



# How to Choose a Future Proof Ecommerce Platform

that's adapted for B2B and B2C and ready for today's digital market.



This was a uniquely challenging year for companies in every industry around the world. More than ever, businesses and consumers alike are turning to digital commerce, accelerating the global growth of ecommerce well beyond what experts were predicting.

You may be in the process of selecting an ecommerce solution, or you may just be starting to research your options. Either way, your choice of ecommerce platform is the most important decision you'll make. You need to consider every aspect of running a business on the web so that when comparing platforms, you'll be able to see how well each fits your particular business needs.

This e-book takes you through the key components of a competitive, profitable ecommerce solution adapted for B2B and B2C and ready for today's digital market. We'll discuss essential functionality and best practices for:

ERP integration .....	<b>03</b>
Hosting, performance and security .....	<b>04</b>
Marketing support .....	<b>07</b>
User Experience (UX) .....	<b>12</b>
Payments .....	<b>14</b>
Logistics .....	<b>16</b>



# ERP Integration

Integration refers to the platform's ability to connect and interact with the other software and services your business uses, particularly your Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. It is the core component of a modern, successful ecommerce solution.

ERP integration allows the web store and the ERP to communicate and exchange information in real-time. Without it, you are forced to copy everything back and forth manually: orders, inventory, pricing, promotions, customer information, and so on. Why reinvent the wheel? Leverage your ERP and make it sell for you.

Say a new customer creates an account on your web store and places an order. If you are running a non-integrated solution, you have to copy the new customer data as well as the order itself over to your ERP. You then have to adjust your inventory in your ERP, invoice the order, copy the invoice back to the web store, and then adjust the web store's inventory to match your ERP.

The more new customers and orders your business receives, the more time and resource-intensive this process becomes, and the more prone your system is to error. Ironically, this

can turn success into a liability, since high-traffic sites can get hundreds, even thousands of orders per day.

With an integrated solution like k-commerce, all this information transfers back and forth automatically between your web store and your ERP, keeping both systems up-to-date and accurate and eliminating the possibility of human error. Order processing is essentially automated, while product, pricing, and customer information is kept accurate at all times.

In short, an ERP-integrated ecommerce platform will save you an incredible amount of time and money, allowing you to focus on growing your business.

# Hosting, Performance & Security

## Cloud Hosting

Cloud technology changes up the traditional model of computing. Rather than installing software individually on every machine that runs it, machines access and run the software over the internet. Cloud hosting is the basis of ERPs like Microsoft Dynamics 365, which companies can operate entirely through Microsoft's cloud service.

