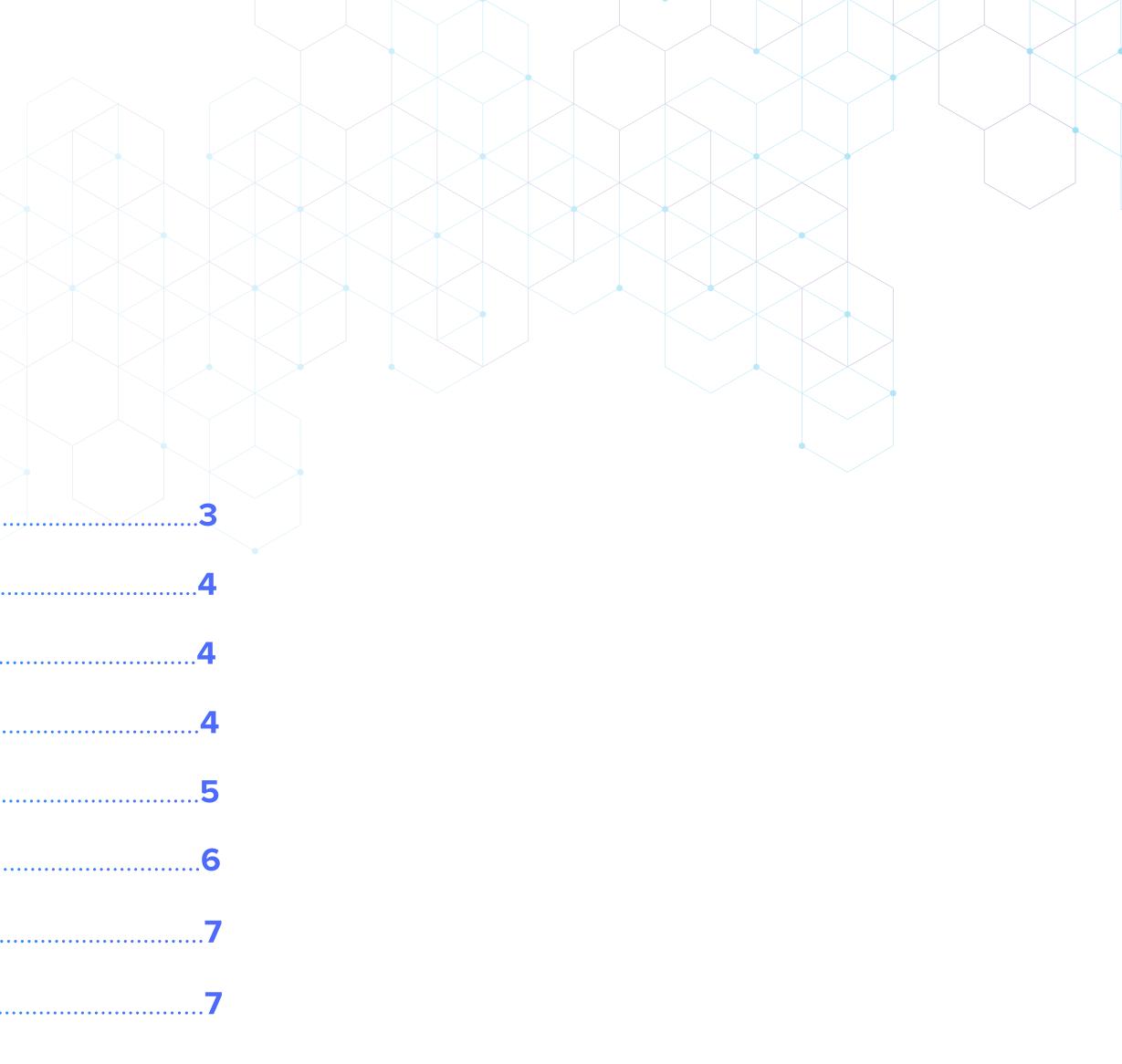# How B2B Manufacturers Can Build a **Successful Ecommerce Program**

Become Your Distributor's Best Partner With Digital Transformation

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Digital Transformation
Must Be Your Top Priority

For business-to-business (B2B) manufacturers, digital transformation must now be the top priority. Between distributors launching ecommerce sites and marketplaces at a rapid pace — and moving beyond traditional, local branch-based distribution — and unpredictable market shifts, embracing tools and technologies that increase your speed and agility are vital for lasting success.

Building an ecommerce program can also help you increase your reach, boost operational efficiency, and grow sales and market share. Here's a breakdown of the five steps required to launch a successful B2B ecommerce program.
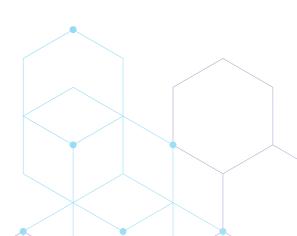
How to Build a Successful B2B Ecommerce Program

Step 1: Create Your Ecommerce Strategy

Your strategy will serve as the guidebook for your ecommerce program, ensuring alignment across your organization and giving your team goals to work toward. It's helpful to consider your unique challenges and opportunities, including business, technical, and operational, and use these observations as your foundation for your strategy.

Every successful strategy must include four essential elements:

- **Assessment:** Complete an internal, customer, and competitive assessment to gain insights about the current state of your business, customer behaviors, and how you rank against your competition.

- **Vision:** Build out your vision for digital transformation at your organization, aligned with your company mission, and use this to develop goals for your program.

- **Measurement:** Draft objective key results (OKRs) and key performance indicators (KPIs) to create measurable success metrics that will help you keep your strategy on track.

