How to systematically level up your ecommerce offering by adopting an omnichannel strategy, optimizing your product pages and checkout flow, and revamping your checkout as a customer-centric experience.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

03 INTRODUCTION
Crawl, Walk, Run Fly: How to Improve Your B2B Ecommerce Site

04 THE CRAWL
Migrating from Legacy Ecommerce Systems and Adopting an Omnichannel Strategy

07 LEARNING TO WALK
Optimizing Your Product Pages and Pre-Checkout Flow

10 BEGINNING TO RUN
Revamping Your Checkout as a Customer-Centric Experience

14 NOW YOU CAN FLY
Looking Over the Horizon to the Future of B2B Commerce
Business-to-business (B2B) ecommerce sales in the U.S. is on pace to grow more than twice the size of online business-to-consumer (B2C) sales by the end of 2020. Retailers who desire to keep their market share in this rapidly expanding universe need to adapt to new expectations around the online buying experience, and improve their sites accordingly. Simply put, an outdated ecommerce technology stack or clunky user experience will no longer be acceptable to modern buyers: in a recent study, 72% of North American B2B retail executives surveyed listed “ease of purchase” as the #1 factor driving their business buyers’ behavior.

Because the path to success requires a series of improvements in technology and website design, we’ll use the analogy of “Crawl, Walk, Run, Fly” to explain how B2B ecommerce retailers can systematically level up their offering. We’ll discuss new B2B ecommerce SaaS options, best practices for maintaining agility through an omnichannel strategy, and design principles for product and checkout pages. Last, we’ll take a look at future developments in B2B ecommerce, and see how retailers can stay ahead of the curve.

---

Today, buyers of business supplies shop in different ways. Some prefer a self-service online experience, some prefer to browse on their own but speak to a sales representative when it comes time to purchase. Modern buyers may research their desired products on a mobile device, initiate a checkout on desktop, and pick up the item in store at a brick-and-mortar location. As a result of this paradigm shift, an omnichannel strategy has become an essential part of any B2B ecommerce retailer’s business plan. To maintain agility in this new omnichannel world, retailers should migrate from legacy ecommerce systems to new SaaS offerings, which allow changes to be pushed through a cloud-delivery mechanism.

“...
While the move to these new platforms allows site updates to be made in a matter of days or weeks over what previously took months, it does carry some drawbacks. Legacy systems often come coupled with a business’s long-held ERP and CRM systems. A potential solution for this dilemma is a headless commerce solution. The headless approach allows the frontend of the ecommerce site to be separated from the backend technical infrastructure. By separating frontend and backend, retailers can make continuous updates without disrupting day-to-day business needs. While headless commerce has surged as a staple in the B2C world, its flexibility and utility makes a compelling case for its use in B2B as well.
Some retailers have benefitted from the headless approach as they’ve had to juggle their existing content management solutions without compromising on the expansion of their ecommerce presence. Their older database, with products, customers, ERP, and CRM, can successfully integrate with a flexible ecommerce platform in order to add rich utilities like elastic search, social commerce, shipping, payment, unique B2B portals, loyalty programs, customer groups, and even CMS.

**SUMMARY OF LEARNINGS**

- The development of an omnichannel strategy is critical for B2B ecommerce success
- Gain agility by moving from a legacy ecommerce solution to a SaaS or cloud delivery-based option
- A headless commerce solution can be a solution for businesses that want to update their frontend site experience while maintaining their older ERP and CRM systems
The pre-checkout flow consists of an ecommerce site’s **product pages and “add to cart” button**, and it’s an often-overlooked area for design improvements. Design changes related to the product pages and "add to cart" option should be aimed at maximizing the add-to-cart rate and facilitating a good overall buyer experience.

![Reasons for Checkout Abandonment](https://example.com/checkout-usability)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Additional Costs</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced account creation</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex checkout</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden costs</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No trust in website</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website crashes</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow product delivery</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return policy unclear</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough payment options</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit card declined</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to optimizing the product pages and add-to-cart button around a goal of increasing the add-to-cart rate, there are a few additional considerations for a retailer looking to uplevel their ecommerce site. For the product pages specifically, B2B ecommerce retailers should consider the following technical integrations:

1. A business intelligence API that lets the retailer integrate their website and their sales team’s CRM

2. An AI-powered chatbot that fires pre-configured answers to customer support questions when the buyer visits outside of business hours

The first is useful since it lets retailers know when someone from their customer list has landed on their product pages through IP address matching, which lets them deliver personalized messaging, page layouts, and promotions to their highest-value accounts. The second one allows any online retailer the luxury of offering 24/7 help and support services without the need for additional on-call personnel.
LEARNING TO WALK

SUMMARY OF LEARNINGS

- The pre-checkout flow (product pages and add-to-cart button) is an often-overlooked area for conversion-focused design improvements.

- A business intelligence API tool allows retailers to serve personalized content to high-value accounts without a required account login.

