

YOUR REPLATFORMING JOURNEY

A practical guide to choosing your
new ecommerce platform



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SUMMARY

01 A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Re-platforming is a big and sometimes overwhelming task, especially if you are a small to mid-range business. This is where we come in, to give you the key points you should focus on and break your way into the eCommerce environment.

Many existing articles touch upon the actions to take when setting up your new platform. This article goes into more depth than that, by telling you the questions you should be asking before, during and after your journey.

'Your Re-Platforming Journey' draws upon a wealth of eCommerce expertise to curate the real need-to-know facts of finding and implementing a new platform and combines it with expert interpretation to give you the actionable insight you need.

Our aim is not to capture and bombard you with every facet of re-platforming but give you the main points which you will need to make an educated decision. We make it easy for you to understand what you should really be paying attention to.

We hope it will help you.



VIKRAM SAXENA
CEO



02 WHY RE-PLATFORM?

KEY MOTIVATORS

Whether you like it or not, change is the only constant. It's happening at rocket speed in the modern world of technology. If you don't move at the same pace, the world will leave you and your business behind.

Evolving technology helps your businesses to deliver a better & more engaging experience for your shoppers. Your current eCommerce site may have been state of the art when you built it a few years ago, but the chances are your business has already outgrown it.

You may be struggling to keep the lights on or finding it difficult to manage server patching. Or your platform is not very amenable for the quick changes that your business needs.

"Managing a great shopping experience is a lot harder than a few years ago."

Your reason for re-platforming may be strategic or driven by a tactical need. No matter what it is, re-platforming can still be a daunting exercise. If not done with a lot of care, it can also be damaging to your business.

Finding the right reason to re-platform can save you large amounts of time and effort when starting the project. Learn from your peers.

Once you have all this information, where do you go from there? You begin to procrastinate in

your decision to re-platform. All this time, change is occurring, your existing site will no longer offer the required customer experience you need.

Customer churn and business loss is at an all-time low. It will then be a further three to six months to migrate to a new full-fledged website. So, using re-platforming as a reactive solution can be detrimental to a retailer's brand image and business.

"17% of global retailers cite re-platforming as their most important eCommerce initiative during 2017"

SLI systems, Oct 2017

When being proactive, you can explore the shifts in your business. You become aware of eCommerce technology advancements, and changing customer expectations. This will then help you to start planning your re-platforming in alignment with the evolving business environment.

Knowing the key reasons that compelled your peers to start a re-platforming project can help advance your business. You will be more aware of when the best time to start the planning process is.

The majority of retailers feel the need for re-platforming when the business has already outgrown their website. Further business growth and expansion is no longer possible with their old platform.

This is a strategic reason for businesses to seek a completely new eCommerce platform. Other business growth scenarios can involve:



Entrance into new product/ business line requires setting-up and managing multiple stores.



Expansion of existing business that requires scaling up the eCommerce site for capacity.



Entry into a new region that requires multi-currency and internationalisation capabilities.



Integration of all commerce channels, online & offline, to offer a consistent & coherent shopping experience to customers.

In most cases, websites evolve over time. Due to pressure, a lot of quick fixes are applied organically, which becomes difficult to scale & maintain, hindering business growth. Align business goals with your eCommerce site, identify gaps and rank the ones to be done first.

You need to align business goals with your eCommerce store strategy. Then match the capacity and capability of your eCommerce site with business expectations. Once you know the gap and its importance in achieving the required business goals, you will know when to start planning for an eCommerce site revamp or re-platforming.

45%

*the amount of digital businesses
in 2018 that are prioritising
faster shipping as their top
consumer-facing initiative.*

57%

*the amount of retailers in 2017
that are purchasing or
implementing new technology.*

Site Speed & Performance

In the day & age of everything being available at the click of a button, shoppers don't have time to wait for your website to load. One factor attributed to a positive online shopping experience is the speed to discover the right product and make the purchase.

