

The Strategic Advantage of B2B eCommerce for Manufacturers and Distributors

Building Smarter Sales Channels

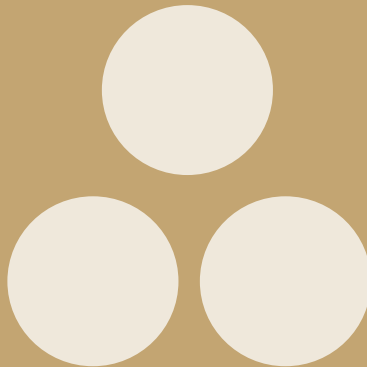


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eCommerce often brings to mind images of online shopping carts and one-click purchases. But the digital shift isn't limited to consumers; it's fundamentally changing how businesses interact and trade with each other. And if you're in the B2B space, this shift is too important to ignore.

If you're running a B2B company, you might be thinking: "My B2B business is doing well. My customers are happy. Why invest in eCommerce?" These are fair questions. Many businesses have thrived using traditional methods like phone orders, face-to-face meetings, and even fax machines.

But here's the thing: the digital world offers opportunities that traditional channels can't match. Even if you're already selling through platforms like Amazon or eBay, you're not fully tapping into the potential of a dedicated eCommerce solution tailored to your unique needs.

However, B2B eCommerce isn't about replacing what works. It's about enhancing your existing strengths and opening up new avenues for growth. Imagine providing your customers with the convenience of 24/7 ordering, streamlined processes that reduce errors, and the ability to reach new clients you might never have connected with otherwise. It's about giving your loyal customers more options to do business with you, on their terms.

This guide isn't about pushing you into something new just for the sake of it. It's about exploring the real value of B2B eCommerce, cutting through the hype, and showing you how it can strengthen your existing business and unlock new potential for growth.

We'll dive into what B2B eCommerce actually is, the trends shaping its future, and how you can make it work for you. Let's get started.



Unlocking the Full Potential of B2B eCommerce for Manufacturers and Distributors

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As manufacturers and distributors, you're on the front lines of B2B. You know the landscape is shifting. While traditional methods still have their place, eCommerce isn't just a nice-to-have anymore — it's table stakes. It's not just about taking orders online; it's about transforming how you operate, how you connect with customers, and how you grow your business.

This transformation centers around providing a digital platform that facilitates sales transactions between your business and other businesses.

B2B eCommerce platforms empower your organization to manage orders, interact with clients, and streamline operations while simultaneously offering buyers a user-friendly interface for purchasing, submitting inquiries, and requesting quotes.

While many associate eCommerce with B2C, the B2B eCommerce market is actually far larger. This growth is driven by business buyers who expect the same modern online experience they get as consumers — simple, efficient, and transparent.

Here's how B2B eCommerce changes the game for manufacturers and distributors:



Multi-Channel Expansion and Market Penetration:

Establishing a robust online presence allows you to effortlessly tap into new markets. By launching tailored websites optimized for different regions—with localized languages, currencies, and regulatory compliance—you make your products more accessible to a global clientele.



Personalized Customer Experiences:

Today's business buyers expect personalized interactions. By offering customized self-service portals with specific catalogs, negotiated pricing, and preferred shipping options, you enhance customer satisfaction and foster long-term loyalty. Access-based restrictions can streamline purchasing processes for various stakeholders within client organizations, expediting decision cycles.



Operational Efficiency Through Automation:

Automating routine processes such as order entry, pricing adjustments, and inventory management reduces the potential for human error and frees your sales team to focus on strategic relationships and new business development. This efficiency not only accelerates the sales cycle but also improves accuracy and reduces operational costs.



Enhanced Sales Workflows and Consistency:

An advanced eCommerce platform can automate complex sales workflows, including contract management and compliance checks. This ensures a consistent customer experience, minimizes the risk of oversights, and maintains the integrity of each transaction.



Agility and Scalability:

A flexible eCommerce infrastructure supports various business models—whether it's B2B2C, direct-to-consumer (D2C), or marketplace integrations—allowing you to reallocate resources swiftly to capitalize on emerging opportunities without disrupting your core operations.



