

REPORT

Achieving Agile & Scalable B2B eCommerce

How B2B Organizations Can Adapt
to Changing Market Trends with
Flexible Digital Storefronts



Executive Summary

More than ever, B2B organizations depend on digital storefronts to meet customer expectations and drive sales growth.

However, creating a B2B eCommerce environment that consistently meets demands has proven challenging. Storefronts must not only be agile enough to adapt to shifts in the market, but also scalable enough to align with the buyers' increasing appetite for digital purchasing.

Based on insights from senior leaders across manufacturing and distribution sectors, this report provides a comprehensive overview of the most common obstacles to B2B eCommerce success and offers actionable recommendations for organizations looking to enhance their digital sales capabilities.

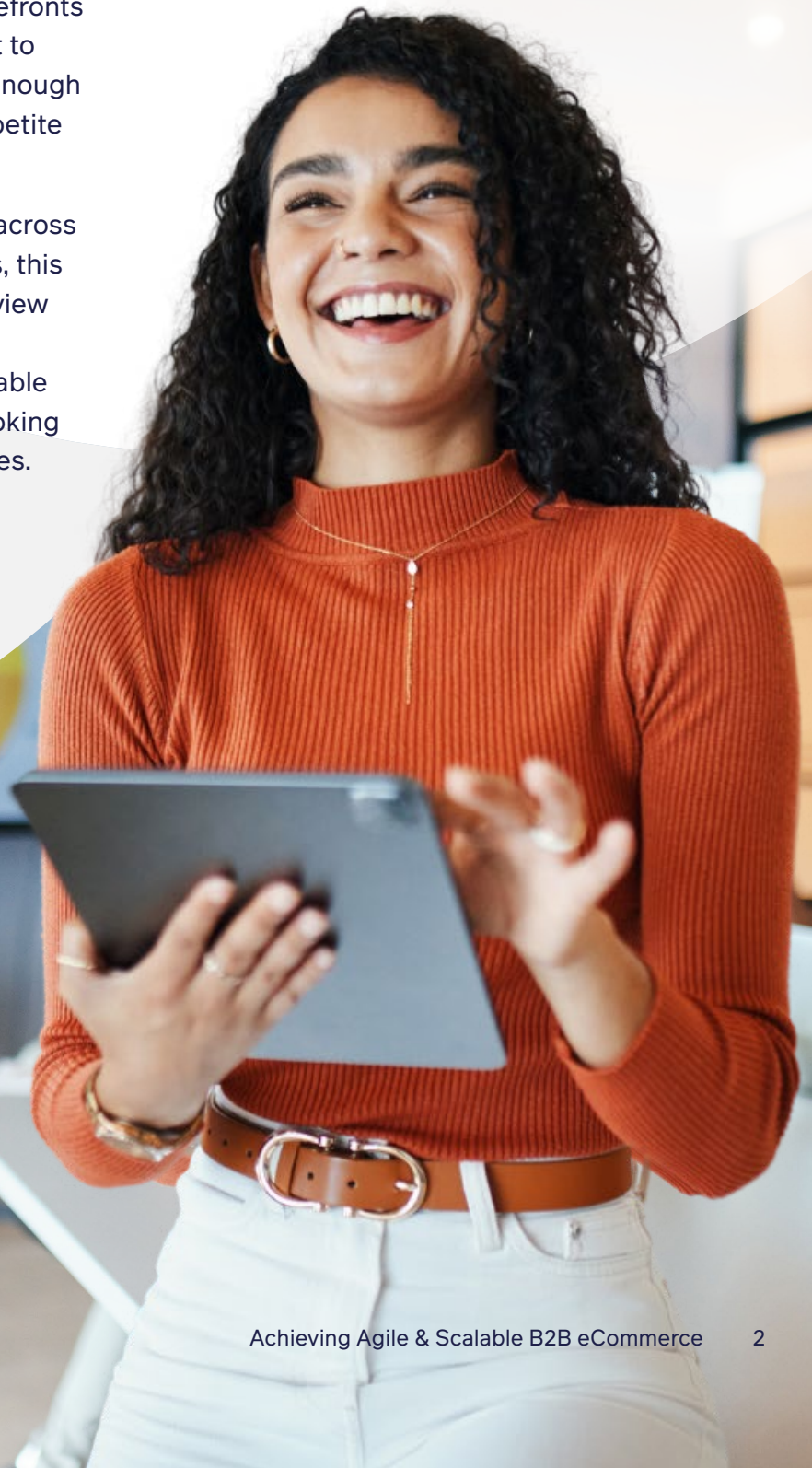


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About the Respondents

Roles



Marketing



Digital



eCommerce



CX

Annual Revenue

25% \$5 billion to \$10 billion

30% More than \$10 billion

Key Insights

76% say customers make at least 50% of their purchases through eCommerce.

12% Only 12% "Strongly agree" that their eCommerce strategies are "both agile and scalable."

57% are "very effective" at using composable commerce architecture.

The two most significant challenges to scaling B2B eCommerce:

