

# How to accelerate and grow your B2B commerce online

The ultimate guide to bigger,  
stronger, faster B2B commerce



# Meet your customers and their expectations online with modern B2B commerce

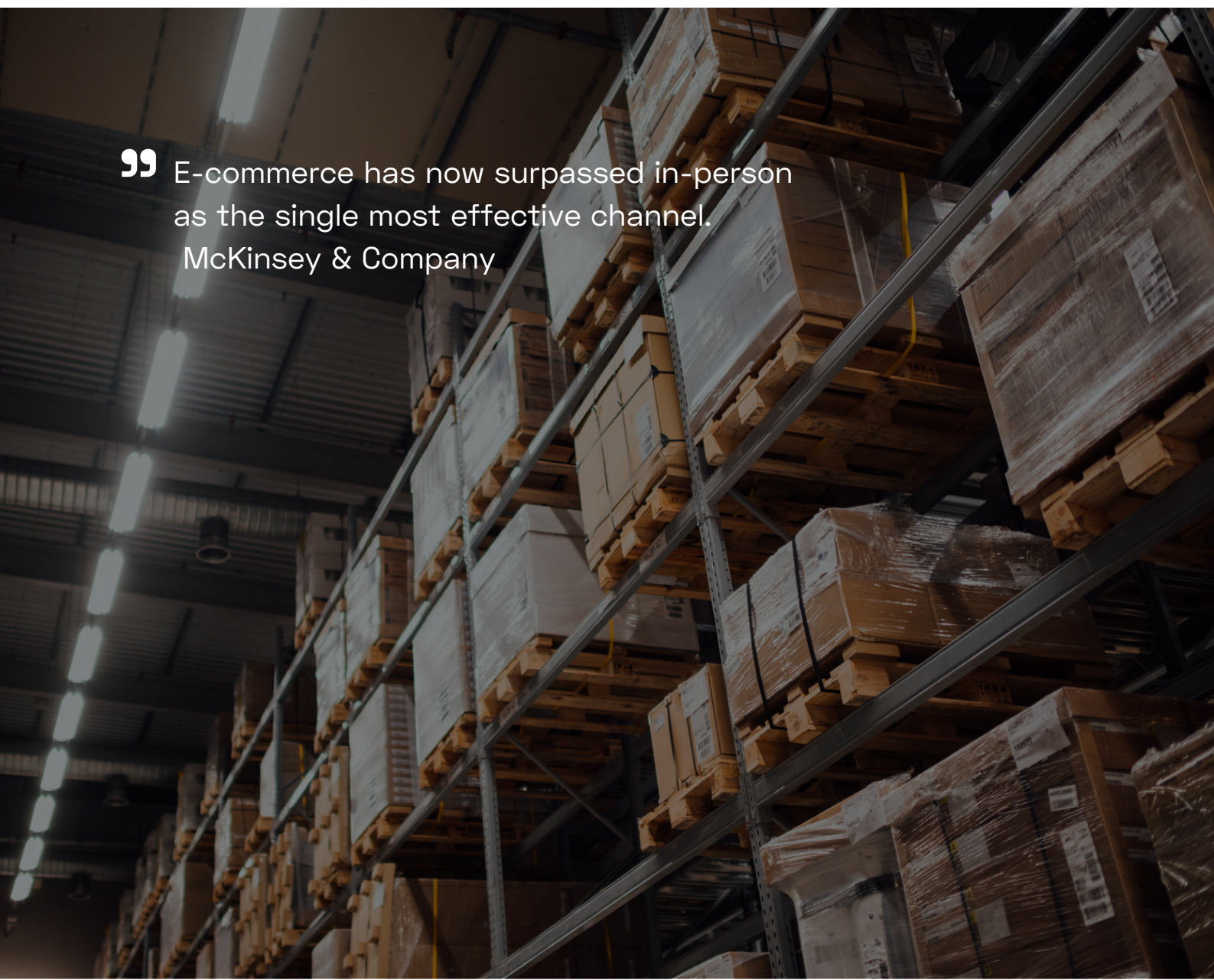
According to McKinsey & Company the leading edge for successful B2B sales growth is digital. This is due to many factors, but what they all have in common is that the need for digitalisation is swift and the experience needs to be at par with B2C commerce. B2B customers are increasingly demanding and expect a consumer-like experience with a modern user interface. With a robust and advanced B2B commerce engine you can benefit from the speed of change and become bigger, stronger and faster on the market.