Integrated Data Ecosystems:

Integration between your eCommerce platform and internal systems like ERP, WMS, CRM, and PIM creates a unified data environment. This connectivity enhances visibility across the organization, enabling data-driven decision-making and fostering cross-departmental collaboration.



Future-Proofing Your Business:

Investing in scalable and adaptable eCommerce solutions positions your company for sustained growth. It mitigates the risks associated with outdated technology and reduces the need for costly overhauls down the line, ensuring that your business remains competitive and resilient.

24%

Forrester estimates that by 2027, US B2B eCommerce will reach \$3 trillion and account for 24% of total US B2B sales.

x6

According to Statista B2B eCommerce market is valued 6 times the value of the B2C market.

\$1.8

The B2B eCommerce market in Europe will reach \$1.8 trillion USD by 2025.

44%

44% of millennials prefer no sales rep interaction in a B2B purchase setting.

49%

The eCommerce deployment has increased wholesale/supplier revenue by an average of 49%.

What Trends Are Shaping B2B eCommerce?

04

Booming online sales force brands to focus on streamlining internal processes and improving customer experience, convenience, and ease of use.

As technology gets smarter and more sophisticated, it will play an increasingly bigger role in business-to-business commerce. Here are some of the eCommerce trends to expect in the next 5 to 10 years.

AI-Driven Personalization

AI is rapidly reshaping B2B eCommerce, moving beyond basic personalization to create truly intelligent, customer-centric experiences.

Imagine leveraging AI to deliver hyper-relevant product recommendations based on individual buyer behavior, automating complex tasks like order entry and quote generation, and even empowering buyers with AI-powered assistants that can answer questions and process orders in real-time.

These **advanced AI capabilities** are no longer futuristic concepts; they are becoming essential tools for B2B businesses looking to enhance efficiency, personalize the buyer journey, and gain a competitive edge.

Data analytics

The future of online shopping hinges on data analytics, leveraging data such as demographics, location, and situational data to meet evolving customer demands and optimize marketing decisions.

This reliance on data is driving the adoption of cloud services like cloud computing and network optimization, along with predictive analytics.

This is not only transforming the industry and requiring new skills and processes from its leaders but also allowing businesses to learn from other businesses and reach new customers more effectively.

Mobile growth

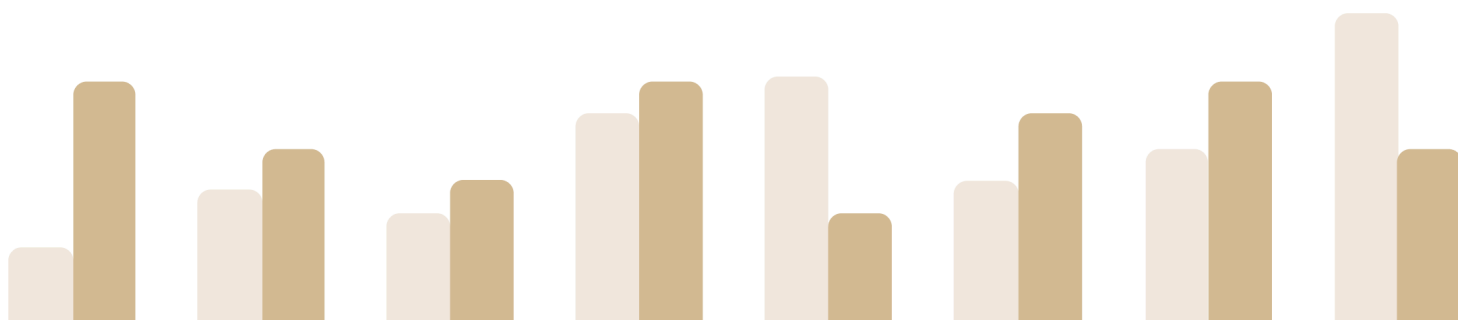
Forget simply having a mobile-friendly website – in 2025, B2B needs its own app. Think of it this way: your app isn't just a digital storefront, it's a direct line to your customers.