- Lack of adoption from customers (53%)
- Issues with legacy systems (40%)

77% say customers don't adopt eCommerce due to security, invoicing, or credit concerns.

89% of B2B eCommerce sites don't show customers real-time inventory numbers.

67% say mobile and accessibility optimization is a "high priority" for eCommerce.

98% consider real-time data critical to seamless eCommerce experiences.

The Current State of B2B eCommerce Adoption

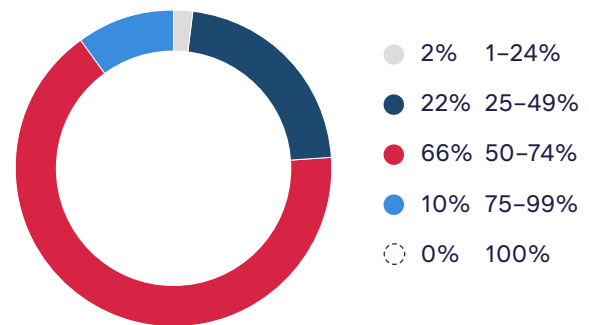
All surveyed companies operate B2B web stores or digital storefronts, with 66% reporting customers make 50-74% of purchases digitally and 10% reporting 75-99% digital purchases.

This indicates eCommerce has become the primary transaction method for many B2B relationships. Practitioners have noted that B2B eCommerce adoption has accelerated since the COVID-19 pandemic, which acted as an “inflection point.”

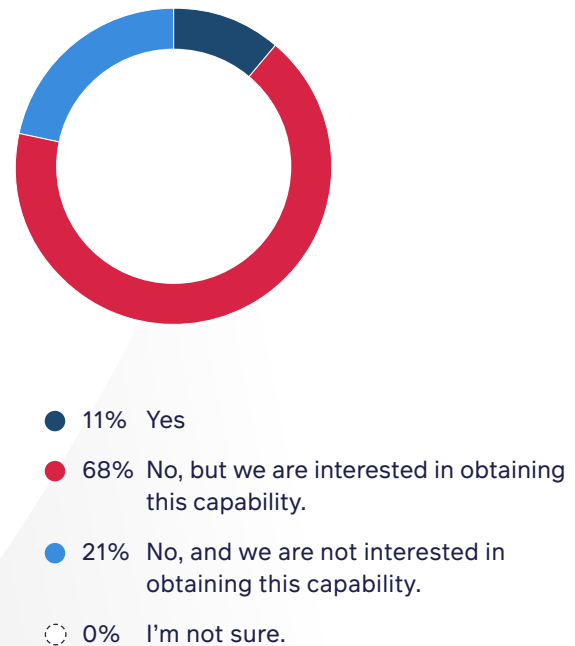
Organizations without robust eCommerce capabilities risk losing market share as buyers increasingly embrace digital purchasing methods.

Capabilities like real-time inventory tracking for customers are an example of what many B2B buyers now expect from vendors. Most respondents (89%) don't provide real-time inventory visibility. However, 68% want this capability, highlighting a significant opportunity for those organizations to create a more customer-centric environment.