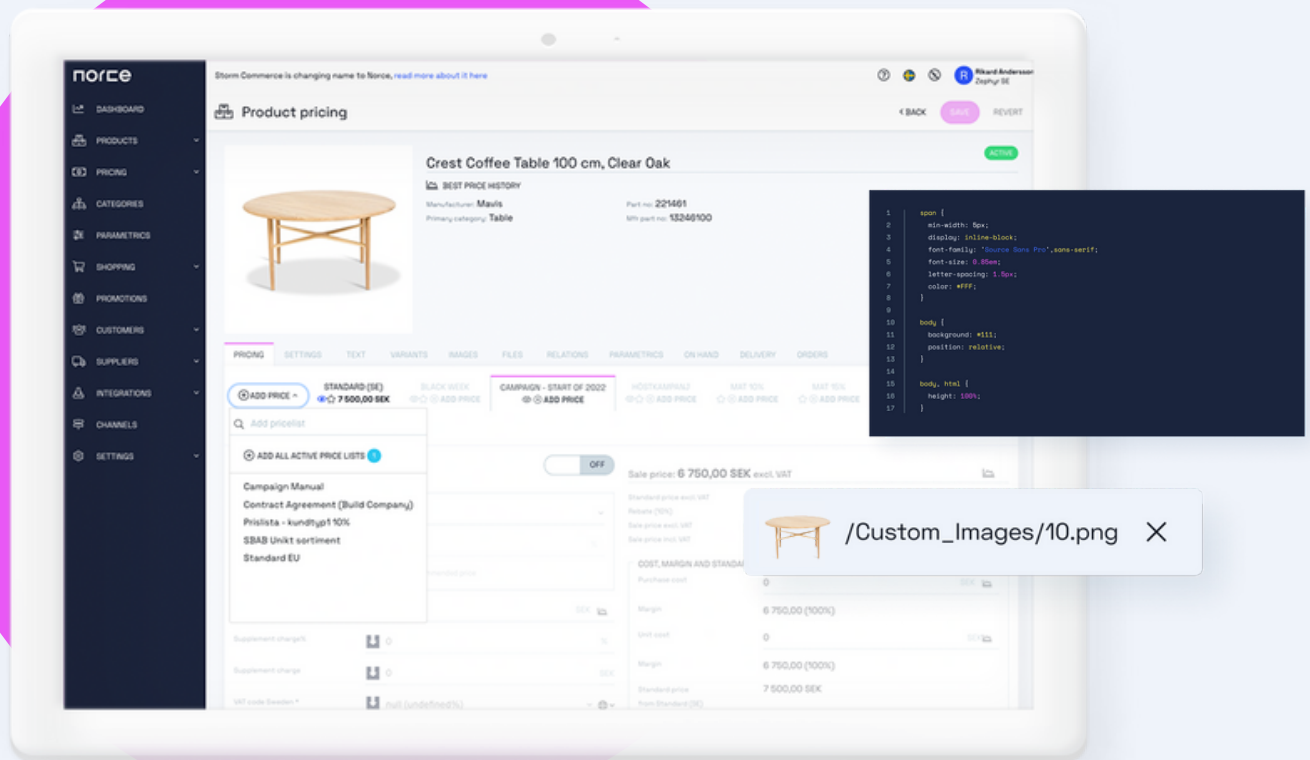
” Modern B2B commerce needs to be at par with B2C commerce.

# But we have nothing online, where do we begin?

In recent years e-commerce has surpassed face-to-face sales as the single most effective channel. This calls for a holistic approach and digitising the whole customer journey from research to repetitive orders. So, where to begin then? Many B2B companies still have their product information in a pdf catalogue. Consequently, a common approach is to start with structuring product information in a PIM (Product Information Management) system. When you do this, you will free up resources from working with updating analogue material to work more strategically with customers. However, in B2B, product pricing and structure is often complex which makes the choice of PIM fundamental. Most PIM-systems handles the structuring of product information and publishing, but they usually lack the commercial elements enabling seamless transition to e-commerce. When you choose a PIM system, make sure that you can work with customer-unique assortments, availability, and pricing. Choose a platform with open APIs which makes it easy to integrate with suppliers, customers, and translation services. Then you can ramp up to a fully functioning e-commerce site when you're ready!



“ E-commerce has now surpassed in-person as the single most effective channel.  
McKinsey & Company



