

W H I T E P A P E R

9 MUST-HAVE

E-COMMERCE FEATURES FOR B2B

by  AmeriCommerce

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INTRODUCTION

There is insurmountable evidence that **the B2B buying process is moving online**. [Forrester research¹](#) suggests that B2B Ecommerce will be worth more than **\$1.1 trillion** and account for **more than 12%** of all B2B sales in the US by the year 2020.

In simple terms, this means that the industry will grow by around **7-8% per year** for the next five years—a trend that B2B organizations simply can't afford to ignore.

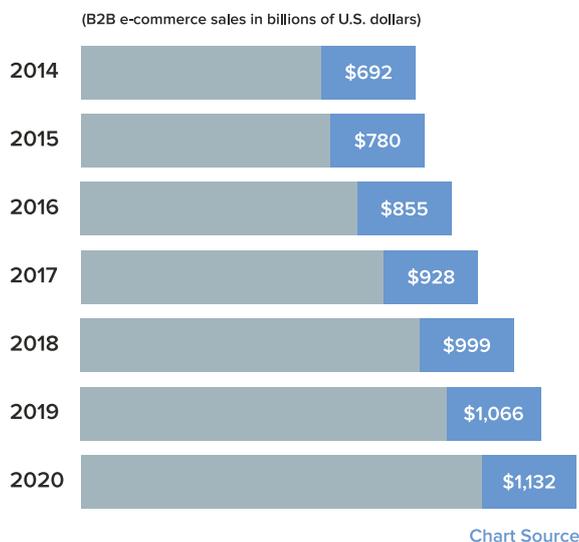
Why the rapid growth?

There are a number of reasons, but two stand out.

First, there's clearly a financial imperative. According to Forrester's research, **56%** of B2B E-Commerce executives said they had certain customers they could only profitably support online. Allowing buyers to make their purchases online can clearly save your company money.

Second is the simple fact that most buyers prefer to buy on the web. Even in B2B? Absolutely. **30%** of B2B buyers say they make half of their purchases online, but Forrester's report suggests this will almost double to 56% by 2017.

U.S. B2B e-commerce sales are heading to \$1 trillion



1 <https://www.forrester.com/report/US+B2B+eCommerce+Forecast+2015+To+2020/-/E-RES115957>

The problem for many B2B organizations is that E-Commerce platforms have traditionally been designed specifically for B2C purchases.

And while many businesses understandably rush to replicate a process that resembles the B2C experience, there are some fundamentals of B2B that make this challenging.

The B2B buyer journey is far more complex, multi-layered and requires advanced customer relationship management (CRM). Moreover, B2B has rules all of its own when it comes to ordering, paying, logistics, customer contracts and more. It comes to ordering, payments, logistics, customer contracts and more.

Naturally, basic expectations hold true across all online stores whether B2C or B2B: intuitive navigation, filtering by multiple attributes, high-quality product images, product bundling, flexible shipping options, easy searching, enticing promotions, responsive design and shopping cart functionality that never breaks.

But adapting to the idiosyncrasies of B2B E-Commerce requires a powerful, feature-heavy platform.

In this White Paper we'll talk about the key features you need to run a successful B2B E-Commerce store. By moving your customers online, you can unlock a number of huge benefits for your business, including:

- Capturing user identity, onboarding with ease and customizing the buying experience.
- Generating leads and acquiring new customers with merchandising and marketing tactics already proven in the B2C world
- Giving current customers the ability to manage and track their orders, freeing up your own internal resources.
- Delivering a flawless experience across multiple channels, including mobile.

All this means increased loyalty, delighted customers and more revenue. Let's get started.

1. FILTERED NAVIGATION

76% of customers say that the most important factor in a website's design is that it's easy for them to find what they want. (Hubspot²)

On top of that, Forrester Research suggests that around **50%** of potential sales are lost because users can't find information or products, and **40% of users won't return after a negative first visit**³.

Making it easy for users to find what they're looking for is doubly important in B2B E-Commerce. Why? Because buyers are on the clock and keen to ensure maximum productivity. The **law of least effort** absolutely applies. In other words, buyers will choose the easiest, least painful way to reach a desired outcome.

Delivering a simple, efficient experience for your users—making it easy for them to find the products they need—is mission critical for B2B merchants.

Here's the catch.

On a typical B2B storefront, products are complex and technical with many **attributes, descriptions and specifications.**

So what's the solution?