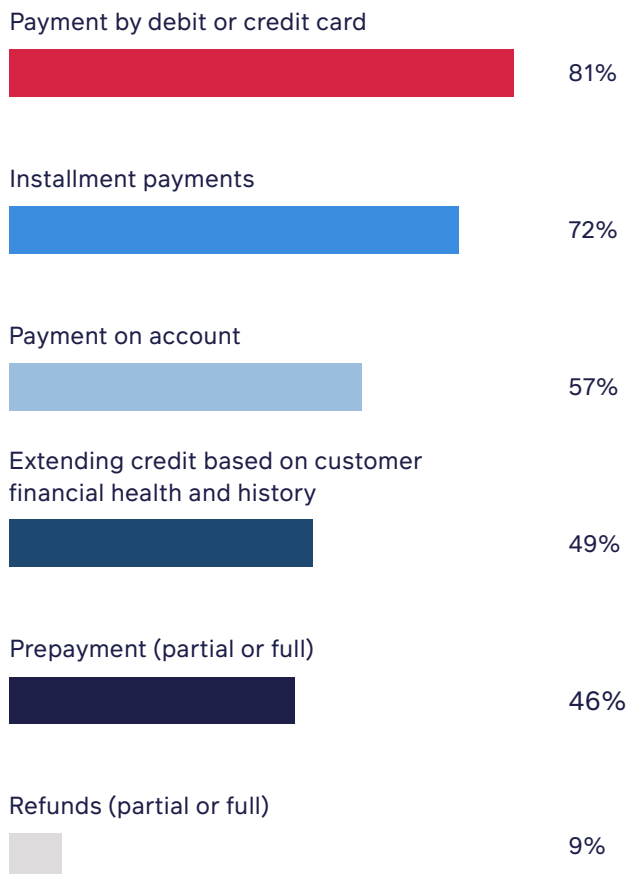
What percentage of your customers' purchases are currently made through your B2B web store, eCommerce site, or digital storefront?



Does your current B2B eCommerce site or web store provide customers with real-time inventory numbers?



Which of the following payment options and capabilities can you currently offer your customers through your B2B eCommerce site or web store?



For payments, companies offer diverse options, including debit and credit cards (81%), installment plans (72%), and account-based payments (57%). To build trust and reduce customer service inquiries, B2B eCommerce leaders should expand their online payment options and display comprehensive inventory data directly at the point of sale.

Practitioner Perspectives

B2B Online Chicago 2025 conference speakers noted that the next generation of B2B buyers is driving eCommerce adoption. Younger buyers favor eCommerce because it's what they're familiar with in their personal lives as consumers.

"While older generations are still attached to what they've known for decades, we're in a place where younger generations are emerging not just into the workforce, but also as B2B buyers of technologies and services," said one practitioner.



Barriers to Agile and Scalable B2B eCommerce

While 83% "somewhat agree" their B2B eCommerce strategy is agile and scalable, only 12% "strongly agree," revealing that organizations' eCommerce capabilities aren't supporting their growth objectives.

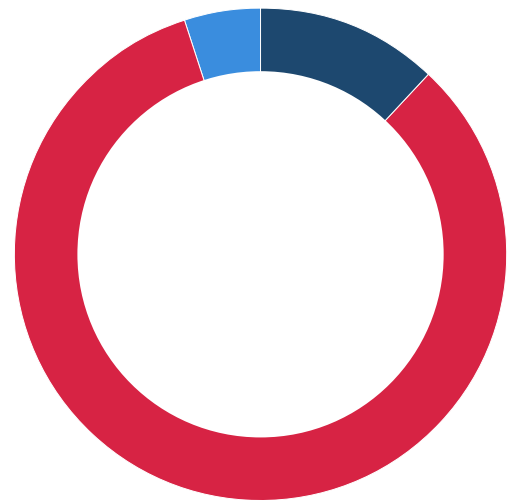
Conversations with respondents revealed a wide range of obstacles to improving their B2B digital storefronts. Many are struggling to adapt to buyer behaviors.

"We are having difficulty bringing our digital storefront to the unique buying process of our B2B customers," notes one respondent, highlighting the challenge of translating complex B2B purchasing workflows to a user-friendly digital environment.

The mobile experience also remains a pain point, with one respondent noting, "Our mobile experience is not where it should be, we're not optimized for that experience."