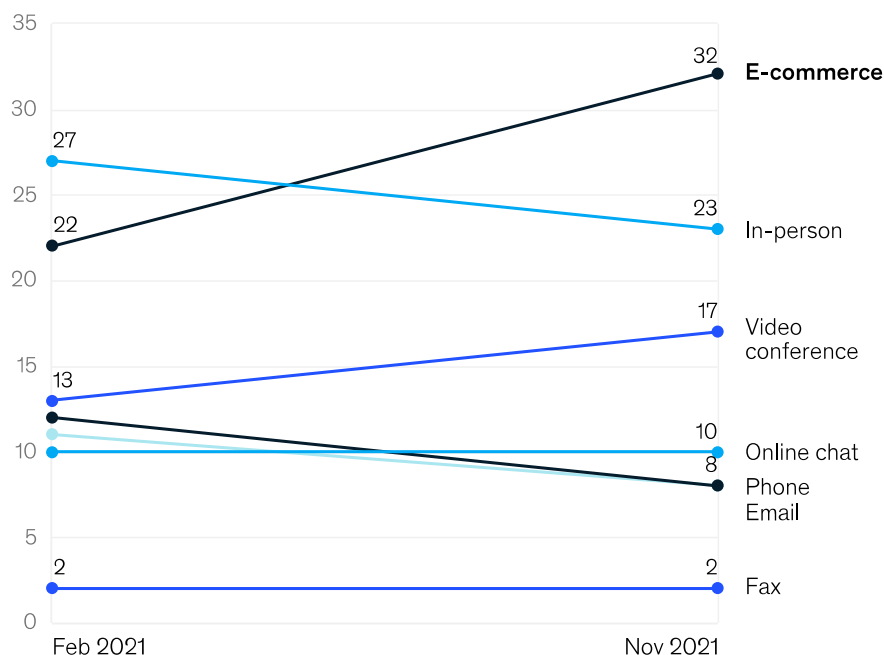
## CHECKLIST

# Digitalising product information, what to consider

- Choosing a strong PIM with open APIs
- Managing multiple markets and brands
- Complex product models, bundles
- Smart and flexible workflows
- Customer-unique assortments, availability, pricing

## E-commerce is the most effective sales channel for a plurality of B2Bs.

Effectiveness of sales channels,<sup>1</sup> % of respondents who identified channel as their most effective, US only



**E-commerce has now surpassed in-person as the single most effective channel.**

<sup>1</sup> Q: How effective are each of these sales channels for your company? Responses are % who ranked the given channel "1," indicating that it is the most effective of any channels the respondent's company sells through.

Source: McKinsey & Company Global B2B Pulse, Feb 2021, n = 562; Nov 2021, n = 602

McKinsey  
& Company

## We have digital commerce, but performance is slow

Many B2B companies make the mistake of building an e-commerce solution that depends on the business system, because a lot of the business logic is already in there. But the other side of the coin is that when an e-commerce solution is built with a dependency to the ERP system the performance will naturally be slow. What's even worse is that when the ERP is not responding the e-commerce solution stops working. This is a real showstopper since the customer expects your commerce experience to be fast and intuitive to navigate without having to hesitate in the flow, and at the same time your employees expect that it's easy to work with. It is also important to have possibilities for integration with many other systems and flexibility if customer needs and markets change.

This is why it's so important to choose a headless API-first software. When you work with open APIs the business logic and transactions are decoupled from the presentation layer and this will speed up the experience. Additionally, you get total freedom creating the best user experience without having to worry what's going on behind the scenes. Another benefit is that you can connect your digital commerce to many different channels, such as web, marketplaces, apps, resellers and more.

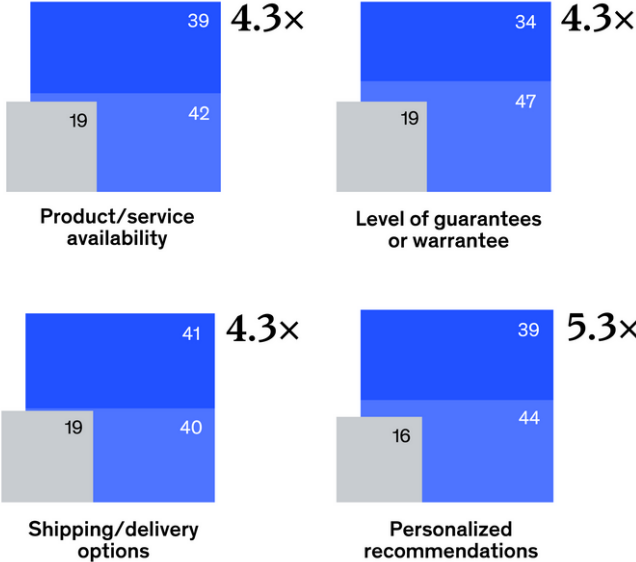
**B2B companies are pulling out the stops for e-commerce: 80 percent are making their online channels as good or better than offline ones.**

How B2B companies have set up their e-commerce channel compared to offline channels<sup>1</sup>  
 % of B2B respondents

Less appealing Same More appealing

Across multiple tested customer experience dimensions, B2B companies are ensuring their e-commerce channel is appealing.

Overall, ~40% have created an e-commerce channel that is likely to be MORE appealing than offline options, with another 40% reporting that e-commerce is at least on par with in-person or other more traditional channels.