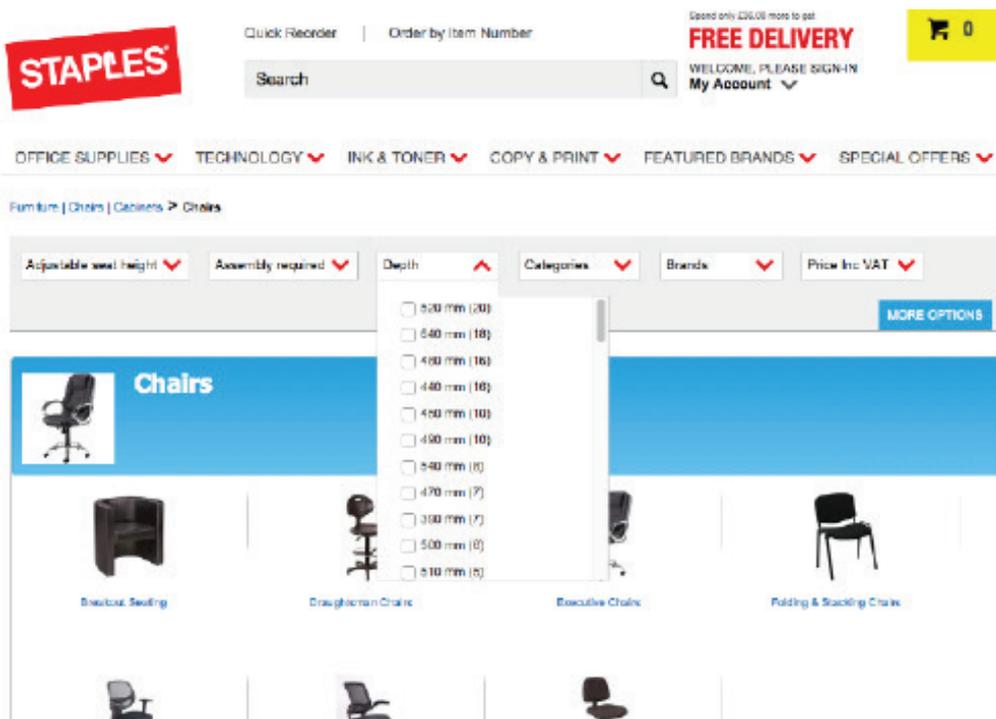
² <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/14953/What-Do-76-of-Consumers-Want-From-Your-Website-New-Data.aspx#sm.0001lk5dmt5z8en4ztg24f48uu4jh>

³ <https://www.forrester.com/report/US+B2B+eCommerce+Forecast+2015+To+2020/-/E-RES115957>

Filtered Navigation.

Filtered Navigation—also known as Faceted Navigation—means building product and category filters relevant to your customers’ needs. This sort of intuitive “sorting” lets your visitor get to the product they need with as few clicks as possible. Less pain. More sales.

Take this category page from Staples, for example. In just a few clicks, users are able to filter office chairs based on brand, price range, category, product size and assembly requirements.



A strong **Site Search** functionality is also a must-have.

76% of B2B buyers listed Enhanced Search as one of their top three features, with **48% of B2B sellers** citing enhanced search as a top technology priority. (E-Commerce & B2B⁴)

Searching for better site search in B2B e-commerce

60% of B2B online buyers say they'd like better site search on suppliers' e-commerce sites.

(Percentage of B2B buyers citing the most important features on suppliers' e-commerce sites)

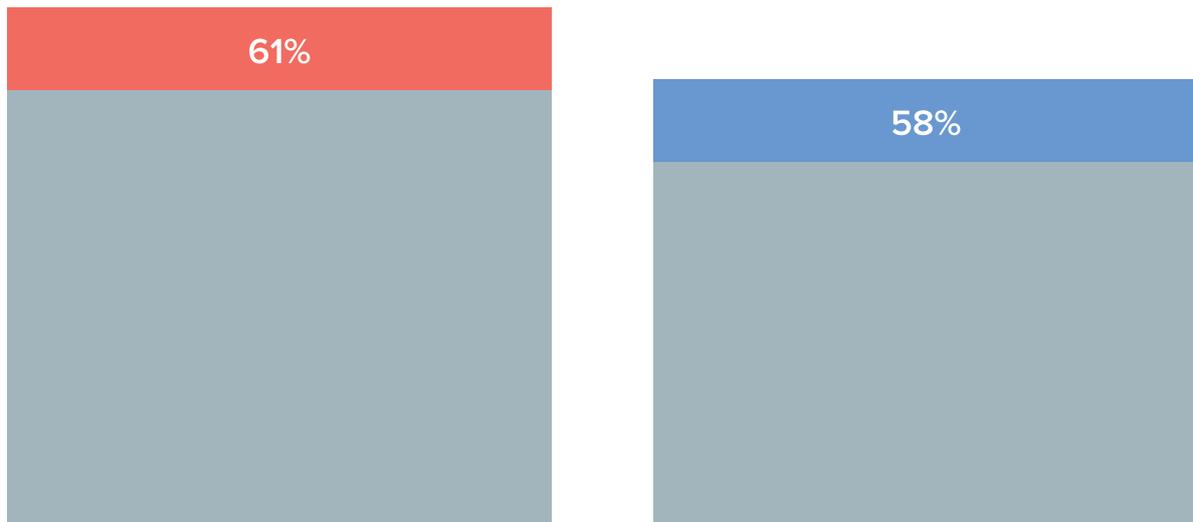


Chart Source

The key that unites both Filtered Navigation and a strong Site Search is to go beyond manufacture's attributes and tie your filters and product descriptions to the kind of considerations most important to your target customer.

4 <http://ecommerceandb2b.com/b2b-e-commerce-trends-statistics/>

William Harris, E-Commerce growth expert at [Elumynt](#) explains:

“I’ve worked with several ecommerce brands that built out filters focused on a few key search phrases their customers were using but manufacturers didn’t include. Because manufacturers have limited market data, we had to create a database of these attributes internally by tracking the top search terms onsite as well as doing keyword research through Google. With a part supplier we added an entire filter just on compatibility with specific “Models” and saw over 20% increase in conversion rate the month that went live.”

2. CUSTOM PRICING

While the vast majority of B2C shoppers are content to buy and re-buy products at fixed prices, B2B E-Commerce demands custom pricing.

This means maintaining and presenting multiple price lists to reflect things like order volume, length of relationship (first-time versus repeat customers), product customization, payment schedules, shipping terms and more. And that's where things can get incredibly overwhelming.