Finally, integration challenges are also an issue, with many organizations struggling to maintain consistency across their digital real estate and connect their storefronts with modern payment gateways. B2B-specific functionality gaps exist around approval systems, catalog management, and customized experiences for different customer types.

How much do you agree with the following statement: 'Our current B2B eCommerce strategy is both agile and scalable'?



- 12% Strongly agree
- 83% Somewhat agree
- 5% Somewhat disagree
- 0% Strongly disagree

Case Study: Carrier Global Corporation's eCommerce Transformation

Carrier Global Corporation embarked on an ambitious digital transformation journey to modernize its fragmented eCommerce ecosystem.

"When you look at Carrier's eCommerce footprint, there are about 25-30 different instances of commerce and a variety of selling motions in a variety of regions," said Steve Duran, Associate Director of Global Commerce at Carrier, during a Fireside Chat at B2B Online Florida 2024.

Duran led the project, addressing a high total cost of ownership and legacy system challenges. Scalability was a high priority:

"I want to be able to build unlimited eCommerce instances at Carrier in a 30-day implementation window," Duran said. This initiative resulted in Carrier's "OneCommerce" accelerator built on Shopify, which successfully addressed its business requirements while maintaining regional flexibility.

According to a speaker from **B2B Online Chicago 2025**, most companies still rely on manual processes when managing customer data, particularly on non-digital sales channels. They noted that they've witnessed "teams processing hundreds of e-mailed purchase orders daily despite ongoing digital initiatives."

When leaders aren't aligned with an eCommerce transformation initiative, practitioners can face internal barriers on top of the technical challenges they'd expect from such a project.



Evaluating Current B2B eCommerce Solutions

Most respondents rate their B2B eCommerce solutions "very effective" at supporting composable commerce architecture (57%), integration with business systems (52%), and scalable infrastructure (52%). This suggests progress in implementing flexible, modular eCommerce approaches and connecting platforms with backbone systems like ERPs, CRMs, and PIMs.

However, 50% or more rate their solutions only "somewhat effective" at other agile and scalable eCommerce characteristics, suggesting a need for flexible cloud-based solutions.

Practitioner Perspectives

Integration remains a critical focus. According to one speaker from **B2B Online Chicago 2025**, their organization is focused on finding "connections that would work between our eCommerce platform and our multiple procurement systems" to streamline processes.

Many businesses have already moved on from legacy systems, as one executive explained: "We had an older platform over ten years ago that was created entirely by us, and we realized it was not going to work. We brought in a vendor with a cloud-based eCommerce solution to help us obtain more opportunities".



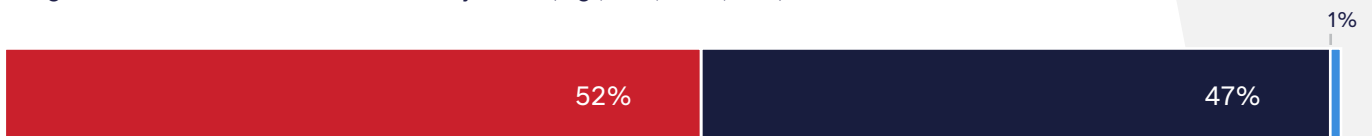
How effective are your current solutions at supporting the following agile and scalable characteristics of B2B eCommerce?

● Very effective ● Somewhat effective ● Not effective

Use of a composable commerce architecture
(e.g., microservices, API-first, cloud-native, headless)



Integration with other critical business systems (e.g., ERP, CRM, PIM)



A scalable infrastructure that supports growth
(e.g., new product catalogs, geographic expansion)



Support for multiple business models
(e.g., product sales, subscriptions, contract-based)



Automated workflows
(e.g., for custom pricing, inventory management, and invoicing)



Ability to handle high traffic spikes and large order volumes



AI-driven personalization capabilities
(e.g., personalized messaging, AI assistants)