It's a tool for real-time inventory updates, instant customer feedback, and even managing supply chain disruptions. Plus, features like push notifications and in-app promotions offer a level of targeted engagement that traditional marketing can't match.

Omnichannel

Customers expect consistency. They might discover your products on their phone, browse on their laptop, and then contact sales with a question. Ensure a smooth experience across your website, mobile app, and sales interactions.

This omnichannel approach eliminates customer frustration and shows you understand their needs.



While both B2B and B2C eCommerce strive to create positive online experiences, B2B transactions often require a more specialized approach. B2C sellers typically focus on individual consumers with relatively straightforward purchasing journeys.

B2B, however, involves a more complex ecosystem, often with multiple decision-makers within an organization, diverse purchasing workflows, and specific pricing and fulfillment needs. Consider a medical supplier selling to both small clinics and large hospital systems — each will have distinct requirements and procurement processes. This section explores the key differences in B2B eCommerce, highlighting why a tailored strategy is essential.

Key differences in B2B eCommerce:

More formal relationships

Business deals between organizations are more than just one-time transactions: they are long-term partnerships. While consumers typically look for products to fulfill their immediate need, businesses help other businesses succeed. And, since businesses are interconnected and interdependent on one another, they help each other generate more revenue.

Longer buying cycles

Business-to-business transactions are more complex and time-consuming, which is in contrast with B2C eCommerce, where retail consumers purchase spontaneously. B2B sellers deal with smaller lead pools, and more contracts, quotes, purchase orders, and other business systems. Businesses look to find trustworthy suppliers to maintain continuity and to simplify purchases for their own customers.

Personalized products and prices

While personalization is a nice-to-have in B2C, it's a must-have for B2Bs for smooth operations. Business buyers depend on personalized product catalogs and price lists, custom quote and contract negotiation processes, and the right payment and shipping options. They also expect specific product discounts for their company.

Multiple decision-makers

While B2C customers are individual buyers that make independent, one-time purchase decisions, that's not the case with B2B. Business clients deal with larger order values, which leads to the participation of numerous stakeholders, approvals processes, and specific workflows. As a result, B2B sellers require specific workflows as required by all stakeholders.

Corporate accounts and roles

Unlike B2C, B2B customers purchasing from a single seller may be completely different. For example, many large businesses consist of different departments, all operating within their own siloed processes. B2B sellers require the same flexibility: their own businesses are split up into different brands and websites – all of which demand a powerful, B2B-specific online store.

Complex payment options

As consumers, we usually pay with a credit card, and wait for the item to arrive. For businesses, payment can be made on a line of credit, transfers, or via invoices. That's not all. Invoicing and payment terms can be different based on customer, order size, order value, and number of orders over time.

What Businesses Does B2B eCommerce Help?

B2B eCommerce isn't niche — it's the engine driving a massive and rapidly expanding global market. From agriculture to automotive, construction to consumer packaged goods, and across manufacturing, healthcare, food & beverage, and energy, B2B eCommerce is transforming how businesses operate. If your company provides goods, raw materials, or services to resellers, eCommerce offers powerful opportunities to optimize your business.

B2B eCommerce is best suited for:

Manufacturers

Manufacturers of raw materials must deal with various suppliers and stakeholders at the same time, which is time consuming and requires a lots of manual data input.

With B2B eCommerce, they can connect their ERP to monitor inventory and forecasting, create client portals, or sell goods or services directly to a consumer (D2C), reducing the cost and maximizing the value of every transaction.

