

# B2B e-commerce maturity

with necessary solutions to make  
a tough path easier



No one said it was easy, no one said it should be this hard.



EMAKINA

# Table of Content

|          |   |           |
|----------|---|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>B2B's e-commerce: easily hardy or hardly easy?</b> | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2</b> | <b>The issues with B2B e-commerce</b>                 | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>A</b> | On initiation   | 8         |
| <b>B</b> | On manageability                                      | 9         |
| <b>C</b> | On expectation  | 10        |
| <b>D</b> | On excellence   | 11        |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Good news is 'Solutions are relatively simple'</b> | <b>12</b> |
| <b>A</b> | How you start?  | 13        |
| <b>B</b> | How you keep it manageable?                           | 15        |
| <b>C</b> | How you get the results you want?                     | 18        |
| <b>D</b> | How to be better than the competition?                | 20        |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Good today, greater tomorrow</b>                   | <b>22</b> |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Take the B2B e-commerce maturity test</b>          | <b>24</b> |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Some projects with Salesforce B2B solutions</b>    | <b>31</b> |

# 1

## B2B's e-commerce: easily hardy or hardly easy?

Why is giving B2B businesses an online presence generally viewed as a type of nuisance— accompanied with overwhelming worries to perfect that platform from every aspect?

If you find yourself agreeing to the statement above, know that you are not alone.



“

Almost half the B2B businesses we see out there are considered 'beginners' when it comes to e-commerce. Only a few of them were able to master it, even fewer to reach full maturity in their digital transformation journey.”

— **Gurkan Ustunkar,**

[Head of B2B Commerce MENA at Emakina](#)

Online business is no easy business, especially in the complex world of 'Business-to-Business'. Recent changes in online purchase strategies and services have truly shifted the way of the game. Let's dive deeper.

### Changes in how they buy (buying behavior)

There has been a major shift in the buying behavior of B2B customers. Traditional B2B buyers used to engage in long-term relationships with their business partners. They were loyal to them and rarely - or almost never - bought from the competition. This has drastically changed.

As technologies advanced and millennials with new habits joined the B2B workplace, **today's customer journey is nowhere near linear**. There is no straight line from A to Z when it comes to purchasing online. Instead, customers move between different channels all the time: they do research on multiple websites on their mobile devices, interact with your business on a host of social media, make their purchases wherever they see fit, etc. It's no secret that B2B buyers prefer self-service and don't care if they're buying from your competitor if it's cheaper, more convenient or faster.

Your B2B buyers nowadays perform their research online, where they compare the existing offers and look at your closest competitors... And they prefer doing all of this using mobile rather than contacting your sales representative.

## Changes in how they want to buy (customer expectations)

Even though B2B sales processes are different from B2C, your B2B clients still want to have more or less the same B2C buying experience on your e-commerce platforms. Today, clients expect the same ease of online retail that B2C consumers enjoy, but with sophisticated capabilities for tailored product offerings/configuration, order automation, contracted pricing, advanced promotions & discounts, different payment terms/types, split- shipping, account hierarchies and more.

Your B2B Customers Expect a B2C Experience on your platforms

**Ease of interaction** is one thing, **personalization** is another. B2B customers now also expect a more personalized experience when interacting with your business online. They want aspects like Search, Catalog & List Management and Pricing to be optimized based on the information your business already has about them. This kind of data-based personalization brings risks to your business, data (generated from all the channels where your users have interacted with your brand) could be disconnected or trapped in different data sources. The only solution is a strong B2B Commerce portal that can capture and unify data across different platforms. Such an e-commerce portal collects, organizes and analyzes data about your users so that your business has one end-to-end view of each customer. When all the data is in one place, your business can create what we call a "unified data experience", a personalized user experience across touchpoints.



