

Ultimate Guide to Ecommerce Replatforming for Manufacturers

Guide



Introduction

Clunky platform? Poor search? Low adoption rates? Incomplete or outdated information? These are all signs that your current ecommerce platform just isn't cutting it. This guide is built for those that have had enough. Those that are ready to take the next step in digital transformation and find a better, more sophisticated platform. Replatforming isn't always easy or inexpensive. Read on to lessen the burden and establish your strategy.

In this guide:

- Determining the right time to replatform
- Creating your replatforming strategy
- Choosing the right platform
- Understanding which provider is right for you
- How companies like you have approached replatforming

It's time to say goodbye to the headache a rigid, dated ecommerce box causes you. This guide is a remedy to help you do just that.

So you've found yourself here... Hello.

If you've downloaded this guide it's likely that you're feeling frustrated, unhappy, overwhelmed, or maybe even ready to throw in the towel on ecommerce all together. We feel your pain. But, if you're here it also means you still believe in what ecommerce can do for your business. How it can make you and your team more efficient. How it can help you build your brand. Get you found. Attract new customers. Better serve current ones. And drive more revenue.

You know just as well as we do that ecommerce can futureproof your business. But sometimes there are potholes along the way.

The analysts at Forrester project B2B ecommerce sales in the U.S. will reach \$1.8 trillion by 2023. Manufacturers and distributors are deploying some kind of ecommerce experience simply to keep up with the pressure. But it's a dangerous road for many. B2B experts report the rate of failure for initial projects is between 75-85%.

Honestly, failure is a harsh term. If you're a manufacturer or distributor who has ventured into ecommerce, you are already a few steps ahead. And that's something to celebrate. Many of the B2B companies we hear from don't know where to start, or have ignored the need for ecommerce altogether.

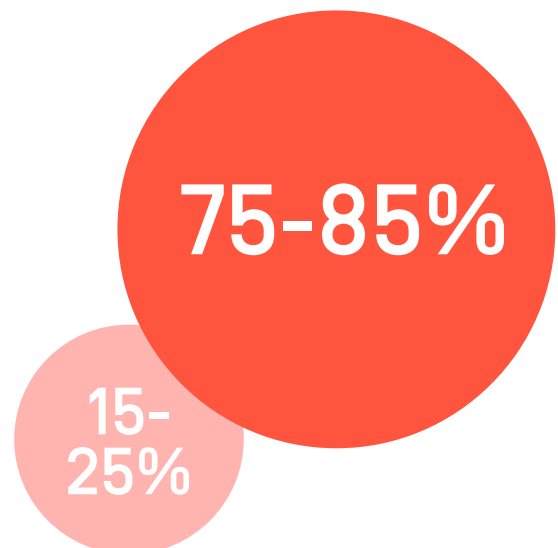
Are you really in the right place?

We'll be the first to tell you that replatforming is not an easy task or a small expense – you need to make sure it's really the right time to replatform.

For that reason, we've prepared a simple questionnaire to help you make this decision. If you answer YES to any of these questions it's a good sign that it might be time to consider replatforming.

A lot to gain

B2B experts report the rate of failure for initial projects is between 75-85%.



Questionnaire: Is it time to replatform?

Technology problems?

- ❓ Is our basic ERP storefront limiting you from building a modern, intuitive experience?
- ❓ Is your platform so heavily customized that it has become obsolete or impossible to support?
- ❓ Is your ecommerce site not mobile-friendly?
- ❓ Did you build your commerce on top of a CRM or CRM-based solution?
- ❓ Did you pick a platform that was built for B2C, and doesn't meet your needs?
- ❓ Is your ecommerce data siloed from your ERP data or other backend systems?
- ❓ Is your data not refreshed because of integration issues?

Support problems?

- ❓ Do you have to get in touch with a developer every time you want to make minor changes to your website?
- ❓ Are customer service representatives unavailable when you need them?
- ❓ Is your provider ignoring your support tickets?

Roadmap problems?