To simplify, let's look at the three most readily available custom-pricing approaches.

(1) Customer-Type Pricing

Every B2B organization will have several “Customer Types,” each of which require different pricing levels.

For example, customers who purchase at retail versus wholesale price points—both of which apply to B2B E-Commerce—are two separate “Types” and it's vital to make sure they see the price that applies to them.

To do this, display your retail prices publically on the front end of your website while setting up wholesale prices that are only accessible through a login.

Setting up Customer-Type pricing means linking your CRM and order history directly to each customer, something your organization most likely does already. This way, when returning customers login to your website, they see their own pricing information across all products instead of just the products they've ordered previously.

(2) Store-Level Pricing

With the multiple-storefront feature, you can go one step further than customer-type pricing, by offering products on completely different stores all sharing the same master inventory catalog. This allows you to set up store-specific product catalogs, shipping rules, currencies, and, of course, prices.

All the multiple stores in one account can be controlled from one admin dashboard.

(3) Quantity Discounts

Advanced pricing that includes quantity price discounts is their simple way to create custom, B2B pricing. Quantity pricing allows the store owner to set up “rules” that changes the pricing if a certain quantity is ordered.

testasd fasdf - f Edit Product Price Help Save

Use this page to edit an advanced pricing record. You can configure prices to be store or customer type specific, to have quantity breaks, to be active for a certain date range, or apply to specific variant inventory items and more. [Advanced Pricing](#) [Price Calculators](#) [\(SysAdmin\) Edit this Help \(1550\)](#)

Pricing Details

Store [?]
[All]

Customer Type [?]
[All]

Variant [?]
[All]

Variant Inventory Item [?]
[All]

Start Date [?]
[Date Picker]

End Date [?]
[Date Picker]

Starting Quantity [?] 1 Your Cost [?] \$ Price [?] \$

Variant Price Surcharge
[none]

Price Calculator
Retail

A good example of this feature is that you can set a product to sell for a certain price for 1-4 qty ordered, but different for 5+. In this case, you would simply make a pricing rule for starting quantity at 1, then another rule for starting quantity at 5.

3. BUILT FOR B2B SECURITY

Why B2B-level security?

The easy answer is because **13% of buyers say they're most likely to abandon their cart due to security concerns.** (Visual Website Optimizer⁵)

And that 13% is nothing compared to the horror stories we've all heard about data breaches and its impact on businesses.

Just like any E-Commerce business, B2B buyers have to be able to trust your organization to securely handle their payment details and sensitive business information. In fact, security matters all the more for B2B providers due to the scale and sensitivity of the data being transferred.

Add to this the fact that users typically visit your store from the corporate workplace—where security requirements and restrictions are stringent—and security takes another huge leap forward in prominence.

So how do we deal with these concerns?

First, you need to make sure your website is **PCI compliant**. Compliance with this set of requirements will ensure that all customer credit card information is stored in a secure environment and can't be breached.

You should also look to implement a high level of **data encryption** to keep other sensitive information safe. In simple terms, this means that data is changed into an unreadable state by using algorithms or ciphers, meaning it can't be read by malicious third parties.

⁵ http://cdn2.hubspot.net/hub/310840/file-2031207983-pdf/VWO_eommerce_report_new.pdf

4. CUSTOMER SPECIFIC CATALOGS

Talk of personalization is everywhere in E-Commerce.

And for good reason. Econsultancy found that 94% of businesses say personalization is critical to their success.⁶

On the B2B front, **50% of buyers surveyed identified improved personalization as being a key feature for suppliers they would want to work with.** (E-Commerce & B2B⁷)

So what is E-Commerce personalization? According to Foundr Magazine⁸:

“When you start thinking about how many types of personalization there are, it becomes clear just how big the minefield is that we’re about to start tentatively feeling our way through.

*“There’s navigational personalization, predictive personalization, personalization based on third-party data, database segmentation, personalized subject lines, personalized content served based on interests...*takes a breath*...real time offers, contextual messaging, location based messaging, dynamic remarketing and more.”*

Taking all that in can be overwhelming.

Consumers often want to login and immediately see products relevant to them—the ones they buy regularly. Their time is valuable and they don’t want to wade through swathes of irrelevant products. Nor should they have to.

Thankfully, implementing personalized catalogs on a B2B-level does take much more than clustering your products in related groups and offering returning customers suggestions based on their previous purchases.

The solution is simple: different customers need to see different catalogs.

Your E-Commerce platform should allow you to display completely different catalogs for different customers, with different wholesale levels and distributor groups all having their own catalogs, too.

6: econsultancy.com/blog/62583-94-of-businesses-say-personalisation-is-critical-to-their-success/

7 <http://ecommerceandb2b.com/use-personalization-b2b-e-commerce/>

8: foundrmag.com/now-its-personal-why-personalization-is-key-to-ecommerce-success/

5. QUICK-ORDERING FEATURES

We've already highlighted this principle before, but it bears repeating.

Easy of use is the golden rule of all E-Commerce success.

B2B buyers in particular value speed, convenience and efficiency. The quicker you can make it for them to place their order, the better your chance of holding onto their business for the long-term.

There are two great ways to do this.

One is to give your customers the option to create '**Saved Carts**' for quick reordering. They simply build up the cart once, and (after checkout) can save it right in their account. The next time they need to place an order, they simply load up their Saved Cart, and are ready to checkout.