<sup>1</sup> Q: We would like to understand how your company approaches selling products/services online (e-commerce). Respondents were given 3 options: "e-commerce limited/not as appealing vs. offline channels"; "e-commerce same as offline channels"; "e-commerce better than/more appealing vs. offline channels." Source: McKinsey & Company Global B2B Pulse, Nov 2021, n = 602

McKinsey & Company

” There is a big tidal wave coming for B2B companies in need of swift digitalisation as customer won't accept a poor analogue experience.

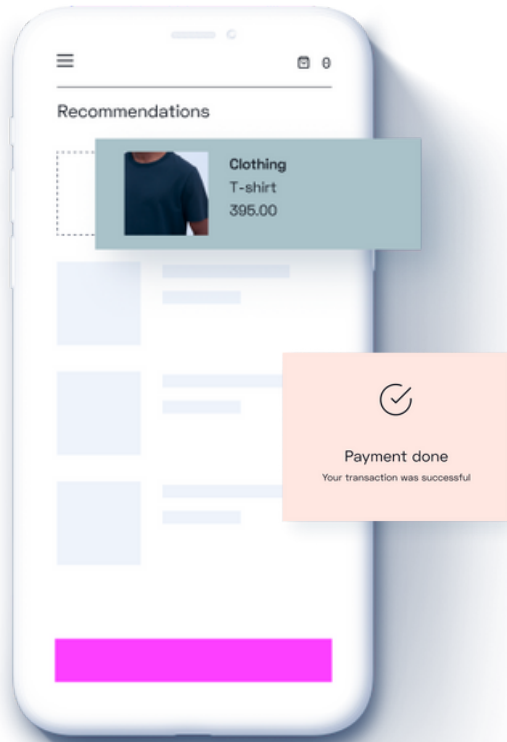


## CHECKLIST

# Speeding up performance, what to consider

- Decouple the business system (ERP) from the e-commerce
- Choose a headless API-first software
- Consumer-like experience (modern UX)
- Composable components (PBCs) for maximal flexibility
- True SaaS i.e., scalable, accessible, and always on latest version

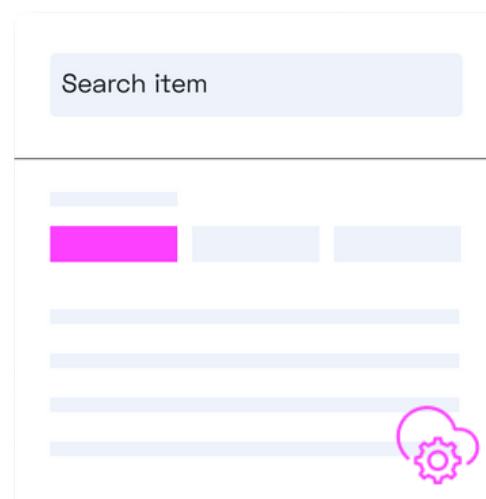
# Achieving a consumer-like experience is much harder in B2B, how do you tackle this?



Some companies have developed customer portals or apps to serve customers better, but these efforts often fail because of underlying issues with data or technology. When you are in the process of transforming your digital B2B commerce, you must consider that a B2B relationship is different from a B2C relationship. For instance, it requires customization to meet customer needs in terms of offerings and also coordination of pricing, assortment control and shipping calculations to make the transaction happen. Since the transformation to digital B2B commerce is accelerating you have to design the online experience with multiple markets and a comprehensive storefront in mind. Consider the fact that B2B customers spend more in digital channels, they are in it for the long run which means recurring sales, and they expect reordering to be smooth. This calls for a robust and advanced B2B commerce engine with a seamless checkout experience regardless of market.

## What functionalities make your digital B2B business thrive?

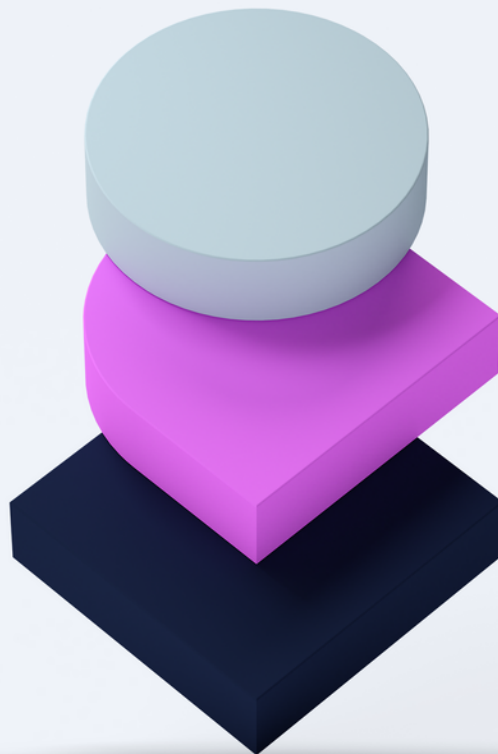
As mentioned before, B2B customers are increasingly demanding and expect a consumer-like experience with a modern user interface. Managing information about the products you sell is often a pain point, which calls for a strong PIM to manage your product information in all channels. Other requirements for B2B functionality are customer specific pricing management, assortment control, shipping calculations and being able to scale to more countries and different currencies. With a robust and advanced B2B commerce engine you can enjoy the speed of change and even explore the opportunity to combine B2B and B2C in the long run.