# 2

## The issues with B2B e-commerce

We already touched on it: B2B online buying behavior and expectations have changed, and the easiest way to deal with that, is with a robust e-commerce platform. Such a platform should enable your company to:

- ✓ Deeply understand your customers and optimize their experience on your channels
- ✓ Cut out the middle man, increasing sales efficiency and speed
- ✓ Open up new channels to reach more customers



Sounds awesome, right? So... why are so many companies either not doing e-commerce, or being frustrated by it? **There are several reasons why companies have a love-hate relationship with B2B e-commerce.** Some companies simply don't know where to start, as there are many things to do and know to get an e-commerce platform up and running. Some have started but find it's just too much work for their small internal team to keep the process going. Some have been doing it for a while without getting the results they desire. And some have been doing okay but don't know how to stay ahead of the competition.

The good news? We're going to tell you how to deal with all 4 issues. To get your answer, all you need to do, is read on!

## A On initiation

When faced with the need to go online, some companies don't know where to start first. Find a platform? Find a budget? Find the time? This is the main reason B2B companies fail at e-commerce at a later stage: they **didn't take the time to think things through** before they got started. Randomly picking a platform, gathering data and hoping some magic will then do the trick for their online sales...

When starting out with e-commerce, particularly in a B2B setting, is it of the utmost importance to develop an overall strategy and set specific goals before investing in a B2B e-commerce

platform. If it isn't a strategic priority within your organization, you will fail at involving your teams and stakeholders, and the project has already run aground before it even took off.



E-commerce isn't something to just try out for your business and then roll with it. It's an investment in your future success that requires your time and attention before you take the first step.

– **Derya Akcakaya,**

[Program Director Emakina - Salesforce Commerce Cloud](#)



## B On manageability

Most companies think things through before they start. They build a strategy and identify their goals. Yet somehow, they focus so much on results that they forget to focus on people too. One of the most common mistakes B2B companies make, is having **one isolated team in charge** of implementing their B2B e-commerce platform and using it to drive sales. Why is that an issue? Because it's never a good idea to see e-commerce as something that stands alone, apart from the current systems within your organization. As a matter of fact, e-commerce must be integrated into your systems and teams – marketing, design, mobile, buyers, PR, and sales – as well as your ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system.



E-commerce should never happen in a vacuum. Because only when you integrate your online with your offline system, can they reinforce each other to maximize your sales and conversion.

– **Murat Yoldaş Ertuğrul,**  
*VP MEA Emakina*

## C On expectation

Lots of B2B companies offer a nice customer experience... or so they think. A truly optimized customer experience isn't one that you think is good enough for your clients. It is the one that your customers expect from your B2C service. Never **neglect the importance of the user's perspective on your user experience** just because you are dealing with B2B customers. In fact, the individuals who buy from you are also B2C consumers who buy from retail brands that offer topnotch, super advanced buying experiences.

The experiences shoppers have at Amazon for example, entirely shift their expectations when they are working with a B2B company. Reports even show that a longstanding relationship between a customer and a distributor can be destroyed by a poor support experience.



A recent study from Pew Research revealed that more than 56% of customers stop doing business with a brand when their online experience is poor.



If you underestimate the importance of the user experience you offer your B2B clients, you can expect mounting negative effects such as inefficiency, additional costs and customer frustration.

– **Gurkan Ustunkar**,  
[Head of B2B Commerce MENA at Emakina](#)

## D On excellence

Even though the field of e-commerce for B2B has a lot of room for growth and most companies are only in the early stages of their maturity, some really have their ducks in a row. They have a solid strategy in place, have internal alignment, a great platform to grow with them and a killer user experience. Yet, they don't know how to be best-in-class. They free up some budget to ramp up their online B2B efforts but because they're already doing well, they don't know exactly where to invest to really stand out from the crowd.

This is sometimes due to the **lack of knowledge about what exactly the competition does**. How do they position themselves? Which of them offer a premium omnichannel B2B experience (and which elements could inspire us to do better)? What are their apparent strategic goals? Sometimes it's not a clear view on the competition that is missing (external), but a clear view of the company itself (internal). How does the company keep an eye on trends? Is it ready and fast enough to react and make the necessary adaptations when something important pops up? Does it monitor changes in customer behavior in realtime?



There is no magic formula. Being a leader in the field of B2B e-commerce requires a solid strategy and hard work. But it's oh so much fun!