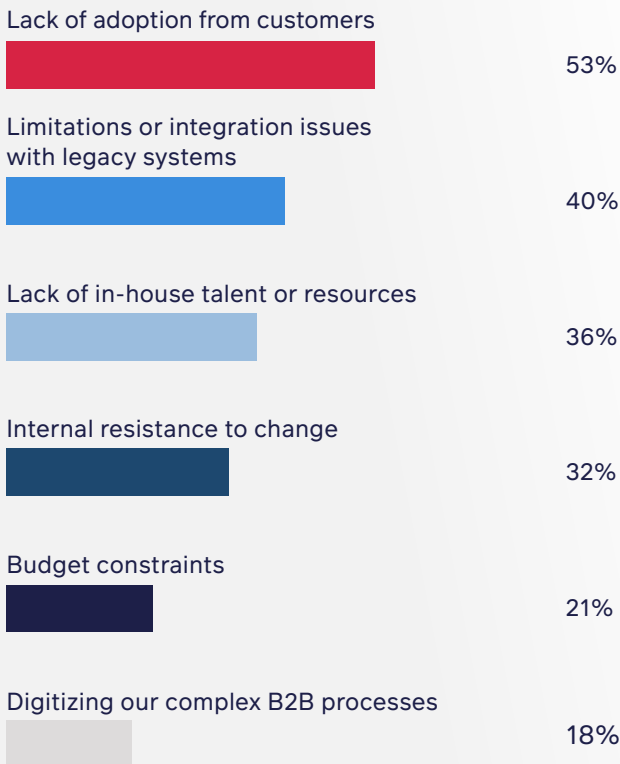
Overcoming Adoption Challenges in B2B eCommerce

Customer adoption issues (53%) and legacy system limitations (40%) represent the primary barriers to scaling eCommerce operations.

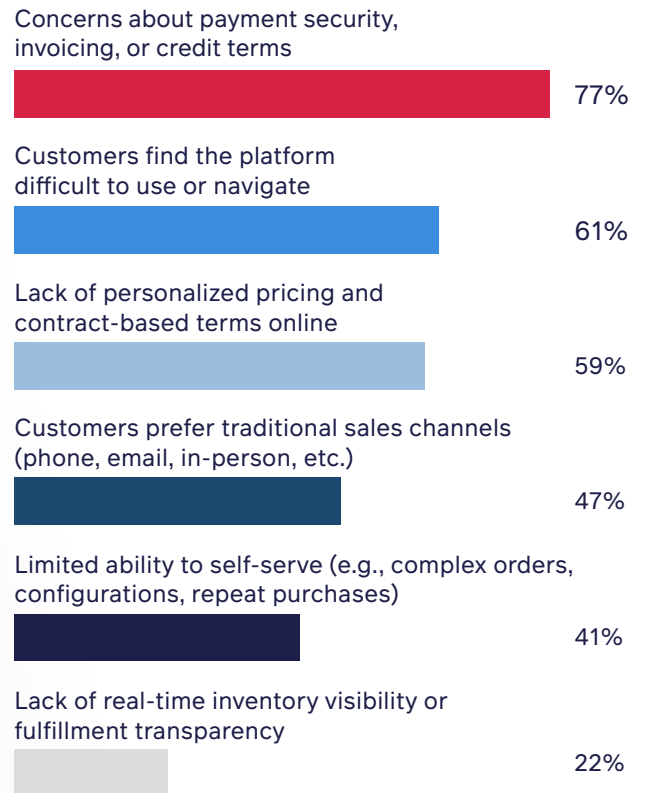
Drilling deeper, payment security concerns (77%), platform usability issues (61%), and lack of personalized pricing (59%) emerge as principal obstacles, specifically in the area of customer adoption.

These challenges highlight the importance of financial trust, intuitive interfaces, and maintaining established B2B relationship dynamics, even in digital sales environments. As such, organizations must deliver storefronts that are innovative, but also familiar and reliable enough to earn the trust of both customers and stakeholders.

Which of the following are the two most significant challenges you face when scaling your B2B eCommerce initiatives?



What are the primary reasons your B2B customers are not fully adopting your eCommerce platform?



Case Study: Lonza Works to Overcome Internal Barriers

During a session at **B2B Online Florida 2024**, Valerie Van Hulle, the Global Director of Digital Commerce at Swiss Manufacturer, Lonza, discussed how the company faced internal barriers to the adoption of new systems. Specifically, internal resistance created barriers to the implementation of new product information management systems that would support its eCommerce strategy.