- **Tactical Plan:** Build your ecommerce website plan, outlining essential focus areas, such as operational needs, product content needs, website design needs (i.e., structure and taxonomy), launch timeline, and cost.

Step 2: Assemble a Winning Team

Managing a successful ecommerce program requires a team with extensive industry experience, strategic foresight, and strong cross-functional capabilities. For B2B brands that are launching an ecommerce program, there are several essential members that can help ecommerce teams find success.

Important Ecommerce Team Members

- Director of Ecommerce
- Ecommerce Program Manager
- Product Content Manager
- Digital Marketing Manager
- Content Creator
- Ecommerce Business Analyst
- Ecommerce Support
- Ecommerce Developer
- Software Engineer
- IT Manager

If your organization lacks the resources to bring on every important ecommerce team member, consider your strategy. Look at your goals to establish which team members would be critical for your path forward, and consider how each role would fit into your short- and long-term plans.

Step 3: Choose an Ecommerce Platform

From scattered product content and inefficient go-to-market processes to a lack of visibility into channel requirements, these struggles can limit the overall success of an ecommerce program. Equipping your team with an agile ecommerce platform allows them to quickly change and adapt to market changes and avoid the most common issues. An ecommerce platform will give your team the power to deliver engaging product experiences across every channel, distributor, and end customer.

Choosing an ecommerce platform requires a thorough review process that will help you pick the platform that best suits your needs. Not all platforms are created equally, and digging deeper into the technical and operational details can help you decide on the option that works best for your current and future needs.

Questions to Ask When Reviewing Ecommerce Platforms:

- What are the components of the ecommerce platform?
- Which capabilities are out of the box (OOTB) — and which are custom?
- Does the platform meet the requirements of your IT and business teams?
- Can the platform implement your technical requirements?
- How does the integration process work?
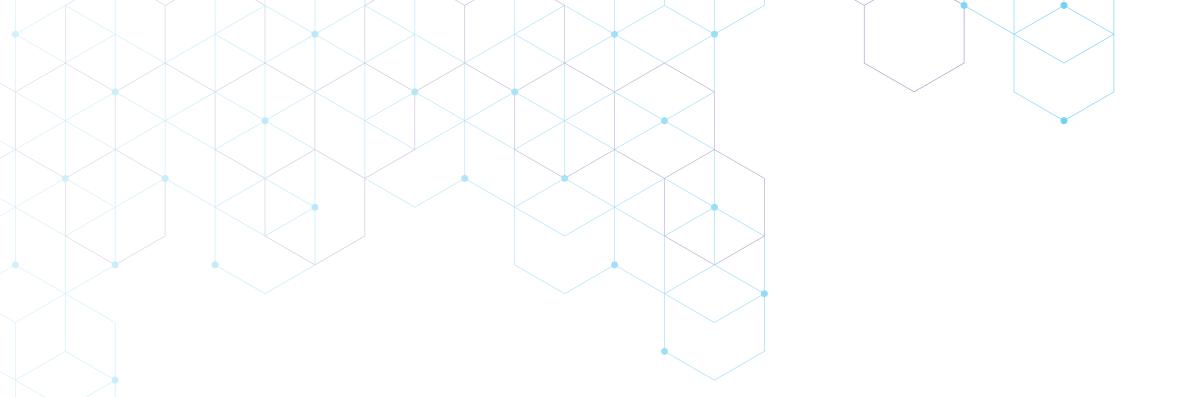- What is the cost?

Step 4: Launch Your Ecommerce Website

"In B2B, the individual researching and buying has a job to do. They don't want to be there necessarily — they have to be there. It's their job," said Justin King, general manager of B2B at Salsify and former president of B2X Partners.

When launching your website, ensure it aligns with your ecommerce strategy goals, and build out your tactical road map with your team to provide a clear path forward. B2B customers want you to make their jobs easier, and several unique factors must also be considered when building and launching your ecommerce website:

- **Assessment: Ensure customer-centric design:** Your customers are visiting your site for their work, not for leisure. A simple and seamless online experience that meets their specific (and, often, complex) needs can help you grow conversion and build customer loyalty. Utility is the most essential design need for a B2B ecommerce website.

- **Create quality product content:** As more B2B sales move online, you must ensure every product detail page (PDP) includes engaging, comprehensive content. Follow the three Cs for product content: clear, complete, and consistent. Enhanced content like images, videos, comparison charts, and more can also help you boost conversion, as these assets help customers better understand your products.

- **Capitalize on SEO opportunities:** Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of using relevant keyword phrases within the copy of your PDPs to increase your ranking in search results. SEO can help you improve product discovery, gain critical market share, and increase conversion and sales.

- **Leverage insights:** Digital shelf analytics can help you gain first-hand insights about your customers and a holistic view of PDP performance, which can then be used to drive optimization.

Step 5: Test, Learn, and Optimize

Launching your website is not the last step in your ecommerce journey, as sustainable success requires continual optimization. Embracing a test-and-learn approach will help you move with agility to meet shifting demands from your customers and the market. It will also help you better understand your customers, empowering you to deliver the best possible ecommerce experience.

Disruption and the 'New Normal'

Disruption forces the acceleration of trends by an unforeseen magnitude, forcing organizations to overhaul existing strategies and reprioritize initiatives that may have been months — or even years — away.

Accelerating B2B digital transformation is essential for keeping up with the continually shifting ecosystem. But turning challenges into opportunities is what sets top-performing B2B manufacturers apart.

About Salsify

Salsify provides purpose-built digital shelf management for B2B manufacturers, empowering them with an integrated platform that delivers engaging product experiences across every channel, distributor, and end customer.

See How it Works

SALSIFY