– **Gurkan Ustunkar**,  
[Head of B2B Commerce MENA at Emakina](#)

# 3

## Good news is 'Solutions are relatively simple'

Fostering leadership and developing a strong B2B e-commerce strategy correlates with increased customer satisfaction and retention. Before, we outlined the 4 impediments to success: lack of strategy, wrong platform and partners, poor customer experience, no roadmap for continuous improvement. If you read on, you will find concrete tips or steps to overcome these impediments.



## A How you start? *At the beginning...*

We already told you that you need be clear on your goals and strategy before you focus all your efforts on building a world-class B2B e-commerce experience. This is important because your strategy will tell you how to identify and select the appropriate tools and technologies to move forward.

All good, were it not for the fact that a strategy doesn't come out of nowhere, right? It should be based on reality, reflect not only what your company is capable of and willing to do, but also what your (potential) clients are willing to do.

So before implementing any e-commerce solution or building a strategy to take it to the next level, you must **evaluate the maturity of your B2B commerce organization and processes** as a whole.

How you can do that? With our maturity test, of course! We've attached it to the end of this whitepaper – if you can't wait, knock yourself out out on [page 24](#).

**According to our maturity model, there are 3 levels for your current state of B2B e-commerce:**

- **Level 1 - Beginners**

As a B2B company, you are only now starting to consider the possibilities of e-commerce for your business, or you have already implemented something but you are struggling to fit it into your existing business. You are (or will be) using your e-commerce platform mainly as a tool to gain new B2B customers and increase B2B sales online.

- **Level 2 - Developers**

You have a B2B e-commerce solution up and running. You have thought about how this solution aligns with the overall sales strategy & goals of your company, but you are struggling to make theory become reality. You feel like e-commerce is a lot of time for small results, you aren't seeing a positive effect on the user experience, and you're not sure you're getting the maximum out of your e-commerce solution.

- **Level 3 - Experts**

You have mastered your e-commerce implementation. It is integrated within the overall sales strategy in your company, and everyone is convinced of the results of your online B2B campaigns. You manage to hit your targets and think ahead. Yet, you feel like you want to be more than an expert, you would like to be considered "best-in-class". You want to become living proof of how successful e-commerce can be for a B2B company.

Advancing your digital maturity will ensure continued success for your organization. The first step to advancement? It's understanding what maturity level you're on today. To find out now, go to [page 24](#) and take the test.

## B How you keep it manageable?

### *With the right platform and the right partner(s)...*

Choosing the right B2B Commerce platform for your business takes time and research. It's an investment in your future. The solution you select should help you achieve both your short- and long-term strategy in a way that feels like you can manage it with the time and resources you have. It's easy for your e-commerce project to spin out of control when you didn't take the time to select the right platform and the right internal partners to match your ambition. Here is a concrete list of things you should think about before you make your choice:

- **How will I host the platform?**

In-house platforms offer you more control over your data, however they are considerably more expensive than adopting cloud-based software.

- **How much complexity does my platform need?**

The B2B e-commerce solution that is right for you may have features like complex promotions, dynamic product catalogs, complex pricing, and delivery management. Understand the complex nature of your organization before you make your list of features, it's important that your features match your specific organization.

- **What does my platform need to be integrated with?**

The solution you choose must be integrated with your CRM, ERP and perhaps a host of other systems your company works with. Best to know exactly which, since compatibility might be an issue.

- **Will I need a scalable platform?**

You need a platform that is scalable if your organization is looking to expand. As your network grows, server requirements will increase because of the higher traffic load.



When you have an answer to the questions above, choosing the right platform for your business will be a lot easier. However, that is just the first part of making sure your e-commerce projects will remain manageable. Because now you need to start deploying the solution within your organization. If your organization isn't aligned around the business case or strategy, your project might end up being a failure after all, despite your magnificent choice of platform.

So, again, what should you do? We recommend that you get your teams together — IT, marketing, finance, etc — and determine who has decision rights to start implementing the project as soon as possible.



“

You need to include your teams and partners from the very beginning of the project. It's critical that everyone contributes to the decisions, so a consensus emerges for the project. Anything less than a full alignment is a threat to success.