## CHECKLIST

# Checklist for a modern B2B commerce experience

- Clear assortments – everything visible is available
- Orders can be placed at any time of the day
- Resources are freed up to work more strategically
- Sales get a mobile solution to easily help customers place orders
- Total freedom in designing and using the interface



# So, what is key to B2B business success according to some of our partners?

We asked a selected few of our partners to give us their view on the requirements and best practices for modern B2B commerce and also asked them to give us a prediction for the future.



## ASK OUR PARTNERS

# What are the three most important things to consider in B2B e-commerce?



JULIA RUNFELDT  
SPOTON



ADAN HULTGREN  
PARTNERSENSE



STEFAN WINTERLÉN  
3BITS

- 1 Structure and enrichment of your product data. Many companies still work with everything in excel files, juggle information in dropbox, have non-updated pdf files and business systems that do not allow enriching product descriptions.

Customers and businesses are in constant change and that's something very important to consider in B2B e-commerce. With that in mind if you position your business and B2B e-commerce to swiftly adopt to the market changes and enable the capability to test new approaches, you will most likely take lead in your field.

Consider the business rules that applies to B2B commerce with customer unique prices, customer unique assortments, quotes and the relation to the customer.
- 2 Make sure your integrations run smoothly between internal and external systems. The reward for such an investment will not only be a lower risk for human errors but also avoiding unnecessary manual work.

B2B e-commerce is rarely a one-man job, to reach your full potential you need to have a great multidisciplinary team that can cover all from product information, sales, support, and logistics to IT. The teams differ in composition and there is no one golden setup, that needs to be specific for your business. Take help from friends in the industry and hire or outsource the parts that you are missing.

Try to make the B2B e-commerce as nice and easy as a good B2C e-commerce. It is harder but well worth the effort.
- 3 Get all employees on board! Act on data by interviewing your customers about what they want instead of getting stuck in "that's the way we've always done it."

B2B e-commerce is usually technically challenging, there is often a need of several integrations to ERP, CRM, and other systems within the organization and to partners. Your B2B e-commerce platform and process should enable you to scale these types of integrations and not hinder you from accomplishing your goals.

A common pitfall is to create real time dependencies to the ERP for frequently used data which can create a bottle neck for the performance when the traffic increases.

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ALEXANDER KAFKALETOS  
CAMELONTA



FREDRIK AXELL  
NEXER

- 1** E-commerce platform and PIM – The heart of e-commerce. Finding the right platform and PIM, adapted to needs and budget, is vital in order to achieve the desired result. Otherwise, you might end up being stuck in your choice of upcoming features and cost inefficient development opportunities.
- 2** The ERP Software. The right choice in software makes it easier for you to master the complex product, order, stock, and delivery logics.
- 3** Design the user experience according to the customers behaviour within your B2B commerce. For example - recurring orders, permissions, price lists and order approvals. These are things you need to address in your solution to make it effective and user friendly.

Dare to take the step and do not wait too long to replace old IT solutions and manual processes that hold back the opportunity to streamline and most important, develop your business. It's still easy to stay in the old a little too long and miss that today's B2B customer buyers are a generation that expects the same experience and accessibility as when they shop online as an end consumer.

Enrichment and product handling through a modern PIM system is getting more important to be effective and competitive.

B2B is often complex with unique business rules that support the overall strategy and USP's. Make sure to use standards as much as possible in the modern technical solutions and use the functionality and put the logic where it should be handled and don't make too many adaptations making it too hard to maintain over time. It's important to be able to scale effectively as the business evolves.



## ASK OUR PARTNERS

# What are the three strongest trends within B2B-commerce?



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- 1 Generational change in B2B buyers – the millennials are increasingly avoiding human contact in their research and when they make orders. Make sure you catch them online in several different channels.

2 More and more companies choose to approach the end customer directly, perhaps not for the entire range of products but for limited editions, spare parts, sale items etc. A perfect way to start testing e-commerce!

