommerce CRM and OroCommerce Marketplace--analyst-recognized tools for all business use cases.



### 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.



### A Comprehensive Solution

Get a 360-degree view of all customer touchpoints across sales, marketing, customer support, and ecommerce with a built-in CRM. Grow into a multi-vendor ecommerce with an integrated online marketplace management software.



### One Platform for All Your Commerce

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

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)



# References

<sup>1</sup> [Gartner](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Mckinsey](#)

<sup>3</sup> [B2B E-Commerce Forecast, Forrester, 2022.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Digital Commerce 360](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Grandview Research](#)

<sup>7</sup> State of the Connected Customer, 6th ed., Salesforce, 2023.