– **Gurkan Ustunkar**,  
Head of B2B Commerce MENA at Emakina

”

## C How you get the results you want?

*With better and more actionable data...*

As we already touched upon earlier: your e-commerce platform deals with people. Even in B2B situation you are dealing with individual users who bring their B2C expectations with them to your B2B environment. If you're not getting the results you desire, there is a big chance you're not leveraging your user data to the max.

Yes, we know, B2B data is voluminous, varied, hard to acquire, and needs constant updating. Lots of companies strive to gather data every day across a variety of business functions. Data is incredibly valuable when analyzing business performance and exploring areas for improvement.

If you picked the right B2B e-commerce platform (see also *how to keep it manageable*) then your platform should allow you to fully leverage your data, because it integrates with your existing business systems enabling you to reduce costs, take better business decisions, and achieve higher ROI.

What this means for your B2B customer experience? Your B2B e-commerce platform is a single system that can consolidate user data from many sources for you. This allows you to:

✓ create a 360-degree view of your B2B customers.

✓ easily study your customers' behavior, scale what works for them and adjust if necessary.

✓ find out what data is missing and gather it fast so you can make even more targeted decisions for your audiences.

✓ use data insights to better understand your B2B customers and provide them with a seamless customer experience.

✓ manage your accounts for multiple orders simultaneously.

If you want to grow into an e-commerce expert, you need to continuously adapt to customer expectations for interacting and purchasing across numerous channels; to be the best, you must use the data you have to your advantage at every single client interaction.

## D How to be better than the competition?

*With a fresh pair of eyes...*

When you have no view of what the competition is doing, you have only one option: to go and find out. You need to evaluate your competition and benchmark the market. As B2B buyers will select the best omnichannel experience, you should make sure your solution doesn't simply line up with the others but outperforms what they are providing.

If you have a clear view on the market but not on yourself as a B2B service provider, a fresh pair of eyes is the fastest way to spot possibilities for further growth. You could go looking by yourself if you're A partner who knows about user-centricity as the key to user happiness, with methodologies to identify your current weaknesses and turn them into opportunities. A partner who keeps an eye on trends and new technologies, who for example understands the ins and outs of cloud-based e-commerce platforms with their vast potential for the future. And a partner that is fast at implementing relevant new technology that comes along and makes it easy for you to manage it once it's there.

- **Perform continuous analysis of your customers changing behavior... You don't want to lose track of the trends and give your competitors a chance to be ahead of you, right?**
- **Make ongoing improvements in your e-commerce platform**
- **Measure your predefined goals and make sure you are aligned with the strategy you have defined at the beginning!**

“

Because we are a part of the Emakina Group, we have all possible profiles and skills just one phone call away. This has proven to be a plus on multiple projects, because as we all know: two heads know more than one.

– **Gurkan Ustunkar**,  
Head of B2B Commerce MENA at Emakina

”

# 4

## Good today, greater tomorrow

According to Forrester Research, the B2B commerce industry is expected to reach \$1.8 trillion by 2023 and account for 17 percent of total B2B sales.

Is your existing B2B e-commerce platform or B2B commerce strategy equipped to capitalize on that opportunity? Or will you sink as customers flock to more powerful, richer, and user-friendly B2B e-commerce websites?

It's important to remember that e-commerce has not yet reached full maturity, it will continue to undergo changes over the coming years. That is good news, as you still have some time to define your strategy and get on board.



To succeed at e-commerce in the future, however, you need a flexible and scalable B2B e-commerce solution today. One that will enable you to:

✓ *Open new channels to reach your customers.*

What if a new LinkedIn, Facebook or YouTube appears in 18 months? You should select a platform today that will enable you to explore any new channel through which you can reach new customers and easily engage with them.

✓ *Maximize your customer experience.*

User expectations will continue to climb, clients will always expect more from you. With the right platform, you will be able to provide your customers access to self-service portals with account, order, history, tracking information, and whatever else they may desire in the future.

✓ *Scale quickly and easily.*

An efficient e-commerce platform will follow your organization as it grows, and scale at the same pace without giving you a headache. If your company's lead should double tomorrow, your B2B engine should be up and running at the same speed quickly and without so much as a hiccup.