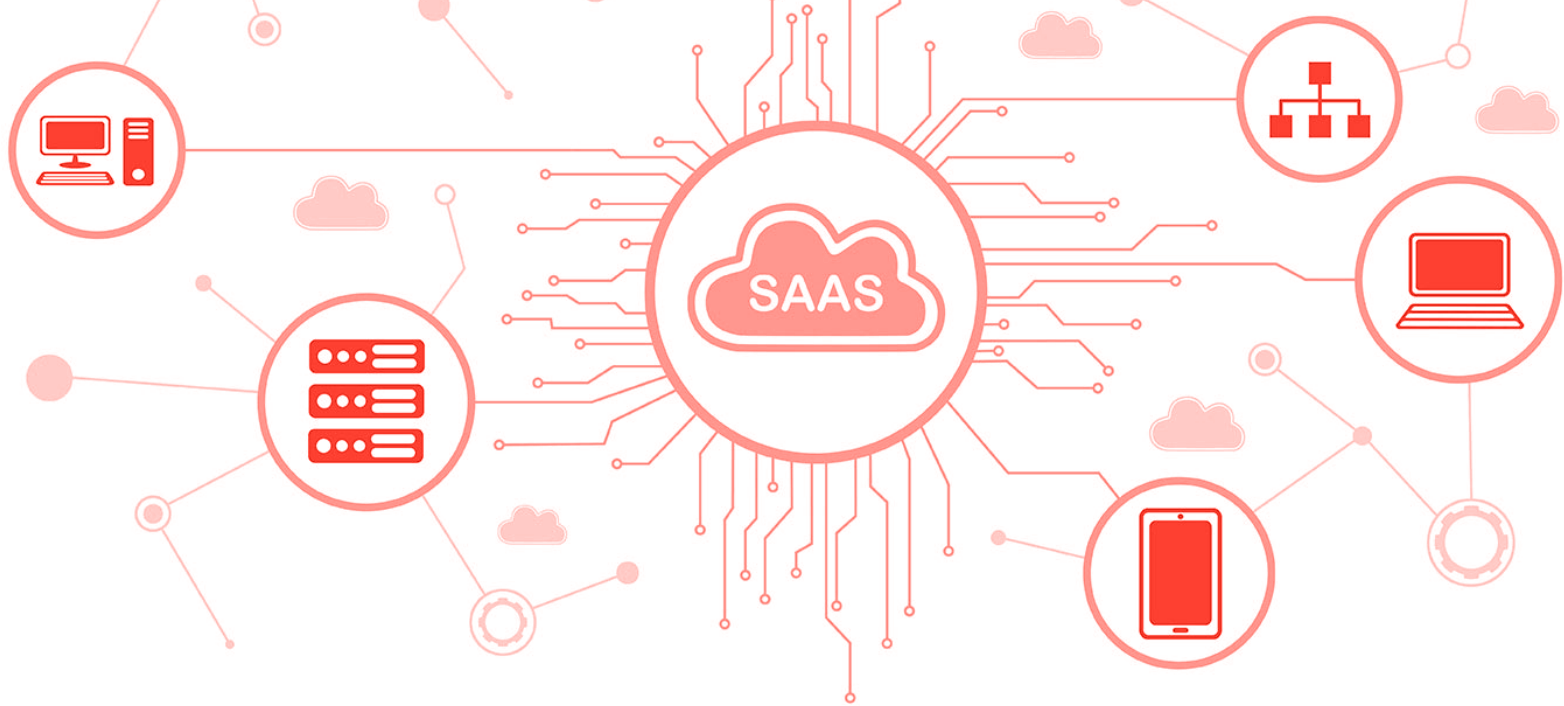
Some companies are understandably nervous about not hosting their ERP or ecommerce platform on their own physical servers. But from an IT perspective, cloud hosting presents immense advantages that are hard to compete with.

The first is availability. When a company's private server goes down, anything hosted on it goes down, too: website, ERP and all. By contrast, giant cloud services like Microsoft Azure are practically invulnerable and virtually always online. So even when your local network is having infrastructural problems, all your vital business processes remain untouchable on the cloud.

But CIOs also see the cloud as an investment in the company's future. As your online business expands, acquiring new customers and launching new products, your hosting needs also grow. When these needs come up against the physical limitations of your server, complex (and expensive) hardware upgrades are inevitable.

On the cloud, sustaining continual business growth is just as easy as scaling up your bandwidth requirements.





## Software as a Service (SaaS)

Software as a Service (SaaS) goes hand-in-glove with cloud hosting. SaaS is effectively a software “rental,” or subscription. Rather than purchasing the software outright, you pay for use of the software at a recurring rate.

As with cloud hosting, this can seem like a strange concept at first glance. But it carries significant advantages. To the opposite of traditional software models where you first install and then configure, with SaaS the application is already installed and pre-configured.

This simplifies many of the most complex onboarding issues companies face, and can dramatically shorten deployment times.

Software updates are another major advantage to the SaaS model. When the developers update the software, the update becomes available to all the customers using it.

Businesses can implement the update without the infrastructural hassles and expense that usually accompany new releases.

This, in turn, makes it easy for the company to stay current with the latest version and take advantage of up-to-date security, compatibility and features.

It's also worth mentioning that SaaS generally features lower licensing costs (due to multitenant cloud environments). This opens the software to small and medium businesses that couldn't afford it with a traditional license.



# PCI Certification

If you're going to process credit cards payments, you'll need to address credit card security to protect your clients as well as your business. A data breach can be catastrophic for companies affected.

PCI-DSS, a set of requirements designed to maximize payment account data security, has been developed by the founding companies of the PCI Security Standards Council (Visa, MasterCard, and the other major payment card companies). It includes technical and operational requirements for security management, policies, procedures, network architecture, software design, and other critical protective measures to prevent credit card fraud, hacking, and similar security vulnerabilities and threats.

Full PCI certification is the only real way to guarantee safety of cardholder data, but it can be a long and expensive undertaking that needs to be renewed every year. If you have a proprietary system there's unfortunately no workaround, but professional ecommerce platforms undertake annual PCI Level 1 Certification themselves, saving business owners the trouble and cost of having their solutions certified.