Distributors

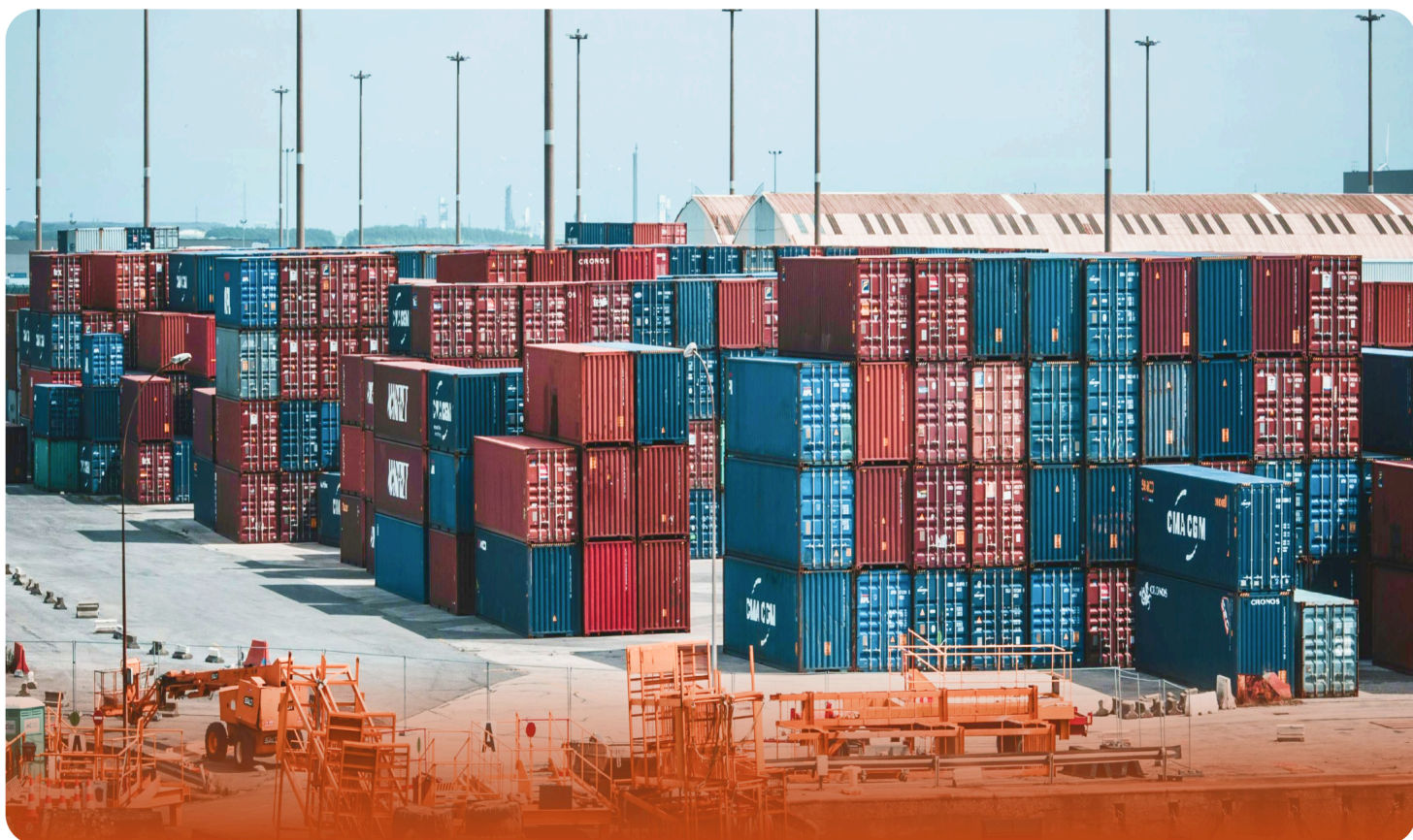
Distributors sell to a variety of B2B customers, all with different requirements. B2B eCommerce software is highly flexible and allows buyers to negotiate quotes and contracts, compare prices, complete purchases online, and pay according to their needs.

This flexibility must be complemented by a robust system that supports integrations and the ability to scale with the business.

Wholesalers

Today's wholesale businesses work with distributors, resellers, retailers, and operate across multiple marketplaces. As a result, they need B2B eCommerce to accommodate up-channel and down-channel participants.

B2B eCommerce APIs allow wholesalers to synchronize data from multiple ERP systems across multiple selling channels while offering modern online shopping experience to customers.



What Businesses Does B2B eCommerce Help?

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B2M Brands

Brands relying on many selling models in parallel, such as B2C, B2B, B2B2B and B2B2C (business to many) require separate, branded websites.