✓ *Bring data together in one place:*

no matter how your data streams may change or multiply in the future, if you select a robust B2B e-commerce solution now then gathering data from multiple platforms (ERP, CRM...) will be a piece of cake. Certainly, if you integrate the solution fully with all your systems, so it can bring all the information together in one place at your convenience.

# 5

## Take the B2B e-commerce maturity test

So you want to know your maturity level? Great! Take this easy questionnaire and find out if your B2B e-commerce operations today are at the level of beginner, developer or expert. All you have to do is select the answer that matches your current state. When you have done so for each question, take a look at the result section. Ready? Here we go!

### Question 1

#### How did you define your B2B e-commerce strategy?

- We set specific goals and a strategy that was aligned to other parts of our organization.
- We included e-commerce goals and strategy in your overall organization strategy by considering who we want to sell to, what we want to sell online, and mapping out our value proposition...
- ▲ We saw it as a new channel exclusive and set apart from our existing channels, then we put together a separate strategy to display our offer on this new online platform.



## Question 2

### When implementing your e-commerce system, what was your main focus?

- Developing a B2B e-commerce platform: an optimized solution in respect of the market standards, with the aim of opening a new sales channel.
- Focusing on the user experience. We aimed to address the needs of our B2B customers and to provide them with a seamless purchase experience, with functionalities optimized to meet the standards of modern online buyers.
- ▲ Improving the internal processes within our organization to reduce costs and gain operational efficiency. The focus was on developing a technically high-end solution to promote our offers online.

## Question 3

### Inside your organization, who oversees the B2B e-commerce implementation?

- Mainly our team of IT experts, with the involvement of the financial and legal department (ess with some authority to take decisions).
- Our IT team takes charge but operates with the collaboration and involvement of other functions like marketing, sales, procurement, PR, finance, and operations, as well as our stakeholders. We grant them the authority to make decisions and ensure they have the skills to get people from different departments together and move in the same direction.
- ▲ Our IT manager m who supervises the project with the approval of top management at each step of the implementation.

#### Question 4

### How has your Sales team reacted to your implementation of the e-commerce solution?

- We trained our Salespeople about e-commerce before the launch, but some of them thought it was risky and they're not convinced it was a good idea. They find it difficult to adopt the new channel and see the benefits, but they use it nonetheless. We may have forgotten to ask for their input before implementing the solution.
- They have been involved in the early stages and while setting up strategic goals. They were happy that their input was used in the planning and implementation phase. Since the launch, the sales team members are commissioned for sales made to their accounts via our e-commerce platform and they have no major objections.
- ▲ They were informed of the new e-commerce platform by the IT team and since then they see it as competition and loss of commissions. Some of them are trying to fight against our e-commerce efforts among our customer base.



That's it,  
you have answered  
all our questions!

Are you ready to discover the maturity level of  
your company's B2B e-commerce?

# The answers revealed

You answered mostly "▲"

You are on level 1:

**Beginners**

There are still a lot of untapped opportunities in your business! We can help you tap them all, we're just a phone call away. Let us give you some advice to get started: do not make the mistake of treating offline sales and e-commerce as two different channels. Your customers are most probably moving across channels and you need to offer them a seamless omnichannel experience. Get to know your online B2B clients well, none of them want to use a solution that does not fit their needs, right? Also, your e-commerce implementation should not be left to the company's IT people and away from other parts of your organization. You need to get everyone onboard, combining input from across the business. Don't keep your sales team isolated from the process, they might be scared to lose their jobs! Instead, use them strategically and encourage their input.

Doing this test was your first step towards the solution, our tips were the second. If you're really serious about building a powerful B2B e-commerce engine, contact us now to get started on your journey!

 CONTACT

# You answered mostly “■”

You are on level 1:

## Developers

Good job! You already started your B2B e-commerce on the right foot. But you still have quite some room to grow. We can help you with that, we're just a phone call away. Let us give you some advice to get started: continue to work on your strategy to grow your e-commerce project. It's no longer enough to align e-commerce strategy to overall strategy. You need to integrate it in every aspect of your business. Also, put some effort into empowering your employees and stakeholders to take part in the process, instead of keeping it only within one or 2 departments. A cross-functional team working on the project is vital to success. Plus, your sales team is still not fully committed, you have to go further than just a basic training about e-commerce, it's time to foster a whole new culture among the team. Show them how an effective e-commerce channel will save them the time on low value accounts and skip all the routine tasks such as entering orders or answering random questions. Engage them in the process, you will gain a lot if you do so!