Even better, when customers create Saved Carts you can send them targeted email reminders based on their product's lifecycle, adding to your E-Commerce personalization.

Another method is through **quick-order forms**. These let clients who know their product codes add them from one convenient spot. This stripped-back E-Commerce experience is a lot less visual but it also takes away a lot of the leg work for your clients in terms of navigating your catalog pages and finding the products they need.

TEXAS BEARD CO. Shop All Beard Oil & Balm Beard Grooming Beard Wash Gifts Merchandise

Always Free US Shipping on orders over \$25!

Quick Order Page

Instructions: Enter the quantity of each product you want and then click the Add to Cart button at the bottom of the page.

Product Name	Price	Rating	Quantity	Options
Beard Bundle	\$34.99	★★★★★	0	
Pumpkin Spice Beard Balm (Limited Edition)	\$21.99	★★★★★	0	
Pumpkin Spice Beard Oil (Limited Edition)	\$17.99	★★★★★	0	Include Glass Dropper: <input type="checkbox"/> Include Glass Dropper / add \$0.99
Glorious Beard Shirt	\$12.00	★★★★★	0	Size: Small
Big Thicket Beard Balm	\$19.99	★★★★★	0	
Clove Citrus Beard Oil	\$15.99	★★★★★	0	Include Glass Dropper: <input type="checkbox"/> Include Glass Dropper / add \$0.99
Green Belt Beard Balm	\$19.99	★★★★★	0	
Green Belt Beard Oil	\$15.99	★★★★★	0	Include Glass Dropper: <input type="checkbox"/> Include Glass Dropper / add \$0.99
Mint Eucalyptus Beard Balm	\$19.99	★★★★★	0	
Night Cap Beard Balm	\$19.99	★★★★★	0	
Night Cap Beard Oil	\$15.99	★★★★★	0	Include Glass Dropper: <input type="checkbox"/> Include Glass Dropper / add \$0.99
Pecan Coffee Beard Oil	\$19.99	★★★★★	0	Include Glass Dropper: <input type="checkbox"/> Include Glass Dropper / add \$0.99
Beard Balm 4-pack	\$59.99	★★★★★	0	
Beard Balm Trial Size 4-pack	\$21.99	★★★★★	0	
Beard Brush - Soft	\$9.99	★★★★★	0	
Beard Oil + Balm Combo	\$29.99	★★★★★	0	Choose Balm: Big Thicket (Cedarwood + Pine Nee Choose Oil: Big Thicket (Cedarwood + Pine Nee Include Glass Dropper: <input type="checkbox"/> Include Glass Dropper / add \$0.99

B2B buyers want B2C features

49% of B2B buyers say they prefer to make online purchases on consumer-type web sites.