- AI-powered chatbots allow retailers to service customer support or sales questions 24/7 without adding personnel.
The last suggested step for B2B ecommerce retailers looking to uplevel their site is optimizing the checkout experience. Millennial buyers have grown up shopping on easy-to-use consumer sites like Amazon and Jet.com, and now expect the same seamless, mobile-optimized buying experience when shopping for business goods. In a world where 25% of major retailers require account login, and 50% require users to enter the same information more than once, retailers that borrow from checkout design best practices like reduced form fields and one-click options for returning customers will see a distinct lift in checkout conversion rates and revenue. As a easy shortcut, retailers can uplevel their checkout with Bolt, a checkout experience platform that’s compatible with ecommerce platforms like Magento, Bigcommerce, Woocommerce, and Salesforce Commerce Cloud, as well as custom-built sites.
Another checkout design improvement for retailers to consider is the addition of a product page checkout. These "Buy Now" checkouts launch directly from the product page, bypassing the "Add to Cart" step, which allows for faster and easier purchases. These checkout are especially effective when used in combination with a "Quick View" product page option. Options like these reduce a further step in an unnecessarily bloated buying experience. Bolt, mentioned earlier, contains a product page checkout option, as well as a redirect-eliminating on-page checkout option.
Save account creation until after checkout to minimize cart abandonment.

Last, it’s worth considering the role of the login wall in B2B online retail. As a best practice, retailers should consider waiting to request email and other required account creation fields until after checkout process, when the purchase is complete. While the desire to collect contact information for marketing purposes is understandable, research shows that the negative impact to revenue from requiring account creation outweighs the positive impact of the additional remarketing. Currently, many retailers selling business supplies require an account login and the collection of the buyer’s wholesale license number before every purchase, but this isn’t necessary, as it’s possible to configure checkouts to display account-creation fields and wholesale license number collection fields only when an item count reaches the wholesale minimum threshold.
SUMMARY OF LEARNINGS

- Checkout optimization is critical for customer-centric businesses who want to maximize revenue.

- A checkout option like Bolt represents the gold-standard in conversion-focused checkout design.

- It’s worth reconsidering the requirement of a login for all B2B ecommerce purchases.
LOOKING OVER THE HORIZON TO THE FUTURE OF B2B ECOMMERCE

As the size of the market expands, B2B ecommerce retailers can keep a competitive edge by staying aware of rising trends in ecommerce technology. Two developments are especially compelling: the rise of voice search and CPQ software, and the move of B2B businesses to online marketplaces.

Voice search, as a functionality, offers unquestionable benefits in product discovery and customer experience for online retailers. However, its adoption in B2B ecommerce has been stifled until recently due to the complexity of product specifications when placing a business order. However, a new class of “Configure, Price, Quote (CPQ)” software has emerged to allow B2B retailers to benefit from voice search capability. For these retailers, CPQ technology bridges the gap between the convenience of voice search for B2C purchases and the complexity of the B2B sales process, making true voice ordering for B2B a future possibility. Retailers who take advantage of CPQ technologies should also look into the full Quote-to-Cash (QTC) lifecycle of products of which CPQ is a part, including Contract Lifecycle Management (CLM), and Revenue Management (RM) tools, for realizing the full value of their customer interest.
One last future trend for retailers to anticipate is the move of B2B ecommerce from owned sites to online marketplaces such as Amazon. Starting with Amazon Business, B2B retailers have followed the migration of B2C businesses to these platforms, which gives them greater exposure to new prospective buyers. According to Gartner¹, 75% of B2B procurement will take place on online marketplaces in the next 5 years. While it is inevitable that many retailers eventually make the move, it is also important that they understand how to use these platforms in a balanced way that maintains brand identity and consumer loyalty to their own site.

In summary, B2B ecommerce retailers looking to uplevel their site should first develop an omnichannel strategy that adapts to the many ways that business buyers shop today. As a first step in this strategy, they should make the move away from their legacy ecommerce system, including exploring a headless commerce solution. Next, they should overhaul the design of their product pages and checkout experience to maximize their full revenue potential. Finally, they should keep abreast of future-looking trends, including the move of B2B to marketplaces, and explore the full suite of Quote-to-Cash lifecycle management tools available to them. Doing these things will allow an online retailer to gain a competitive edge in what promises to be a rapidly-modernizing ecommerce space in the years to come.

¹ https://www.gartner.com/en/documents/3368717/hype-cycle-for-digital-commerce-
ABOUT US:

Bolt is the checkout experience platform. We make sure that nothing gets in the way when shoppers want to buy. Bolt provides a mobile-friendly, dynamically-optimized checkout experience with fraud prevention and higher order approval rates built in. Learn more about us at Bolt.com.

ABOUT US:

BORN is an award-winning global digital & content production agency. Our evolution over 25 years combines experience in both integrated creative production, and full service digital ecommerce solutions. Learn more about us at borngroup.com.