Additional requirements include support for multiple sites, organizations, languages, and currencies under one roof. B2B eCommerce allows B2Ms to sell to different target customers, through advanced customer groups and pricing workflows.

D2C Brands

In order to consolidate their branding, build a community, and better serve market demand, many brands choose a D2C or directly-to-customers business model.

Since D2C websites act as a marketing, resource, and shopping destination, key features of B2B eCommerce site for D2C must include an online sales portal, rich product content, streamlined checkouts, and a personalized customer experience, product, discount, and pricing options.

Multi-channel Brands

Today's brands don't just rely on their eCommerce website to generate sales. Customers increasingly are relying on Google and search engine optimization which pulls up various destination sites, marketplaces, and comparison sites.

Brands need B2B eCommerce to unify their presence, leverage customer data, offer links and pull up reviews, and target marketing initiatives to their multichannels – all the while driving traffic towards their websites.



What Types of B2B eCommerce Are There?

08

The world of eCommerce is more diverse than just buying and selling online. Just like businesses themselves come in all shapes and sizes, eCommerce sites use a variety of models to optimize how they handle B2B transactions. Finding the right business model depends on several factors: the products or services you offer online, your target market, your growth goals, and even your geographic reach.

B2B2B eCommerce

The B2B2B (business to business to business) eCommerce model extends the traditional supply chain, involving multiple tiers of businesses like manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers, and retailers.

B2B2C eCommerce

The B2B2C (business to business to customer) eCommerce model merges together B2B and B2C. By connecting directly with the end consumer, businesses gain valuable insights into customer behavior and preferences, enabling them to refine their sales process and marketing strategies.

D2C eCommerce

The **D2C (direct to customer) eCommerce** model allows businesses to bypass traditional intermediaries and sell directly to consumers, potentially increasing market share and building stronger customer relationships.

B2M eCommerce

The B2M (business to many) eCommerce model allows businesses to sell via various channels in parallel. By diversifying across multiple online marketplaces and digital channels, businesses can reach a wider audience and expand their market reach.

B2E eCommerce

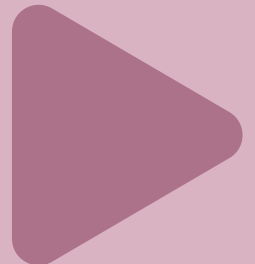
The B2E (business to employee) eCommerce model streamlines internal business processes, by providing a centralized platform for employees to purchase company-approved goods and services online.

B2G eCommerce

The B2G (business to government) eCommerce business model also caters specifically to the unique needs of selling to government agencies. Example: PPE manufacturer selling to law enforcement or a tools distributor selling to the building inspections department.

For a deeper dive into B2B eCommerce for manufacturers, download our playbook

Get the ebook



Moving your business online doesn't require a giant leap. Instead, focus on building a solid foundation with these strategic steps. Avoid the temptation to replicate your entire offline operation from the get-go. Instead, prioritize for a streamlined launch.

Curate Your Catalog

Begin with a selection of your top-performing products — those that are high-demand or easy to ship and configure. This allows for a focused, high-quality product presentation.

Start with Essential Integrations

Prioritize integrating core systems like ERP and PIM to ensure accurate product information and inventory management from day one.

Establish Your B2B eCommerce MVP

Create a functional prototype of your eCommerce site or platform with limited features and products (called Minimum Viable Product or MVP). This allows for early testing and feedback from a select group of customers.

Customer Onboarding Strategy

Determine how you'll encourage early adoption and gather feedback from your initial customer base to guide future improvements.

Target a Niche Market

Identify a customer segment with strong online buying potential. This could be a group familiar with digital purchasing or one facing unique challenges that your online platform can solve.

Implement Changes to Affected Processes

If this is your first time implementing a B2B eCommerce platform, you'll likely have to enact structural changes to sales processes. Consider the cash flow implications, roles of sales reps, support, payments, inventory tracking — all this could be impacted.

Measure and Iterate

Track key metrics like traffic, conversions, and customer feedback during your MVP phase. Use this data to refine your platform and demonstrate progress to stakeholders.