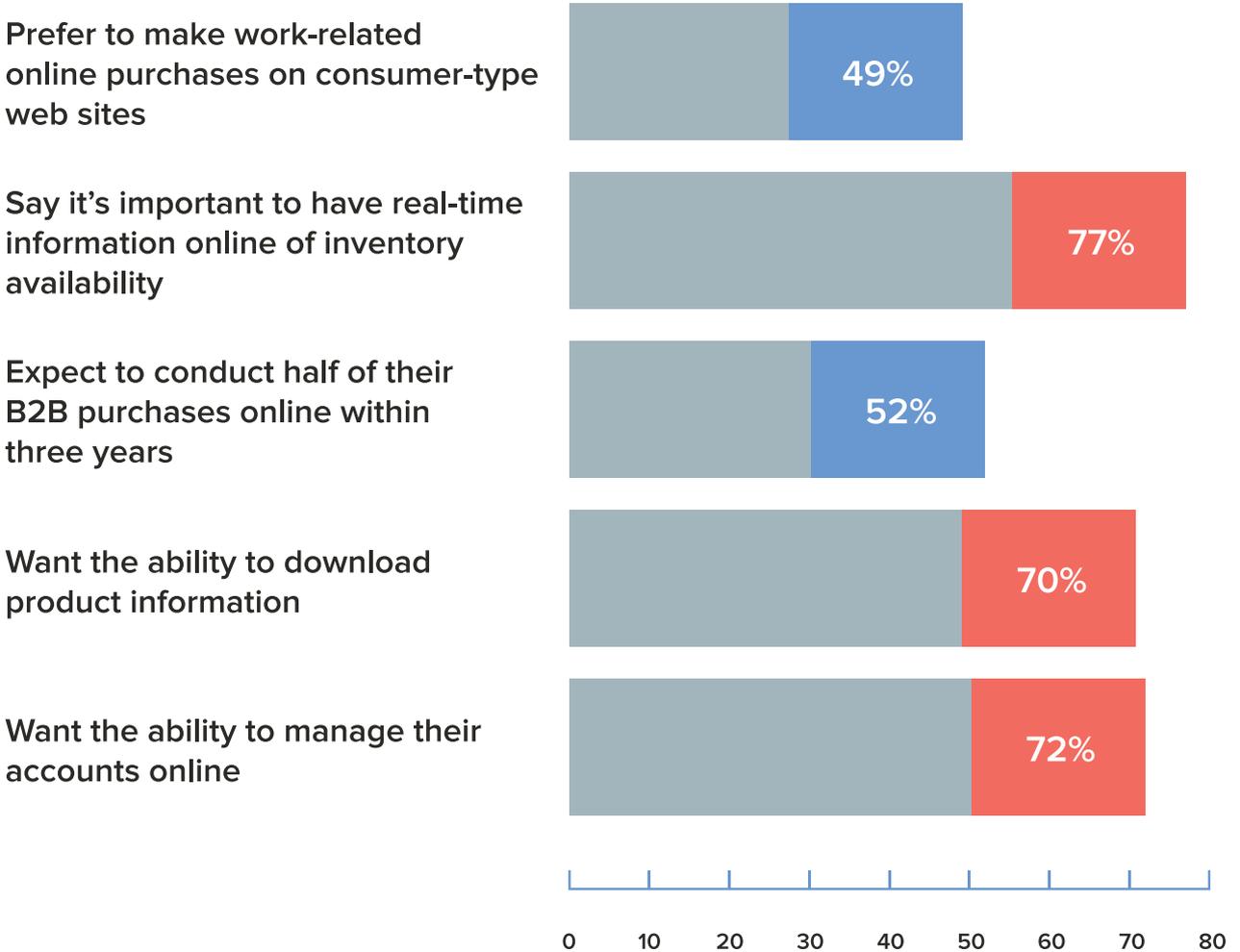


Chart Source

6. BUSINESS ACCOUNT SUPPORT

Uniquely difficult to B2B E-Commerce is the multi-layered buying process.

70% of B2B buyers buy by committee, with at least two decision makers. And 30% of transactions include more than five decision makers. (Frost and Sullivan⁹)

In the world of B2C E-Commerce, you're typically dealing with a single purchaser. In B2B, there are often many more parties involved—and this is particularly the case for larger enterprises, where you could be working with multiple contacts who each wish to make their own orders.

The obvious solution—setting up a single business entity account and having the login distributed throughout the organization—fails because it doesn't give you the ability to customize and tailor the experience at user-level.

Of course, creating dozens of individual user accounts with no tie back to the business itself is equally unsatisfactory.

That's why you should combine the two where possible. **Provide multiple user accounts, but have them all sit 'inside' that one business entity account.**

This allows you to set appropriate permissions and display the right products and pricing to all users, while being able to manage that business account in its own right.

⁹ <http://ecommerceandb2b.com/b2b-e-commerce-trends-statistics/>

7. ADVANCED SHIPPING & FULLFILMENT

In both B2B and B2C E-Commerce, shipping can be a deal-breaker.

First, you need to be transparent.

28% of shoppers will abandon their shopping cart if presented with unexpected shipping costs¹⁰, making it the most common reason for cart abandonment by a mile (pun intended). The key word here is ‘unexpected.’ This can be avoided by being up-front about all shipping and handling charges prior to the checkout page.

Second, you should also provide a number of shipping options for buyers to choose from. This includes both price ranges and time frames.

Third, your platform should automatically pull live shipping rates from major shipping providers—FedEx, UPS, USPS and DHL. Set up shipping rules based on weight, cost, number of items, unique items and geographic regions. This will also mean you can trigger free shipping at certain thresholds.

And what about the all-important task of actually fulfilling your orders?

Whether you’re manufacturing or drop-shipping your orders—or a mixture of each—you’ll want a solution that automatically breaks up orders from multiple warehouses and multiple drop-shippers. You can then have customized email notifications sent to those fulfilment warehouses and drop-shippers so the orders can be processed and fulfilled.