- ❓ Does your ecommerce provider have a hard time understanding your business?
- ❓ Is your solution being sunsetted?
- ❓ Is the product roadmap unclear?

Experience problems?

- ❓ Are you failing to meet the expectations of your customers for powerful and seamless buying experiences? [Remember they've grown used to Amazon-like experiences]
- ❓ Is the navigation less than intuitive? What about the site structure or the pages?
- ❓ Do your customers have a hard time finding what they need to find with search?
- ❓ Are you failing to provide customer-specific information, pricing, catalog and order approvals?
- ❓ Do you have poor site performance, errors, down time or other experience problems?

Adoption/Onboarding problems?

- ❓ Are you finding it challenging to onboard customers?
- ❓ Are you experiencing high shopping cart abandonment rates?
- ❓ Did your sales team fail to embrace the new system?
- ❓ Is it cumbersome for team members [or customers] to use the platform?
- ❓ Are you failing to meet your digital revenue goals?
- ❓ Is the platform failing to meet the needs of everyone involved in your buying cycle?



It's not a necessary evil...

If you've answered yes to several of these questions – it's apparent that you need to replatform and chances are, you're dreading the project. When it comes to replatforming, we understand it's not a small job.

It can be helpful to first reframe the situation. In our eyes, if your company is facing the task of replatforming you should be proud. You're one of the few B2B companies that embraced ecommerce in its infancy, and that's something we applaud! You forged ahead to do something others were not doing. Along the way you learned a ton. Now you're in a position to take all those learnings and do things right from the beginning.

We think it's time to stop defining replatforming as a necessary evil. Replatforming should be the logical next step as your ecommerce capabilities and experience mature.

If you look at replatforming through the lens of continuous improvement rather than a dreaded fix, it can open up a new world of possibilities that let you do some pretty cool things like:

- ✓ Take advantage of new technologies
- ✓ Learn from best practices in the industry
- ✓ Expand the positive impact of digital commerce throughout the whole company!

Congratulations on this mindshift! Now you can start planning your next [big] move.



Create your replatforming strategy

So, you're determined to avoid the struggles you endured with your previous platform implementation. To make sure your next platform is the right platform, you've got to consider aspects of ecommerce that have less to do with the bells and whistles - and more to do with the best strategy this technology has to offer. Yup, once again it's back to asking yourself some questions. Below are some things to consider as you design the right strategy to meet your unique needs and wants for your next ecommerce system.

01 Do your objectives reflect the true goals for B2B ecommerce?

Most first-issue ecommerce solutions fail because they haven't addressed many of the real goals behind creating this digital experience. To succeed, the buying experience must be more efficient for customers while supporting the internal needs of your team as well. Unless the new B2B ecommerce solution is viewed as a better,

faster option for everyone involved, it won't be readily adopted. In addition, you need company buy-in. It takes an organizational investment and a modern marketing mindset to affect change. You need to get your sales team onboard.

02 What do you want the customer experience to look like?

For most, it's important to deeply personalize the experience to meet your B2B customers' needs, which

can range from simple search mechanisms all the way to advanced catalog and list management.

03 What internal processes do you need to account for?

The needs of your internal customers must be considered as well, and that means sales in particular.

Your team must feel as though the system supports their work, instead of adding just another layer of overhead.

04 What are your integration needs?

Strong B2B ecommerce solutions have to integrate with strong backend systems, like your ERP and PIM, in a way that provides the most current information, often in a 24/7 manner. Although it might be more fun to review the

"bells and whistles" of a pretty user experience, integration is often the biggest hurdle to a successful replatforming project.

05 What technology advancements have been made since your first launch?

To build a strong strategy, you must understand what's available today. Costs have dropped while functionality has skyrocketed, so consider the need for fully functional

mobile apps as well as cloud-based ecommerce solutions.



Some helpful hints along the way...