Doing this test was your first step towards growing your online B2B business, our tips were the second. If you're really serious about building a powerful B2B e-commerce engine, a strong partner can make you move a lot faster. You are mere steps away from reaching success, and our team of experts knows exactly what to do. Contact them now!

 CONTACT

# You answered mostly “•”

You are on level 1:

## Experts

Congratulations! You are ahead in the game and on your way to lead the category! You have put in place the best practices that enable you to reach maturity in today's competitive markets. You have a solid overall commerce strategy and you successfully integrated your B2B e-commerce strategy in it. You focus on the users' experience and get the most out of your data. The future looks bright, with your adaptable platform and open mind. Keep up the good work!

You probably did this test because you're uncertain about something, or you're wondering what you could do to really become a category leader. If you're really serious about becoming best-in-class in the B2B e-commerce category, we've got a few ideas for you. Contact us now and let's have a talk!

 CONTACT

# 6

## Some projects with Salesforce B2B Solutions



### Global-scale b2b commerce for Bugaboo

Creators of some of the World's best strollers; Bugaboo needed a new B2B commerce platform, and needed it within three months. Emakina delivered a multi-country multi-language platform in that time, which we are now rolling out globally.

[Read the complete case here](#)



### Digitally enable your distributors

Help them be passionate ambassadors for your brand in addition to being able to swiftly deliver your latest products. Crucially: understand their level of technological maturity and help them modernise in close partnership with you, creating a strong bond.

[Read the complete case here](#)



## The authors

### **Sarah Claeys**

Storytelling Manager

Sarah helps international brands tell compelling stories to its users. She does so by combining deep user insights with content strategy, editorial support and coaching. She works with clients across the global portfolio of the Emakina Group.

### **Meryem Abbad**

Marketing Specialist

Meryem is a great support to the work of the sales and marketing teams on projects related to content marketing, social media, and business management. She works with Emakina people in the Middle East region to develop sales strategies and marketing campaigns.



## Sources

**Salesforce** - The B2B E-commerce playbook (2018)

<https://www.salesforce.com/eu/form/pdf/b2b-e-commerce-playbook/>

**Forrester** - Gauge Your B2B e-commerce Digital Maturity (2019)

<https://www.forrester.com/report/Gauge+Your+B2B+e-commerce+Digital+Maturity/-/E-RES75761#>

**McKinsey & Company** – How B2B decision makers are responding to the coronavirus crisis (2020)

<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/how-b2b-decision-makers-are-responding-to-the-coronavirus-crisis>

**Nextiva** – 100 Essential Customer Service Statistics and Trends for (2020)

<https://www.nextiva.com/blog/customer-service-statistics.html>

**Forbes** – Why B2B E-Commerce Is A Top Growth Sector Today (2020)

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/theyec/2020/04/21/why-b2b-e-commerce-is-a-top-growth-sector-today/#253ac1593043>



**EMAKINA**

The User Agency

---

## Welcome to Emakina

Team up with our marketing and technology experts to grow your business and brand value.

Let's join forces, to develop highly effective strategies and creations, from cutting-edge applications and websites to impactful e-commerce projects, content and campaigns.

---

## Take the next step

Learn more at

[www.emakina.com](http://www.emakina.com)

Feel free to contact us

### Emakina Europe HQ

Rue Middelbourg 64a  
1170 Watermael-Boitsfort  
Belgium

+32 2 400 40 00  
[think@emakina.com](mailto:think@emakina.com)

### Emakina Middle East HQ

Aurora Tower office  
2202-2207,  
Dubai Media City,  
PO Box: 478891, Dubai,  
United Arab Emirates

+971 4 589 57 22  
[info@emakina.ae](mailto:info@emakina.ae)

### Emakina North America HQ

79 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10016  
USA

+1 866 499 9591  
[info@emakina.com](mailto:info@emakina.com)