¹⁰ <https://blog.kissmetrics.com/5-ecommerce-stats/>

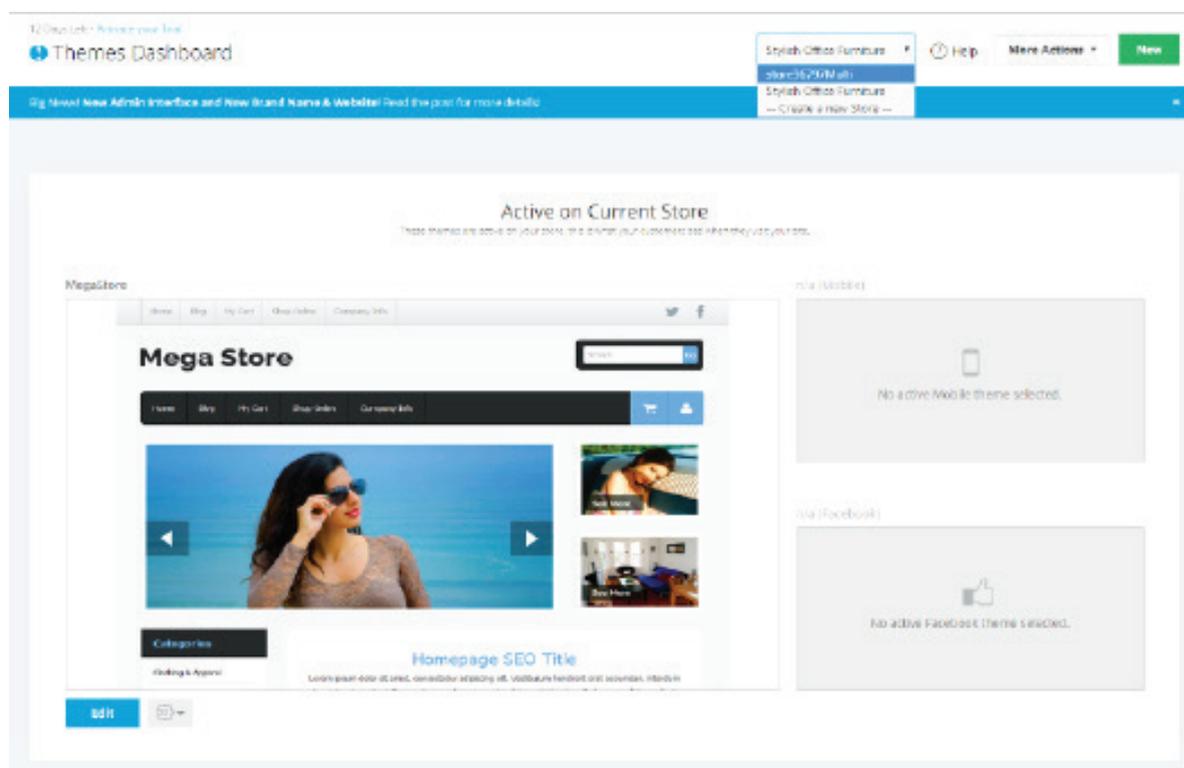
8. MULTIPLE STOREFRONTS

Alongside personalization, segmentation is king in B2B E-Commerce.

But delivering a richly personalized experience can be challenging. **Multiple storefronts** are a great way to make it work.

We've already touched on the role multiple storefronts can play in pricing, but that's not all. You can use multiple stores to dominate search results, appeal to specific demographics, test markets and extend your online presence.

The idea behind this feature is that you can have multiple—ideally—storefronts that are all administered and managed from one admin console with a single dropdown menu to toggle between them.



You can then give buyers access to multiple stores or limit them to a single store, depending on their needs—delivering a highly relevant and tailored experience without draining all your time.

To run multiple stores smoothly, you'll need an E-Commerce platform that can handle inventory, design, and management. Using one centralized backend that manages everything—inventory, shipping, site designs and orders—is crucial to ensuring consistency across your stores.

With AmeriCommerce's multiple storefront option you can easily “leverage your investment of time, integrations, store settings, infrastructure and product catalog without sacrificing unique designs, capabilities and customization.”

This approach is even more vital with B2B sellers who run a wholesale website but also want to launch a retail storefront. You'd also be able to sell internationally through separate storefronts, each with their own currencies, country rules, shipping rules and more.

9. CUSTOM PAYMENTS

This last must-have feature is all about the money. The rule is straightforward: “The more options you have for accepting payments, the better chances you have to close the sale.”

The average business uses checks 50% of the time to pay other businesses—down from 74% in 2007 and 57% in 2010. (AFP Online¹¹)

Payment is another area that is significantly more complex in the world of B2B E-Commerce. As the above data suggests, businesses are slowly moving towards electronic payments, but a large number still prefer offline methods like checks and purchase orders.

Your E-Commerce platform must be able to accommodate these methods.

Another wrinkle that adds complexity with B2B transactions is working with multiple decision makers. That means there is often the need to have purchase approval from multiple sources. All of these “chefs in the kitchen” delay the speed at which you receive your money, unless your store is setup to meet these challenges.

To do that, ensure that your B2B store is equipped with the ability to provide invoicing and purchase orders both online and physically. You must also be able to accept checks, money orders, credit cards and secure third-party payment options like PayPal and Google Wallet.

¹¹ <http://www.afponline.org/epayments/>

Another payment option that many businesses experience success with is issuing clients a corporate account. This streamlined billing process works well because it allows the client to add multiple decision makers to the account itself, often with preset spending limits. It also allows merchants to issue one bill at the end of the month or quarter instead of after each individual order.

The good news is that Purchase Order Information can be stored the first time it's entered by the buying company, so it can be accessed for later purchases without needing to be completed each time.

Tax is also a significant factor and you'll want to choose a platform that lets you set up tax exemptions. The best-case scenario is a solution that allows you to "set it and forget it." Handling all this manually can create a real time sink for your business.

The rise of direct online B2B payments

Nearly 70% of B2B buyers prefer instant online payment instead of purchase orders and invoices.

(Percentage of B2B buyers)