“The biggest challenge from an implementation perspective has been change management,” said Van Hulle.

“For us, it’s all about which solution fits our requirements internally, helps us level up our strategy, and supports us as we create documents, value propositions, and technical materials.”

Van Hulle recommends B2B ecommerce leaders “fight for every dollar” in their search for an optimized platform while ensuring they “have the right governance” to support new solutions.

“It’s not a magic bullet,” said Van Hulle. “Take a look at yourself and determine how you will support it.”

Practitioner Perspectives

Encouraging adoption among customers requires nuance. Successful organizations focus on “meeting customers where they are,” even if their preferences don’t always align with the company’s digital sales priorities. That means they must implement multiple pathways to purchase based on the priorities of different types of buyers, including buyers of different generations.

When addressing sales team concerns about eCommerce adoption, one speaker from **B2B Online Chicago 2025** said, “We’re not going to change the incentive model. If your customer orders online, you will still get commission”, positioning digital tools as enhancements to the activities of salespeople rather than replacements.



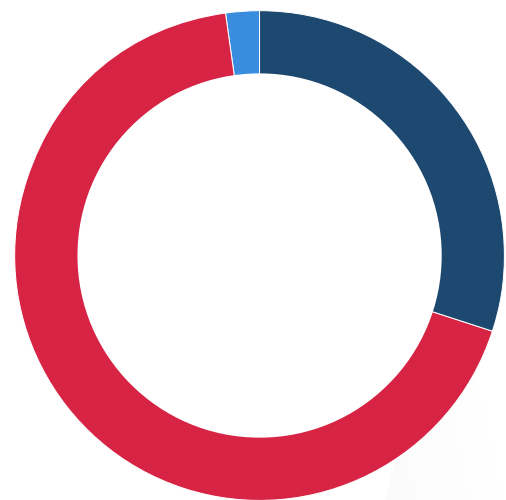
Strategic Priorities for Agile and Scalable B2B eCommerce

In the respondents' efforts to create an agile and scalable B2B eCommerce strategy over the next 12 months, mobile optimization is the most common "high priority" initiative (67%), followed by scalable architecture (57%), analytics tools (56%), and system integration (55%).

Nearly all respondents consider real-time data either important (68%) or critical (30%) for delivering seamless experiences.

Organizations effectively leveraging real-time data will be better positioned to meet customer expectations. When paired with enhanced mobile eCommerce capabilities, sales teams can create an intuitive and information-rich buying experience directly on their customers' smartphones.