How do you know you need B2B eCommerce software?

If any of these scenarios resonate, it might be time to rethink your digital strategy:

Your current online channels aren't meeting the needs of your B2B buyers. Customers expect a smooth and efficient purchasing experience, regardless of whether it's in-person sales or online ordering.

Managing complex business to business relationships is becoming increasingly difficult. Juggling multiple brands, intricate pricing structures, and vast amounts of customer data across different systems can lead to inefficiencies and missed opportunities.

You're struggling to cultivate customer loyalty in the digital age. Without a centralized B2B eCommerce platform, it's difficult to personalize interactions, gain a 360-degree view of your customers, and deliver the kind of experience that fosters lasting relationships.



While no single solution will perfectly address 100% of your needs, the goal is to find a platform—specifically designed for B2B, not a B2C platform with bolted-on B2B features—that covers 70–80% of your core functionality out of the box. This allows for easier customization and integration of the remaining 20–30%, streamlining implementation and minimizing long-term maintenance. This section outlines the essential functionalities to look for in a robust B2B eCommerce platform, empowering you to make a strategic decision that aligns with your current needs and future growth plans.



Tailored Pricing and Catalogs:

Go beyond basic segmentation. Offer granular control, creating custom catalogs with specific product selections, tiered pricing based on customer groups, customer-specific discounts, and contract pricing.



Flexible Volume Discounts:

Incentivize larger purchases with flexible volume discount structures, including tiered discounts, quantity breaks, and order value-based discounts.



B2B-Specific Payment and Checkout:

Cater to B2B complexities with support for purchase orders, credit lines, payment terms, and configurable payment methods per customer. Offer a seamless, mobile-optimized checkout experience.



Streamlined Quote Management:

Automate quote generation, online negotiation, approvals, and seamless conversion of quotes into orders.



Robust Account Management:

Empower customers with self-service portals to manage accounts, access order history, track credit, manage user roles and permissions, and maintain multiple shipping addresses.



Multi-Warehouse Management:

Optimize inventory and fulfillment across multiple warehouses, ensuring accurate stock data and efficient order routing.



Configurable Order Approval Workflows:

Implement custom approval workflows based on order value, product type, or other criteria, ensuring compliance and control.



Simplified Matrix Ordering:

Streamline complex orders with multiple variations (size, color, material) using intuitive matrix ordering capabilities.



Accelerated Ordering with Quick Order Forms and CSV Upload:

Cater to high-volume and recurring orders, saving time and reducing manual data entry.



Tax Flexibility:

Handle complex B2B tax rules, including support for various tax exemptions and integrations with third-party tax services.



Shipping and Fulfillment Automation:

Offer multiple shipping carrier options and integrate with fulfillment systems for automated shipping processes.



Automated Upselling and Cross-selling:

Integrate with marketing automation tools to drive additional revenue through targeted product recommendations.



Intelligent Search:

Enhance product discovery with accurate, AI-driven search that learns from customer behavior.



Comprehensive Reporting:

Gain valuable insights with B2B-specific reports integrating data from various systems (eCommerce, ERP, CRM).



Assisted Selling Capabilities:

Enable sales reps to efficiently manage orders and support customers.

Choosing the Right B2B eCommerce Platform: Build, buy, or hybrid?
This guide provides the clarity you need to make the best decision.

Download now

What Are Some Examples of B2B eCommerce Projects?