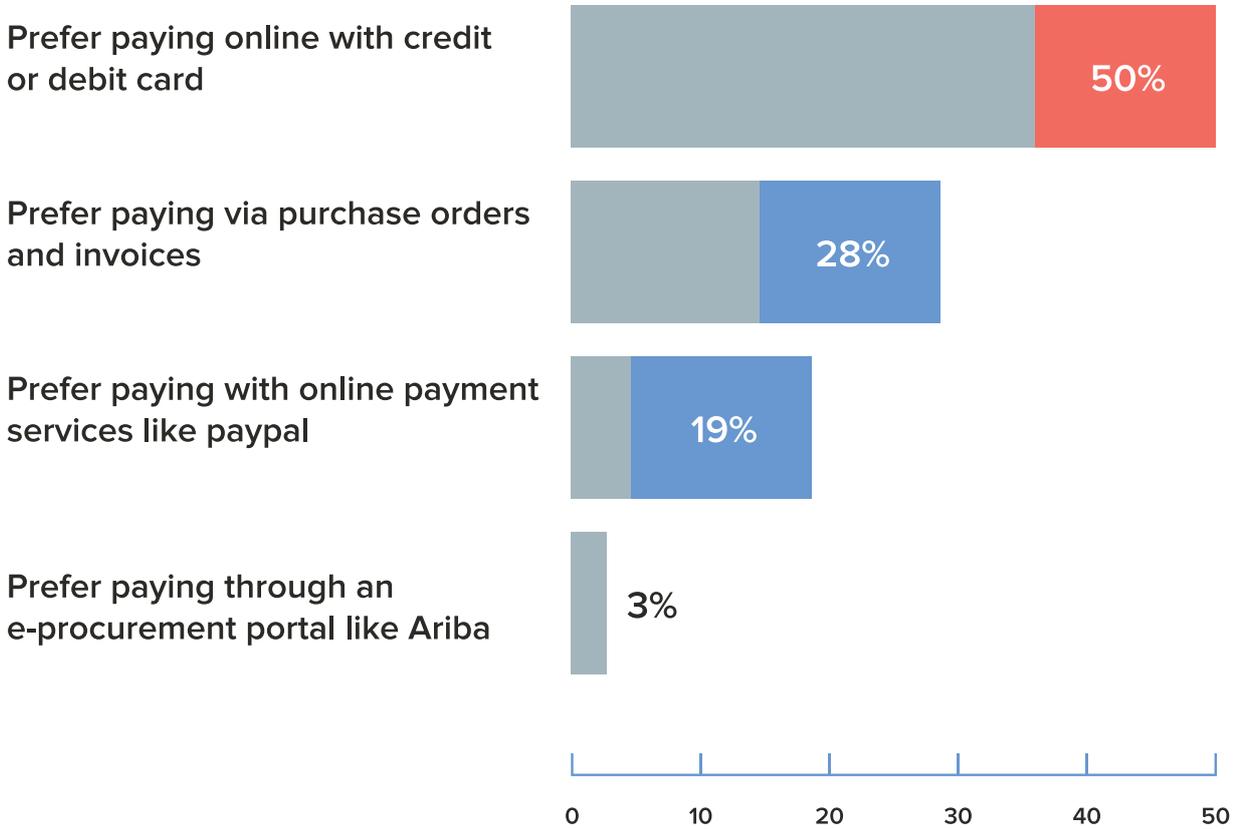


Chart Source

CONCLUSION

The explosive growth of B2C E-Commerce has fundamentally changed buyer expectations...and the reverberations are well and truly being felt in the B2B sector.

For B2B organizations, the challenge is to facilitate an experience that emulates the best of B2C while at the same time meeting the complexities of B2B buying.

These nine must-haves will guide you through navigating the platform you choose:

1. Filtered Navigation
2. Custom Pricing
3. Built-for-B2B Security
4. Personalized Catalogs
5. Quick-Ordering Features
6. Business-Account Integration
7. Advanced Shipping & Fulfilment
8. Multiple Storefronts
9. Custom Payments

About AmeriCommerce — Powerful eCommerce Software

All of the features we've outlined in this White Paper are included in AmeriCommerce's comprehensive B2B solution. To find out more, visit www.americommerce.com. If you have any questions about our B2B features or to find out all the ways we can help your business, please call our Solutions Consultants at 1-800-936-9006 or email us at sales@americommerce.com.

APPENDIX

Technology investment priorities of B2B pros

E-commerce platforms and web content management top planned technology investments for 2015.