# Merchandizing Product Catalog

When it comes to building your product catalog, you want to choose an ecommerce solution that provides you with numerous tools for showcasing and promoting your products.

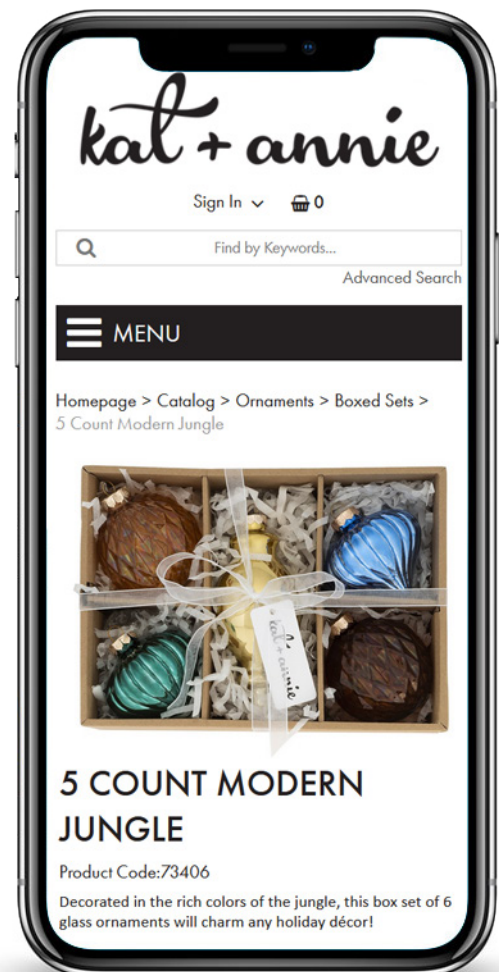
Detailed product descriptions, specs and attributes are important for providing your customers with information and helping search engines rank the page. As a rule, the more detailed the product page, the better. Every item also needs at least a few full-color images with zoom capabilities. Rich content such as videos are great for demonstrating functionality.

Additionally, you should be able to configure product recommendations, as well as suggested substitutions if a desired item is out of stock. Best Sellers are another popular merchandizing feature that you can configure in a number of ways.

While this might seem like a lot of work, many ecommerce solutions let you import products and images in bulk using an Excel spreadsheet. You can then configure them as needed in your web store.

Allowing customers to leave ratings and reviews on your website can thus be great way to advertise the excellent service you provide. When a shopper has a particularly positive experience with your customer support team—or if they're pleased with your web store's ease of use and speed of delivery—their review serves as a testimonial to other shoppers who are considering a purchase.

This can easily make the difference between you and a competitor with the same product and price, but no review. It helps SEO by adding unique content to your web store's pages and enhances the customer experience even further by empowering your shoppers to leave feedback. And at the end of the day, recommendations from friends and family remain the single most powerful marketing tool available.





# User-Friendly Search Engine Optimization

To maximize traffic, you need search engine optimization (SEO). Basic SEO involves identifying the terms for which your clients are searching. For example, a shoe store would want to rank for shoes as well as boots, sandals, cleats, and other types of footwear.

But SEO also tells search engines about the content of your website, demonstrating that you are a relevant and reliable source of information on the subject. This requires original content and well-configured page elements like the title tag and meta description.

Still, a winning SEO strategy does not require a tech degree. Many ecommerce platforms come equipped with built-in SEO tools for optimizing your pages. If you want to learn the basics of optimizing your website for Google and other search engines, you can get a copy of our free guide [SEO for Ecommerce](#) here.

## Mailchimp Integration

Email is still critical for pretty much every digital marketing team. Mailchimp is one of the best email marketing services available, in addition to being a powerful automation platform that helps you promote your brand and offers extensive engagement data. Integrating to Mailchimp allows you to power your email campaigns with live product and price data from your online store.



# Ecommerce for Google Analytics

You may already be familiar with Google analytics, but not everyone is aware that it offers specific ecommerce functionality. Ecommerce for Google Analytics creates specialized reports that give you insight into all purchase-related activities on your website. This includes Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) such as average order value, time to purchase, conversion rate and more, as well as relevant transactional and product information:

- Number of active sessions
- Number of users
- Geographic location of users
- Devices used to access your site
- New vs. returning users
- Sources of traffic (search engines, direct access, external link, etc.)
- Pages visited (including the page visitors first accessed on the site and the page from which they left)
- Search terms used
- Total number of transactions
- Products by sales (quantity sold, total amount sold, etc.)