3 Configurators combined with 3D drawings to visualize product and results.
- Digitalization of everything, it's a new generation of people working in B2B, and they are well-known with tablets and smartphones which has made it possible for organizations to easily adopt digitalization. What we can see is that more processes now are fully supported via the B2B e-commerce or has technical support from the B2B e-commerce i.e., salespeople using the B2B e-commerce as a digital product catalogue.

Scale out, Swedish and Scandinavian companies are doing well and the accessibility to reach new markets have increased with the standardization within EU. We can see more and more B2B e-commerce companies moving out in the world.

Consolidation, there is a lot of competition and there is a lot of consolidation happening in the market.
- Many companies are creating a digital sales experience where the customer and the salesperson can interact. Full self-service should be provided to the customer, but it should also be a place where the customer and salesperson can interact in order to help the customer in a good way.

Simplified and more efficient sales and order process with less time spent on non-value increasing tasks, like entering e-mail-based orders into the ERPs or trying to find the latest product data sheet as part of a quote.

In a post covid world it is absolutely clear that you cannot rely on a purely face to face sales process. You have to offer an alternative digital way of doing sales.

## ASK OUR PARTNERS

# What are the three strongest trends within B2B-commerce?



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1 Headless e-commerce. A strong trend is to structure your e-commerce with headless technology. In this way you separate your solutions logics into smaller parts that are best suited for the task. If you need to alter a specific part - you can do so with minimal impact. This is particularly well suited in B2B e-commerce since the system structure within B2B is often complex.

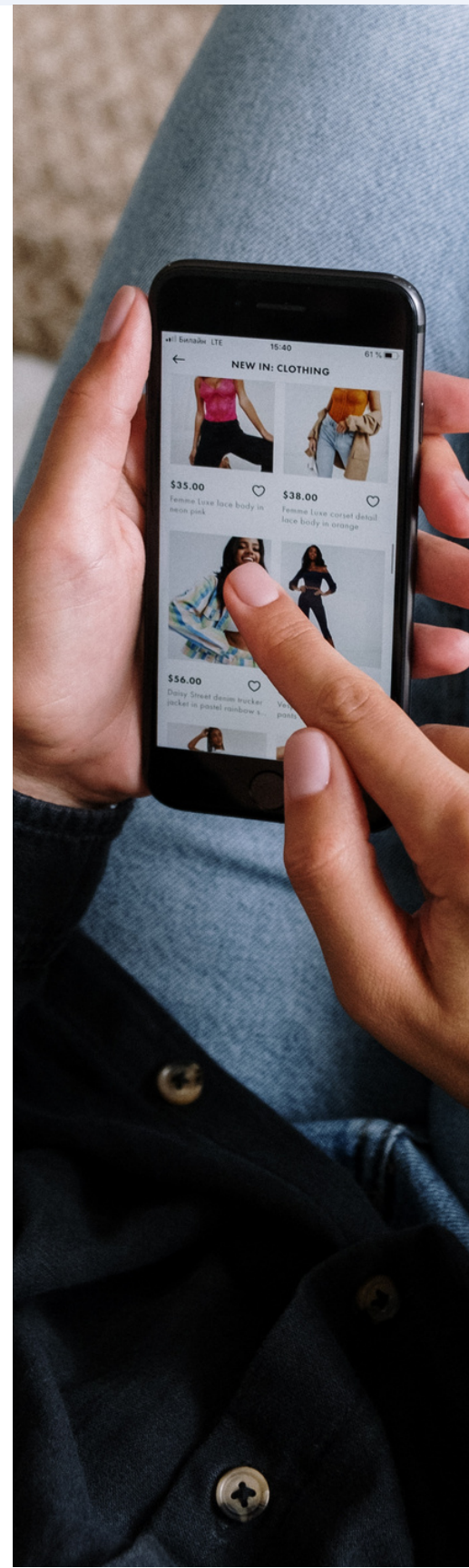
2 PunchOut – Offering a so-called PunchOut process is a strong trend within B2B. By using PunchOut, an external system is allowed to access your product assortment and perform orders injected into the e-commerce. In this way they can shop directly by using their own order software.

3 AI-based search – Having a fast and intuitive search, where it is easy to find all products and content is fundamental today. However with a search engine based on AI, or machine learning, you get features that adapt to what customers are looking for - which leads to an increased number of conversions.

Headless or micro service architecture to be able to be more flexible and to scale the business easier. Sometimes a business where you have a moving target, and you need to be ready to adapt on the way or if you really don't know how the business will transform in the upcoming years. You need flexibility and scalability, and you don't have a Suit strategy.

Moving towards B2C and sell directly to end-customers, making it possible to have both B2C and B2B in the same platform.

Different kind of recurring purchase offerings like subscriptions or recurring order lists.