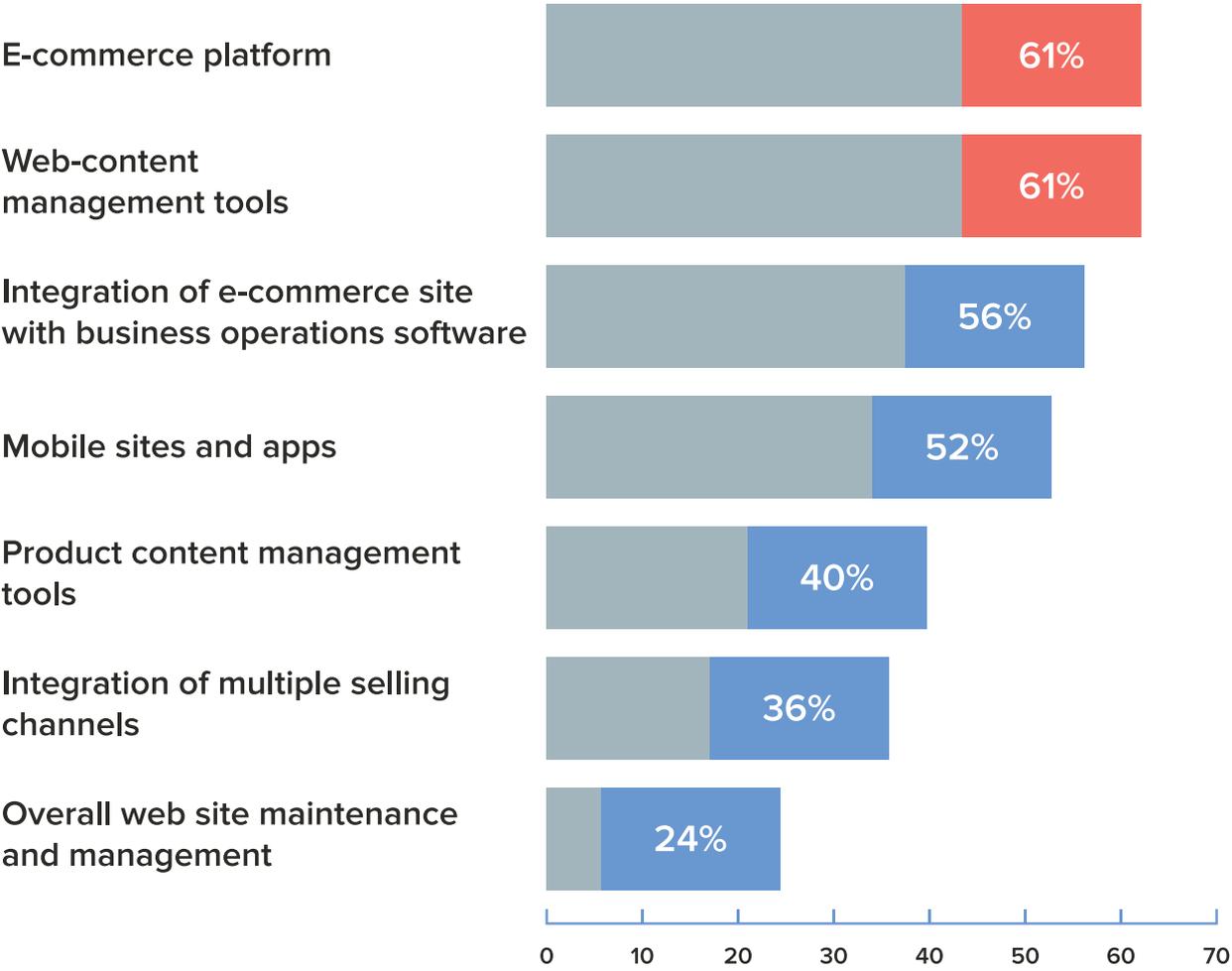
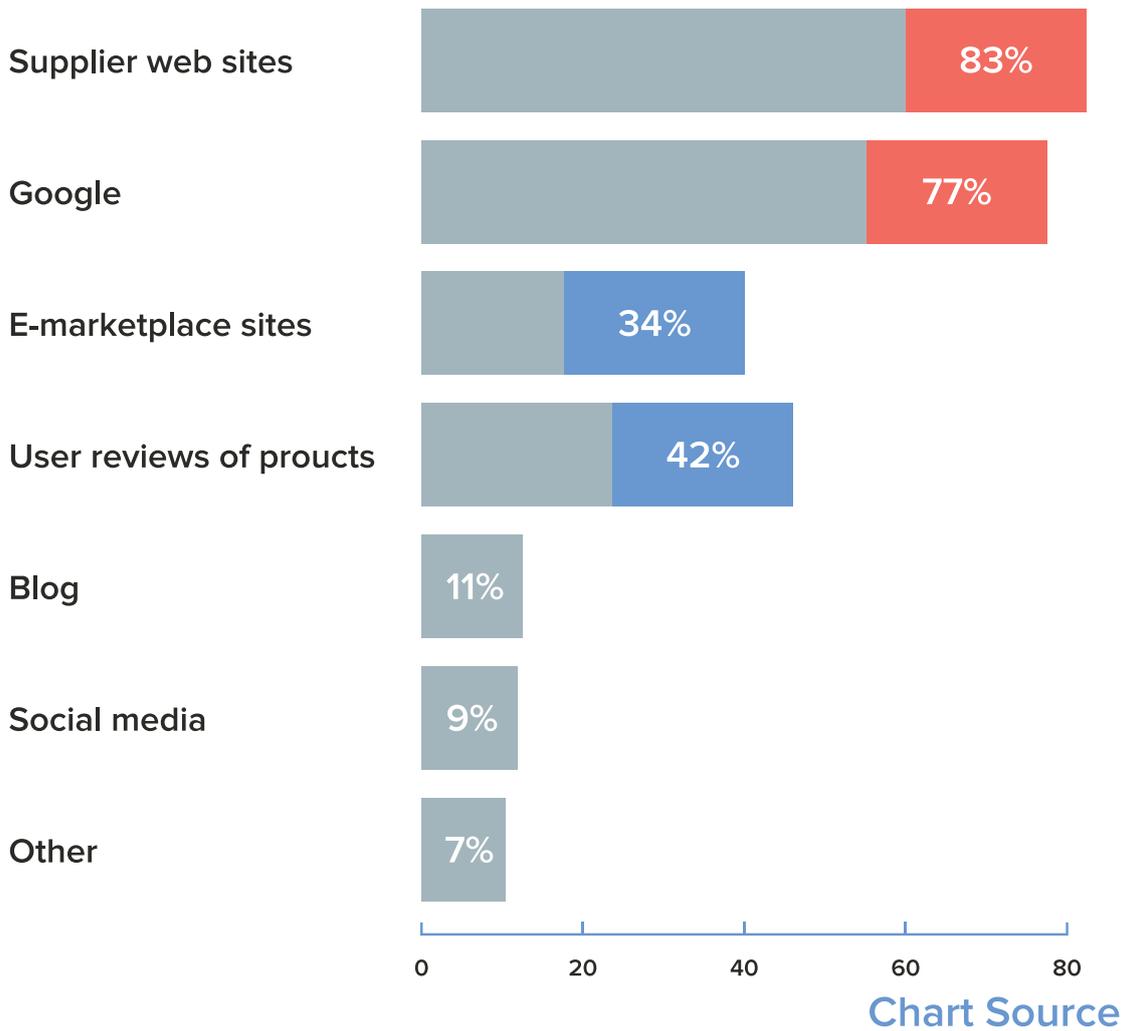


Chart Source

Where B2B buyers like to research products online

Supplier web sites are most popular, cited by 83% of buyers, but Google is close behind at 77%

(Percentage of B2B buyers citing the most important features on suppliers' e-commerce sites)



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