Enhanced Ecommerce for Google Analytics provides even more ways to capture and analyze your customer data. It offers information on product impressions (the number of products each visitor is shown), as well as the products that customers click on, view details for, add to their carts, and more.

Properly configuring a Google Analytics dashboard can be time consuming, but there are a lot of pre-configured dashboards available online. This sample Google Analytics ecommerce dashboard will get you started.



# Social Media Integration

Social media opens your web store to millions of users from all over the globe. It facilitates the relationship-building process with clients and leads, promotes brand recognition, offers entrepreneurs the opportunity to share their industry expertise, and can even function as an extension of your online boutique.

To get the most from social media, you should choose an ecommerce solution that integrates easily with certain third-party tools. AddThis is one of the oldest and best-known plugins, allowing you to add social sharing buttons to your web store's pages, which lets customers share products and promotions with their friends and followers at the click of a button.

With more than 2.7 billion monthly active users as of June 2020, there is no question that Facebook is one of the largest and most powerful advertising platforms available. Facebook pixel tracks visitors to your site and lets you to retarget them with ads when they are on Facebook. It also gathers data on their behavior when they return to your site. Facebook pixel is very easy to use, as it only requires adding a bit of code to your website.

The Open Graph protocol is a tool that lets you integrate any page on your website as a rich object on Facebook. For instance, you can integrate product pages from your website catalog, and they will behave exactly like Facebook pages. You are also able to customize how Facebook displays the content you share. This is a great way to announce special promotions and events with your social followers.

Twitter Cards are units of media that you can insert into a tweet to function as advertisements. These advertisements help send traffic to your website, but they are not pieces of content properly speaking. You cannot post them directly; instead, you must attach them to a standard tweet. According to Twitter internal data, using Twitter Cards with promoted tweets results in 43% more engagement than Tweets with links.

## Brand Recognition and Loyalty

Choose an ecommerce platform with built-in tools for fostering brand recognition and customer loyalty, such as coupons, gift cards, personalized web promotions, loyalty points and more. By carefully selecting an ecommerce platform with the right features, you'll be amazed at how easily you can attract, convert, and retain a happy, loyal customer base.



# User Experience (UX)

When designing your web store, always try to see things through the eyes of your shoppers.

## Design

The look and feel of your web store are major components of branding and user experience, so considerations like logo placement, color choice, layout, and theme are critical to your image. Equally critical is ensuring that your web store design is fully responsive to make it accessible and visually engaging to shoppers using a wide variety of browsers and devices.

Responsive design is important for search engine performance as well, as Google penalizes sites that aren't configured for mobile devices. Fortunately, you don't have to be a web designer (or even hire one). Many ecommerce solutions come with a selection of professionally-designed, fully responsive

themes built in that you can implement and update easily through your Content Management System (CMS).

## Navigation

According to Hubspot, 76% of consumers say that the most important element of a web store is finding what they want easily. Your customers should be able to locate the search bar at a glance, apply filters with a click, and browse menus with intuitive ease. Are your products organized into logical categories to facilitate optimal menu building? Do your search options let customers filter products by color, brand, and size?

# Simplified Checkout

KPIs like the Cart Abandonment Rate inform marketers when something is going wrong in the conversion funnel. The goal is to create a smooth, intuitive customer experience with the lowest possible “wind resistance.” Streamlined, single-page checkout that autocompletes for returning customers minimizes sticking points in closing the sale.

## Self-Service

ERP-integrated ecommerce provides an engagement platform whose primary engine is online self-service: the ability for customers to do things for themselves. Not only is it extremely profitable, online self-service is what your customers want.

With online self-service, customers can place orders from literally anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day. This is an obvious benefit to both the customer and to your business, which accepts the orders that come in overnight and literally grows while you sleep.

Your customers can log into their accounts and check on the status of an order any time. Likewise with other routine tasks: updating addresses, adding payment methods, and so on. This translates to huge savings for your company. A business with 100 orders per week that spends \$5 per order answering status update calls is saving \$26,000 per year in post-order costs just by switching to online self-service.

## Other UX Considerations

Details like this create a first-rate customer experience, which in turn fosters long-term customer loyalty:

- Are the search tools and shopping cart visible at all times?
- Can clients easily modify their shopping cart, and save it to return for a later purchase?
- Are customers' order and invoice history available when they log into their account?
- Does your web store suggest items based on past purchases and previously viewed products?
- Is your company contact information easy to find?
- Can shoppers read product ratings and reviews from other customers, and leave their own?