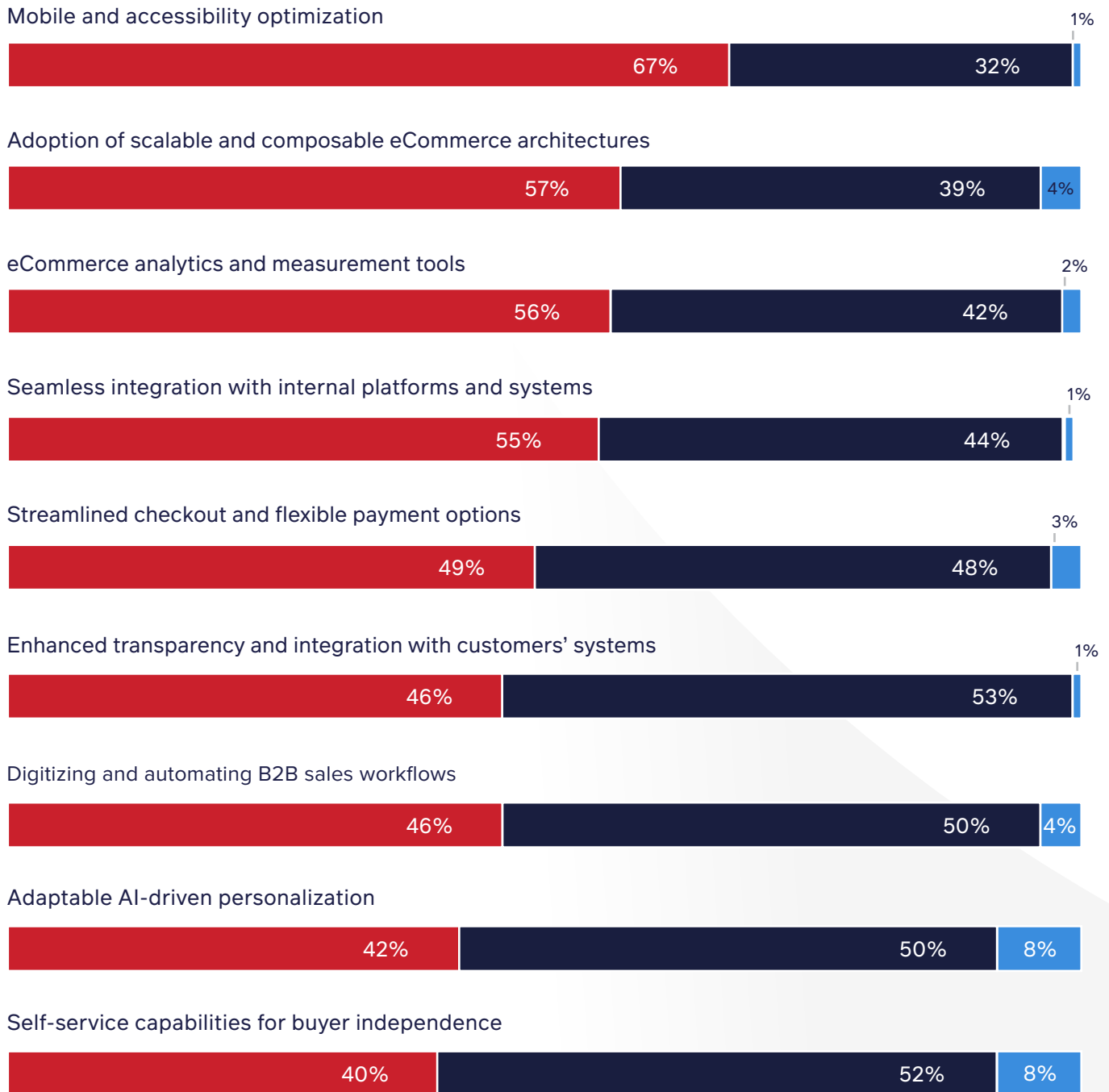
How important is real-time data in delivering a seamless B2B eCommerce experience for your customers?



- 30% Critical
- 68% Important
- 2% Not very important
- 0% Not important at all

In its efforts to create an agile and scalable B2B eCommerce strategy over the next 12 months, how much of a priority will improving the following elements be for your organization?

● High priority ● Moderate priority ● Low priority



Case Study: Kimberly-Clarke, Inc. Prioritizes People and Products to Drive Digital Transformation

During a presentation at **B2B Online Florida 2024**, Daniel Winstead, Associate Director of Global Content Platforms at paperbased product manufacturer Kimberly-Clarke, explained how product experience management (PXM) became central to the company's digital B2B sales strategy.

"In our B2B business, we sell to industrial distributors who are stocking the washrooms at offices and large venues," said Winstead.

"We also sell products to consumers, which is a completely different profile, but we're trying to take a two-pronged approach and meet somewhere in the middle."

Product-Centricity and Internal Governance

To achieve a similar level of quality in B2B eCommerce, Kimberly-Clarke focused on personalization and product-centered content as well as the internal development of digital sales capabilities.

This involved conducting a thorough evaluation of not only its technical systems but also its people:

"We spent months evaluating our ecosystem, but we wanted to center on the people in the process," said Winstead.

Adapting Systems and Processes to Sales Regions

To move forward, the company had to understand how its customers "interacted with" its data. It began by evaluating the very end of its supply chain, working its way back to "the source systems and intermediaries" to identify how best to serve "distinct regions."

This led the company to adapt how it operates product information management and digital asset management platforms in specific regions.

"We homed in on a business unit to start with as a pilot," said Winstead. "We learned so much from the beta launch that we were able to do a big release in North America, and that's been impressive."

Suggestions for Other Companies

Winstead ended with the following suggestions for other practitioners going through similar processes:

“Collaborate with your people.

