

10 features to look for in a B2B eCommerce platform

If you're looking for a robust, scalable B2B ecommerce platform, then there are certain features that are essential. We've created this checklist to use when specifying and selecting an ecommerce platform. So that you can be sure of selecting the platform that best meets your business's needs, just choose from and tick the features that you require.

Checklist

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>1. A B2C-like interface You want an online store with interfaces that are friendly and familiar. B2B buyers are also consumers too and they are used to the advanced online buying experiences they have on consumer websites.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>2. Sophisticated online catalogue A good ecommerce system will allow you to add multiple product images, with zoom and video streaming. You may also want to add PDFs or other documents for your customers to download, such as detailed features or spec sheets, user manuals, parts lists, and case studies, etc. Product comparison functionality allows users to compare features of products before purchasing and offering associated products helps with upselling and cross-selling. Also look for a system that has a sophisticated search and navigation system, to ensure your customers can easily find the right products to purchase.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>3. Self-service features Your buyers should be able to manage their own customer accounts. This not only frees up time for your customer-facing staff, but also allows your clients to manage their accounts out of normal business hours. Customers should be able to view and pay invoices, arrange returns and refunds, and view account statements. You will want to allow them to view their order history and change their account preferences, such as the number of products viewable per page, language settings and security features such as password management. They will want to choose whether or not to receive your marketing emails and newsletters, and to add and manage delivery addresses.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>4. Advanced ordering functionality The checkout process needs to be smooth and fast, with a clear, simple control panel. Business customers will also want in-depth information and functionality though, such as being able to assign their own order references to purchases, saving favourite orders, editing and saving their basket, and using promotional codes. You may also want the facility to include complex shipping calculations. Depending on your product range, shipping may be calculated by weight, volume or value, and you may want to link to carriers' pricing data for the customer to choose their shipping options.</p>

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>5. Mobile ecommerce app functionality You want your clients to be able to use mobile phones and tablets when they deal with you, so that they can buy and manage their accounts when they are working remotely or out of hours, and can easily use mobile features such as barcode scanning. Choose a system that comes with apps already, rather than having to create new mobile apps from scratch, and ensure that they are available for smartphones and tablets, and on both iOS and Android.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>6. Payment flexibility To give maximum choice, you want to offer multiple payment options. Look for a system that allows you to offer payment on account, as well as integration with credit card payment and PayPal. And with credit card payments, security checking is vital, so choose a system with payment service integration where credit card details are checked and funds debited before the order is processed.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>7. International options If you operate internationally, then your B2B ecommerce system needs to tailor your offering to each international audience accordingly. Alphabets, languages and currencies will differ, not to mention pricing, taxation, logistics and delivery, as well as product ranges with specific, localised product information.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>8. Advanced administration features There are a host of features that you will want to incorporate into an ecommerce system that will help you to easily manage your ecommerce website. Good systems allow you to: add new pages, products and product images; bulk upload new products; modify product and other website content; set up and edit site-generated emails; personalise customer control panels by adding their logo; access customer account details to view order history and details; amend customer account details; manually add new accounts for customers; set the parameters for shipping calculations; update prices, automatically on a daily basis, or manually and instantly; and amend and over-ride the status of an order. You may also want to assign user roles to employees, giving certain levels of functionality and allowing or restricting access to certain parts of the site or administration functions.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>9. Enhanced reporting functionality You will want to be able to produce detailed reports on all aspects of the sales made through your website, for example: spend by customer, average order values, number and value of sales by product, analysis of items ordered at the same time, analysis of abandoned baskets, payment methods, customer types, expenditure by category, and expenditure by hour or day. You may also want to see analysis of successful and unsuccessful searches made on the site in order to track products you may not yet supply, and to analyse common mis-spellings so that you can incorporate them into your search keywords. Reporting on newsletter sign-ups and analysis of orders by promotion or voucher code can help to assess marketing effectiveness.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>10. ERP integration Your B2B ecommerce system should not stand alone. It needs to integrate with your ERP system so that you can connect systems for finance and accounts, warehouse management, sales order processing, inventory control, stock and special customer pricing, and stock availability.</p>