# Creating a seamless B2B payment customer experience on all markets

Our partner Briqpay is specialised in B2B payment infrastructure and analytics. We asked Briqpay to give us their view on what to keep in mind regarding payments in modern B2B commerce and what trends they see gain momentum.



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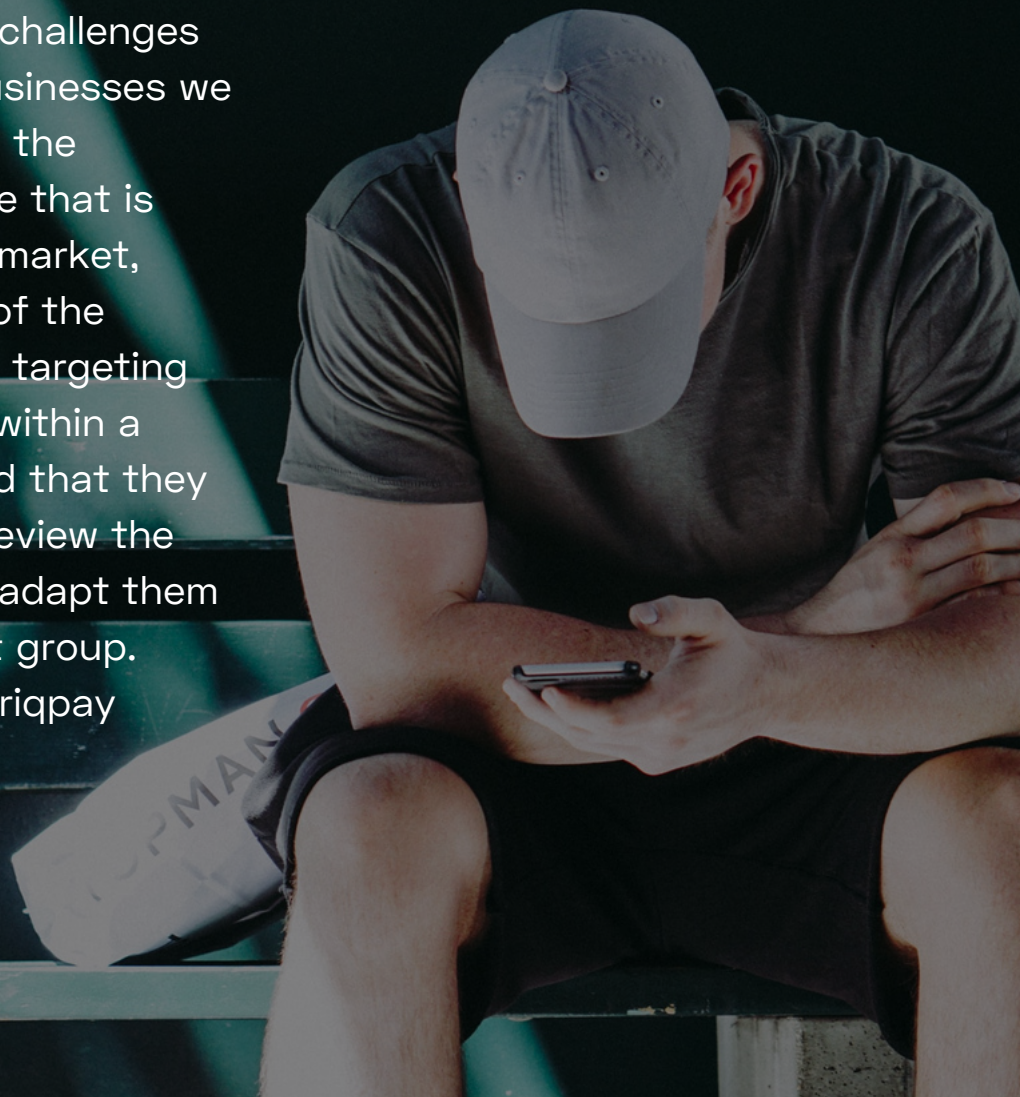
Hey you and thanks for your purchase.

# Customer expectations merge in an online world

Cards, open banking, digital wallets, invoice, partial payments, and cryptocurrency are just some of the payment methods available to consumers today. The number of choices and methods increase with trends and market demand as innovative solutions drive digitization forward. But even though it is the same person who at the end of the day has all these choices as a consumer, the options are limited when you represent a business.

Both selling and buying as a business today is considered extremely complex, and according to a survey released by Gartner in 2019, a whopping 77% of business customers experienced their last purchase as complicated. In a world where accessibility increases and people in the consumer world focus on improving customer journeys, we can see that this trend is now starting to gain momentum in B2B.