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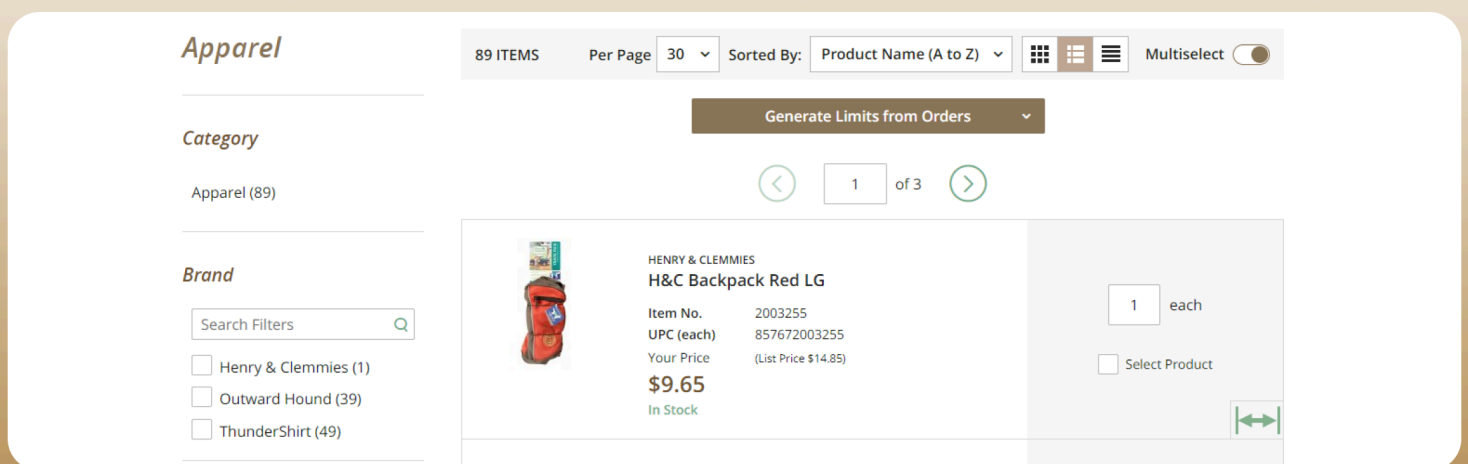
Successful eCommerce projects start with eCommerce platforms built for the job. Explore businesses, brands, wholesalers, distributors, and manufacturers across different industries that use OroCommerce, an enterprise eCommerce platform designed for B2B commerce complexity of any magnitude.

Animal Supply Company



Animal Supply was founded 1987 and remains a leader in pet food supplies and distribution, boasting over 15,000 retail outlets as customers. To streamline operations, they sought an eCommerce platform that could integrate with their legacy systems and help them migrate their retailer and third-party logistics structure. But that's not all – they also needed to address complex logic and restrictions according to retailers.

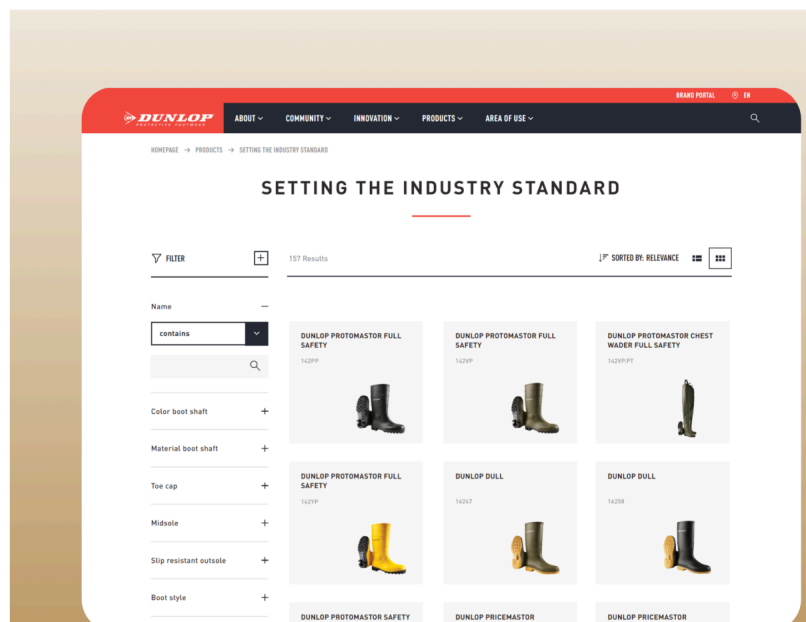
Animal Supply implemented OroCommerce as a headless eCommerce platform to connect to their multiple WHMs and ERPs to give business customers more freedom in designing their front-end experience. Their system now handles over 400,000+ monthly orders.