At Episerver we've seen some typical roadblocks along the way to replatforming. Here are a few things to think about as you move toward making a choice on the next ecommerce platform:

- 📌 It's important that your sales team is excited and engaged with any new ecommerce system. In fact, their participation is a huge success factor for customer adoption of the digital experience. If you involve sales in the replatforming process early on you can easily understand their wants and needs, while learning about the needs of the customer from those closest to the field. Your sales team should feel ecommerce will help them, and not hurt them. They shouldn't be viewing the new system as their competition, they already have enough of that as it is.
- 📌 Make sure that you're asking for a fully functional mobile app. You shouldn't be satisfied (and you definitely won't be competitive) with merely a responsive website. Mobile data can be spotty. Responsive-only sites can take awhile to load. B2B commerce happens just as much in the field as it does behind a desk. Meeting the full needs of everyone – from customers to service technicians – will boost efficiency and productivity no matter where they are. That means a responsive website that functions well on any device AND a mobile app that can be installed on a phone or tablet.
- 📌 It's easy to get distracted by solutions with flashy CMS functionality, but without much "meat" underneath. A lot of unnecessary bells and whistles usually means the solution has a B2C origin – and often they can't handle the complexities of B2B. Ask vendors to take you under the hood of their solutions and drill into use cases that are unique to the way your customers need to buy from you.
- 📌 Don't ignore the requirements for integration with backend systems like ERP and CRM. While this can be challenging to gauge, asking for references of other customers who have integrated with your specific backend software suite can make the difference between a fairly smooth process and a lot of IT headaches.



- 📌 Consider the complexity of requirements and don't just check the boxes. Search capability needs to be robust and sophisticated. Catalog management has to adapt to the unique needs of each customer and their buyers. Pricing complexity should be available and easily customizable. Make sure you're going deep into what you need, and find a solution that provides that depth as much "out of the box" as possible, to avoid expensive customization. Consider the benefits of investing in a platform that has most of what you need natively built in. Customized platforms will become a pain down the road. Build a list of requirements and measure your options against the list. Make any provider show you how functionality is deployed and how they will handle your unique requirements.
- 📌 Ask questions about the scalability of the solution, and make sure you have a clear understanding of your provider's roadmap for the platform. You want to do everything you can to avoid replatforming in the future, so the next ecommerce solution you choose must grow along with your business.
- 📌 Having said that, gain a clear understanding of every cost involved in this decision, or what we like to call "total cost of ownership." Know your needs for hosting, customization, implementation, support and even training, and the costs associated with each of those items. Some solution providers bury these items. You don't want to be surprised with a bill that destroys your ROI calculation.



Choosing your ecommerce platform

So you've built your strategy, and considered some of the pesky problems that often pop up. What's next? It's time to pick the right platform to meet (and beat) your ecommerce objectives. Now that you've assessed your current digital landscape and you understand where you want to be in the future, you've got to start looking for the right technology. How do you make sure the decisions you make are strong? You consult ecommerce experts. You conduct research. You map solutions and their features to your unique business needs.



First, consider the self-service experience.

How complex are your customers' needs, and how complex is your product offering? Is the desire to be 100% self-service achievable, or just a pipe dream? How much will your field sales team need to integrate with the online system? In most robust B2B solutions, the ecommerce system needs to integrate seamlessly and in real time with important backend systems to deliver the strongest customer experience.

Next, how complex are your customer pricing models?

Do you need to provide unique pricing for every customer? Does each contract dictate specific promotions and add-on pricing? Do you need to provide pricing in front of the sign-on, and robust guest checkout? In order to move away from cumbersome, manual pricing models, the ecommerce system must provide customizable, fast pricing mechanisms to meet a plethora of pricing scenarios.

Catalog management is critical to consider.

It drives some of the highest efficiency gains. Do you want to create custom online catalogs not only for every organization, but for specific buyers, researchers and others as well? Have you considered the impact of a sophisticated search mechanism within each category? Can you incorporate advanced techniques such as list management and permissions into your catalog system?

Mobile responsiveness is important.