” One of the biggest challenges some of the B2B businesses we talk to are facing is the generational change that is taking place in the market, where a large part of the customers they are targeting today have retired within a couple of years, and that they therefore need to review the sales processes to adapt them to a younger target group.  
Björn Widerström, Briqpay



The B2B payment flow is largely driven by credit, either by issuing an invoice or by offering a line of credit. Both parts are based on the creditworthiness of the customer. It limits sales against e.g., start-up companies where credit history is limited or simply put businesses that do not have the creditworthiness required to obtain credit.

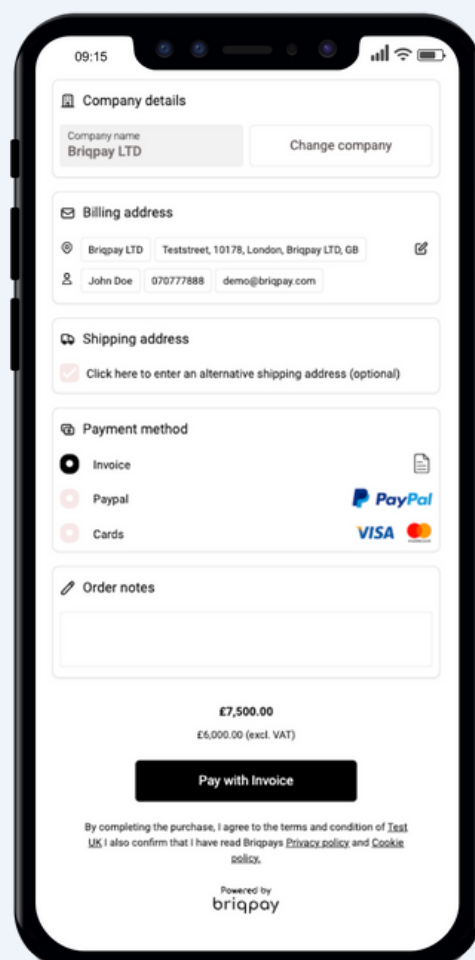
Just offering invoice as a payment method limits which customers that can buy and removes the opportunity to pay as they wish. By including more payment methods such as card or bank transfer, the possibility opens up for more customers to buy, while at the same time offering the option to pay as they wish. For smaller businesses, it is in many cases easier to buy on the company card than to pay an invoice.

Creating a future-proof customer journey, adaptations are required, partly in the payment methods but also in the customer journey itself. Public product prices will increase your visibility on Google and a guest checkout will attract a younger target group. Even though a consumer flow may not always be directly applicable to B2B, this is where you should take inspiration from to create as customer-adapted and sales-driving flows as possible. Today, the majority of buyers are millennials, a generation that is used to being able to shop however they want, when they want and that puts higher demands on the selling company.

One reason why the consumer market is so far ahead is the range of smart solutions, a trend we clearly see beginning to be reflected in B2B with several new players on the market driving innovation forward.

” We can see that those among our customers who offer more payment methods have a better conversion than those who only offer invoice. It’s an early sign of where the market is headed.  
Björn Widerström, Briqpay

With the future ahead of us, the time is now to make a digital B2B investment with a focus on the customer journey and ease of use.



# Do you want to accelerate and grow your B2B commerce online?

There has been a big change in B2B customer behaviour, sales are growing online, and the expectation is a consumer-like experience with a modern user interface. Going for a robust and advanced B2B commerce engine will accelerate development and meet new business needs. It will keep your customers satisfied and enable your employees to focus on the core business. If you want more information about the functionality or business value and how we can be a part of your e-commerce solution, feel free to contact us!

Norce is a Nordic leader in software-as-a-service (SaaS) commerce. We provide retailers, brands and B2B customers with powerful tools for growth. Through a composable architecture, an open platform (API-first) and cloud-based offering (True SaaS), we let solution partners and e-tailors create tomorrow's customer journeys. Together, we accelerate the transformation of digital commerce. With over two decades of continuous evolution, built by e-commerce pioneers seeking to design the ultimate platform for online commerce, the product stands out for its ability to meet the highest standards. Norce is today trusted by some of the Nordic region's most successful companies including Adlibris, Autoexperten, Blåkläder, ICA, Ludvig Svensson, Nobia, Spendrups, Swedish Match, Tress and Ultimate Nordic. Annually, over ten million transactions take place through the platform, to a value exceeding EUR 1,3 billion. Our team of +100 dedicated experts operates from Stockholm, Gothenburg, Oslo, and Gdansk with one common objective, creating superior value for our customers and partners. For more information, visit [www.norce.io](http://www.norce.io) or follow us on LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook.

Norce  
031-788 41 00  
[www.norce.io](http://www.norce.io)  
[sales@norce.io](mailto:sales@norce.io)

Gothenburg – Sten Sturegatan 44  
Stockholm – Katarinavägen 15  
Oslo - Universitetsgata 2

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# Accelerating digital commerce

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