Dunlop Protective Footwear

Dunlop is a global manufacturer of protective footwear for industrial customers. 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 eCommerce project, Dunlop focused extensively on personalizing the customer experience and buying process 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.



What Are Some Examples of B2B eCommerce Projects?

Saltworks



Saltworks is the nation’s largest salt manufacturer, supplying distributors, restaurants, gourmet retailers, and end consumers. Their biggest challenge was maintaining dedicated relationships with partners. Saltworks had no patience for complex customizations and workarounds.

Saltworks leveraged OroCommerce to create a unified online experience for both their B2B and B2C company websites. Their new platform features streamlined B2B ordering with flexible checkout options for various shipping methods, including LTL, UPS, freight quoting, and self-arranged shipping. They also integrated with Amazon, allowing B2C customers to purchase with PayPal. Detailed product pages with downloadable specifications and certifications round out the customer-centric experience.

SONOMA



PACIFIC SEA SALT

Fine Grain - 50 lb Bag

Grain Size: ⓘ

Fine

Small

Size: ⓘ

2200 lb Super Bag

2000 lb Pallet

50 lb

5 lb (Case of 6)

5 lb

\$63.62 Item code: SNG-FNE-50

1

ADD TO CART

Usually leaves our facility within 24-48 hours

[Kosher Certification](#) [Spec Sheet](#)

DESCRIPTION

Harvested in the United States, Sonoma Pacific Sea Salt is harvested from evaporation ponds in Northern California drawn from the waters of the Pacific Ocean. It's a conventional, economical choice that offers the clean, crisp flavor of all-natural sea salt. Sonoma Sea Salt is all natural and Optically Clean®, maintaining the high quality standards of SaltWorks brands. Sonoma contains no anti-caking or free flowing agents, and can be used as an ingredient in products with "All Natural" labeling. Available in small and fine grain with a variety of convenient packaging options for the food service industry, this is a popular salt for topping pretzels, crackers and processing tomato products. Wholesale Sonoma is available in bulk and large volume.

Fine Grain: Sonoma Pacific Sea Salt in Fine grain is ideal for salt shakers & retail repack projects. An essential in any commercial kitchen, it is perfect for everyday cooking, baking and brining. This salt is also easily incorporated as an ingredient in food products for manufactures & processors.



All Natural
Product



Kosher
Certified



Certified
Authentic



Optically
Clean®



Organic
Compliant



Made in
USA

DETAILS

Case Cube:	1.08
Bags per Pallet:	40
Color:	White
Container Type:	Bag
Container:	Bag
Container Materials:	Laminated Plastic
Country Of Origin:	USA
Geographical Region:	North America
Grain Size:	Fine
Ingredients:	Sea Salt
Manufacturer:	SaltWorks

Why Choose OroCommerce?

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We built OroCommerce specifically for the complexities of B2B selling. Our open-source platform empowers organizations like Dunlop, PartsBase, and Braskem to streamline complex orders, manage massive catalogs, and create modern experiences for manufacturers, distributors, and wholesalers.



Built for B2B Resilience

Beware of the “one size fits all” B2C solutions for your B2B business. OroCommerce is designed from the ground up for the complex, long-cycle sales of manufacturers, distributors, and wholesalers. Go beyond basic transactions and digitize the supply chain, relationships, and processes that drive your business.



Complexity Made Simple

Our platform equips you with powerful CRM, CPQ, workflow automation, and multi-channel capabilities – all in one unified solution. Focus on selling, not managing disparate systems.



Flexible and Future-Proof

Own your data and your destiny. Our open-source platform, modular architecture, and robust APIs give you the freedom to customize, integrate, and scale without limitations.



Transparent Pricing, Exceptional Value

Get everything you need – CRM, CPQ, marketplace, CMS, and eCommerce – all for one license. We believe in transparent pricing and delivering a complete solution with no hidden fees or surprises.

Interested in learning more about OroCommerce's features, pricing, or implementation process? Contact us today for a personalized consultation.

[Talk to an Expert](#)