# Payments

## Payment Gateway Integration

You want a solution that integrates with the major payment gateways. Payment gateways are merchant services that authorize credit card and direct payment processing for web stores (and other vendors). As the vast majority of ecommerce transactions use credit cards, you are likely to lose a good deal of business if your web store doesn't accept them.

## Flexible Electronic Transaction Processing

Most ecommerce solutions are set up to capture credit card payments. However, they generally only support basic transaction types. Further, many B2B transactions use On Account payment. This means that a B2B ecommerce website has a strategic advantage if it is able to process electronic transactions like Automated Clearing House (ACH) and Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) payments.

A digital payment solution integrated to your ERP and ecommerce system can empower your businesses to accept an even wider variety of electronic payments, extending greater freedom to their customers while diversifying your own capabilities.





- » A consulting firm might not sell goods online but can still provide B2B clients a convenient e-payment site for billable hours.
- » An ecommerce company offering On Account billing can give their B2B customers a way to pay invoices directly on the company's website.
- » Businesses can incentivize early payments by offering scalable discounts if the payment comes in before the due date.
- » If a company wants to require a deposit on orders, they can define one for either a percentage or the full amount.
- » Transactional versatility allows for greater control on an order-by-order basis, such as issuing a post-authorization uplift if you anticipate additional fees.

## Online Invoice Payment

The majority of online consumers prefer paying bills through the biller's website, as opposed to a financial institution. Which means that even if you aren't running an ecommerce channel, your customers would still rather be paying you online directly through your website. A digital invoice payment solution integrated to your web store and your ERP makes that possible.

# Logistics

## Taxes

Opening a web store allows you to sell potentially all over the world, but this also means having to calculate accurate sales taxes in all the regions where you'll be doing business. Tax laws can be complex and vary widely even between states and provinces, let alone from country to country.

In 2018, for example, a United States Supreme Court case (Wayfair vs. South Dakota) determined that states can collect sales tax from purchases made by their residents even if the company involved has no physical presence within the state.

This has enormous implications for interstate business, so you'll avoid a great deal of frustration by choosing an ecommerce platform that integrates with third-party tax services like Avalara.

## Shipping Company Integration

The best ecommerce platforms also integrate with the major shipping companies. This greatly facilitates logistics no matter where you're doing business, and lets you calculate accurate shipping rates whether you're selling locally, nationally, or internationally.

## Find-a-Store

When you have one or more brick-or-mortar locations, Find-a-Store allows customers to find the nearest location using the Google Maps API. This feature is an ecommerce mainstay which has been around a long time. Modern updates give you the option of displaying images for each location, let your customers bookmark favorite locations and view store inventories.



# Curbside Pick-up

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, curbside pickup has become an increasingly popular solution for businesses operating brick-and-mortar stores. It gives them a way to continue operating in the face of store closures by letting customers schedule a time to come pick up online purchases outside the store. This has remained popular even with the lightening of pandemic restrictions, and serves as a crucial lifeline for sales should restrictions tighten.

## Conclusion

Every sign points to this being the largest year for ecommerce growth yet. Hopefully this guide has given you a good idea as to which ecommerce features your business needs and what kind of digital sales platform you want to build.

## Free 20-minute demo

If you'd like to know more, watch our free 20-minute demo. We'll show you where an ERP-integrated SaaS web store on the cloud will take your business. As our customers can tell you, our team can have your website live in a matter of weeks.

[Join a demo >](#)

## Ready to get started now?

Give us a call and let's talk about your project.

[Book a call today >](#)

### CANADA

1111, St-Charles  
Street West,  
Suite 255  
Longueuil, Quebec  
Canada J4K 5G4

666 St-Martin  
Boulevard West,  
Suite 330  
Laval, Quebec  
Canada H7M 5G4

### UNITED STATES

15 British American  
Boulevard  
Latham, NY 12110  
USA

### DENMARK

Hoejbro Plads 10  
1. Floor  
1200 Copenhagen,  
Denmark

### UKRAINE

Leonardo,  
17/52 Bogdana  
Khmelnitskogo  
Street,  
Kiev, Ukraine,  
01030



1-855-532-6663  
[support@k-ecommerce.com](mailto:support@k-ecommerce.com)

[k-ecommerce.com](https://k-ecommerce.com)

**k-ecommerce.**  
powered by **mdf commerce**