Don’t make a decision in a vacuum. What I learned is that if you try to do that, all eyes are on you to deliver. Aggregate a consensus from the people around you, but don’t be afraid to speak your mind.”

Finally, Winstead suggested that companies “go back to the beginning, start early, and do a lot of research. Get executive buy-in and bring them into the team,” before implementing transformative changes.

Practitioner Perspectives

One speaker from **B2B Online Chicago 2025** told **B2B Online Insights** that they are focused on personalizing buyer journeys, so they “accommodate for each and every one of our customers.” The idea is to create functionality “that can be adjusted and aligned with their workflow”.



The commerce platform that's engineered for B2B.

“With Sana Commerce, we’ve reclaimed valuable time for our sales team to focus on higher-value tasks, while providing our partners with an intuitive spare parts ordering system. Without Sana Commerce, our market reach would be limited. It’s not just a platform; it’s our key to finding the right sales channels and informing our dealers.”

Peter Jäger
Head of Project & Process Management at PALFINGER

The PALFINGER logo, featuring the word 'PALFINGER' in bold, black, uppercase letters inside a yellow rounded rectangle.

Conclusion: The Most Significant Upcoming Changes to B2B eCommerce

B2B eCommerce is poised for significant growth and transformation in the coming year, with several key trends emerging from the respondents. Organizations that anticipate and adapt to these changes will be best positioned to create agile eCommerce environments that can scale with growing demand for digital B2B purchasing.

Transparency and self-service capabilities stand out as dominant themes. "More B2B buyers will want to independently manage their accounts and track their orders," notes one respondent, highlighting the growing expectation for customer autonomy.

Mobile optimization, personalization, and AI integration also feature prominently in respondents' predictions, as they've witnessed these capabilities become standardized elsewhere. As one respondent summarized, "B2B buyers will expect the same experience they get from their personal shopping experiences. Companies must improve their website design and navigation."

This convergence of B2C and B2B eCommerce processes is perhaps the most fundamental shift facing organizations as they ramp up their strategies. As another respondent observed, "An increasing number of buyers will expect B2B eCommerce websites to function in the same manner as sites they use in their personal lives."

Organizations that fail to meet this demand risk falling behind their competitors in the deployment of next-generation eCommerce capabilities. These include customer-centric features like repeat purchasing capabilities, contextualized buying interfaces, and scalable storefronts,. However, they also include agile revenue-drivers like streamlined account-based ordering processes, real-time product recommendations, AI-powered buying assistants, and even subscription-based purchasing options.

Key Suggestions



Prioritize mobile and accessibility optimization across your entire eCommerce platform:

Ensuring your site functions seamlessly on all devices will significantly improve customer adoption and satisfaction.



Adopt the most robust payment, invoicing, and credit security protocols, and inform your customers:

Security concerns are primary barriers to customer adoption, and implementing robust security measures and flexible payment options can help.



Invest in real-time inventory visibility:

Providing customers with accurate inventory information can improve the buying experience, and most companies lack this capability.



Adopt a composable, modular eCommerce architecture that can change as you scale:

Embracing microservices, API-first, cloud-native, and headless architectures will improve your ability to adapt to changing market conditions.

About the Author



B2B Online Insights, the industry research and digital publishing arm of B2B Online, delivers cutting-edge data and analysis on trends, challenges, and opportunities in the B2B eCommerce and digital marketing sectors. Through comprehensive research reports, webinars, and thought leadership initiatives, we empower senior-level B2B leaders to make informed strategic

decisions and stay ahead in the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Our deep industry intelligence not only informs B2B leaders but also connects innovative solution providers with key decision-makers, fostering a dynamic ecosystem that drives the future of digital commerce in the B2B space.

For more information, please visit wbrinsights.com.

About us



Sana Commerce is the only real-time B2B commerce platform built for manufacturers. We deliver instant data synchronization, a seamless end-to-end buyer and seller experience, and built-in guided analytics.

Our real-time B2B platform empowers manufacturers to run smarter, faster, and more connected ecommerce operations, bettering the buying experience for buyers and sellers alike.

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Report: B2B insight 2025: Achieving Agile & Scalable B2B eCommerce
Version EN 1.0 07/2025

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