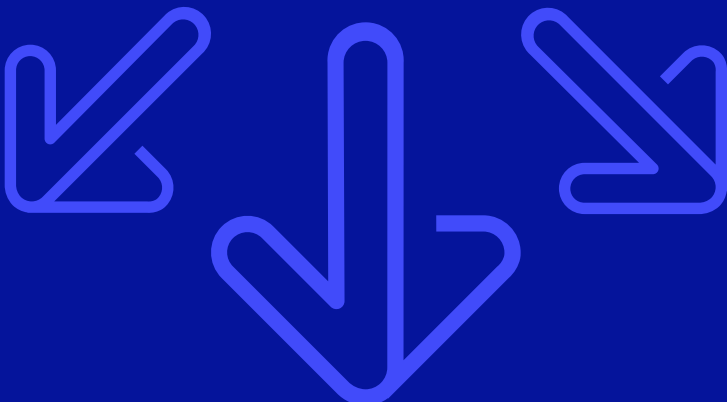
But it's not enough when it comes to B2B ecommerce. With so many roles operating "in the field," have you thought about the need for a fully functional mobile app when replatforming? From the maintenance technician looking for a part, to a salesperson assisting a client, do you know the mobile needs of your staff and clients when it comes to ecommerce? Understanding and meeting the needs of everyone involved in your B2B ecommerce cycle – when they're NOT at their desk – is a crucial aspect to consider.

Replatforming often takes into account the need for increased efficiency.

So have you thought about which roles need to be supported and in what way? Will your new solution need to be customized to meet the needs of not only the customer, but each team member, from the sales support engineer to the research? Productivity is one of the biggest "hidden" goals of B2B commerce, and your new system must support – not hinder – the work of everyone involved before, during and after the transaction occurs.

Of course, you need to look at your integration requirements.

To meet requirements for complex pricing, custom catalogs, and personalized experiences, the new system must be able to seamlessly integrate with backend systems like CRM and ERP. Have you considered how complex integration may be for your environment? On the flip side, have you thought about the unique needs of B2B commerce so that you're not tempted by simple portal solutions? Understanding the frequency, complexity and scale of integration helps drive a choice toward an ecommerce solution that is truly built for B2B.





Replatforming done right

So you've decided it's time to replatform and you've identified some well-suited ecommerce providers. What's next? Learn from companies that have been there, done that. Here are a few manufacturers and distributors who have replatformed and reaped the benefits of a more powerful B2B ecommerce platform.

Royal Canin

Replatforming from a homegrown solution to meet a diverse set of customer needs and wants.



The Company

Royal Canin is just as obsessed with your pet as you are. A global pet food manufacturer established in 1968, Royal Canin creates highly nutritional food that is formulated to make your pets healthy. Although most people wouldn't immediately consider this B2B, Royal Canin required a model that would enhance the way they were selling to veterinarians, breeders and pet specialty retailers to support their referral and online direct sale business.

Limitations of Royal Canin's previous platform

When Royal Canin initially launched their ecommerce journey they deployed a homegrown, custom solution. But the solution was missing key B2B functionality like multiple promotions, persona-based experiences and cross sell capabilities. The business was flat and the customer experience needed an overhaul. The company outgrew their homegrown solution and recognized the need for a scalable platform. In order to better meet the diverse set of customer needs, Royal Canin set out to replatform.

Approach to replatforming

Among Royal Canin's top priorities in a new platform included the ability to handle complex pricing, integration with their existing CMS system, multiple promotion capabilities and a host of other robust B2B commerce requirements.

To meet the diverse needs of a wide variety of customer personas, Royal Canin turned to Episerver. With Epi B2B Commerce Cloud by Insite, customer feedback and sales feedback gives Royal Canin the ability to constantly make changes to improve the site and experience. Plus, personalization enables

the company to highlight specific products and promotions.

As a result of choosing to replatform, Royal Canin achieved 49% growth on the platform itself with a 54% increase in orders the first year after implementing Episerver. Ease of placing an order improved, order count increased and the majority of orders shifted from phone to online. In fact, today 70% of Royal Canin's orders are placed online. Overall, the replatforming initiative reduced the costs for Royal Canin to serve their customers.

Macpek



Replatforming to beat a skill shortage.

The Company

Quebec-based manufacturer and distributor of heavy duty vehicle parts and car wheels, Macpek is committed to growing alongside their increasingly digital customers. Macpek needed to find a way to augment its teams' processes and make employees more efficient as a talent shortage made it challenging to hire more qualified staff. The company also wanted to see its customer base grow and provide current customers with the digital tools that would enable them to self-serve.

Limitations of Macpek's previous platform

Macpek was initially using Infor Storefront for ecommerce, a very limiting experience. As younger generations were entering the market, Macpek knew that delivering anything less than seamless experiences wouldn't satisfy the ecommerce need. Infor Storefront had no SEO built in to the website, so customers were not able to find Macpek online unless they created a direct shortcut to the website on their behalf.

Approach to replatforming

Macpek turned to Episerver to replatform off their current ecommerce software to create a website where the online expectations of a younger generation could be met, while still delivering seamless integration with backend systems. The customer experience had to be robust, and integrate seamlessly with the Infor SX.e ERP.

With B2B Commerce Cloud by Insite, Macpek customers can now conduct research, make the smartest product purchases possible, and complete transactions with efficiency and accuracy. Macpek's

new website features a real-time inventory checker, quantity pricing with more than 63,000 price matrix combinations, centralized product information for 100,000+ products and smarter search so buyers can find the exact product they need, quickly.

One month after replatforming, Macpek increased its revenue by 43% and is now opening new accounts at record-breaking levels. By May 2018, Macpek's revenue had doubled since the first quarter of 2017. Today, Macpek has seen a 86% increase in online revenues since switching to Episerver.

Top reasons to leverage Episerver B2B Commerce Cloud by Insite

In December 2019, Episerver acquired Insite Software. Here are some of the reasons why manufacturers and distributors have historically chosen the B2B Commerce Cloud by Insite solution.

- 01** We understand that no size fits all in manufacturing and distribution. B2B Commerce Cloud has built-in extension and customization for even the most difficult B2B challenges.
- 02** Episerver B2B Commerce Cloud by Insite has more native B2B capability out-of-the-box than any other platform in the marketplace. That means the platform can easily handle things like complex pricing, workflows, and multi-location inventory management.
- 03** We listen to our customers. 50% of our platform's roadmap is directly influenced by our customers and the challenges they are facing.
- 04** We understand the complexities of B2B because B2B is in our DNA. We aren't just another company doing B2B ecommerce to check the box.
- 05** Episerver B2B Commerce Cloud by Insite is deployed in the cloud so upgrades can occur in a synchronous, efficient way.
- 06** Episerver provides mobile options to meet your customers where they're at, whether they're at a desk or in the field.
- 07** Our team has extensive B2B knowledge. In fact, many of them have even worked in manufacturing and distribution.

What's next?



Ready to make your next move?

The replatforming journey is not something to be taken lightly. We wouldn't have authored this guide if it was. You want to do things differently the second time around and we want nothing more than to see you succeed, even if you don't end up doing business with us. We don't claim to know your unique business, but we do have 15+ years experience in manufacturing and distribution. We would be delighted to help guide you in this process.

We created a tool that manufacturers and distributors have found to be very useful during their replatforming process. Get in touch with Episerver's B2B ecommerce experts and we will send you an ecommerce assessment that helps you determine what you should be looking for in your next ecommerce platform.

About Episerver

Episerver empowers businesses to scale through the most customer-centric approach to digital experiences. Its Customer-Centric Digital Experience Platform™ features best-in-class content management, robust commerce and intuitive data and personalization solutions. The platform has consistently earned industry, analyst and media recognition for its vision, capabilities and customer commitment. Episerver's 900+ partners and 825+ employees in offices around the globe are proud to help more than 8,000 customers enrich their customer lifetime value, increase revenue and grow their brands.

Learn more at [episerver.com](https://www.episerver.com).