Your conversion rates are proportional to the speed of your eCommerce site. Yet, many online retailers feel their existing eCommerce site is too slow. Thus, losing customers & revenue. If your site takes more than 2 seconds to load it will affect your conversion rates and subsequent visits by shoppers.

"57% of shoppers left websites due to the site being slow."

Google

Managing peaks is another huge challenge the majority of eCommerce retailers face. Black Friday & Cyber Monday are as much loved by the businesses as they are dreaded by their respective IT teams.

BLACK FRIDAY CASE STUDY

On 2018's Black Friday, The Fragrance Shop sales grew by 60% over from the previous year. Their site had zero issues with performance and scaled on demand as needed, without having to throttle traffic or refactor any part of their site.

Their main competitor on the other hand, The Perfume Shop, had a 2-hour site outage with most of their customers shifting to TFS.

Ensuring that your eCommerce site is available during the peak season, without glitches, is a critical objective of many eCommerce technologists.

To manage peaks, a lot of retailers opt for 'online queue' management systems. These ensure that your website performs and does not crash under high load. Yet, this creates a poor customer experience and results in lost business.



With so much advancement in eCommerce technologies, retailers now have the choice to shift to a platform that offers fast, convenient and smooth online shopping experiences to consumers.

Benchmark your site performance with your peers and set a goal. If your existing eCommerce platform is unable to meet this goal despite several optimisation projects, then it's time to plan for a new eCommerce platform.

Cloud Commerce

The traditional model of running your eCommerce website hosted on a server farm with a service provider has worked quite well for a number of years. Yet, as customer expectations have evolved, the traditional model of servers have posed some critical challenges for businesses.

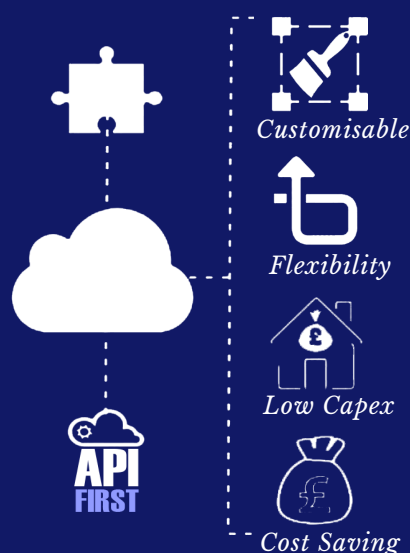
These can be agility, non-scalability and cost of deployment, as well as the lack of ability to handle the seasonal peaks of the business. The total cost of building and owning an eCommerce site, supported by the traditional models, is higher than one built on a cloud-based eCommerce platform.

"Around 46% of enterprises are moving towards externally hosted, cloud commerce software"

[Richard Slade]

The latest generation of eCommerce platforms built on the cloud have benefits beyond cost savings. Modern businesses are driven by the idea of such platforms. It relieves them from a huge initial investment, lowers the total cost of ownership (TCO) and offers a modern and future proof architecture for their eCommerce business.

Conduct a TCO comparison between an on-premise software and a cloud commerce platform, based on the requirements of your business. This TCO model should be created for a minimum of the next three to five years. Based on this you can decide when the time would be right to migrate to a cloud commerce platform. This is explored in more detail in our next chapter : Begin with a Total Cost of Ownership model.



On a cloud-based platform you pay for what you use rather than doing a huge capital investment into infrastructure.

Flexibility allows you to gain back control of your site and change it how you wish.

You can have full control over your site's single click back-end integration with customisation.

By using a cloud based platform you begin with a very low initial capital expenditure.

03 BEGIN WITH AN ACCURATE TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP MODEL

You've started evaluating eCommerce platforms for re-platforming, ready to grow your business. But where do you begin? Two of the main decision criteria of upgrading or selecting an eCommerce platform are TCO and Return on Investment (ROI).

Having a project plan, a core team and committed stakeholders may not be enough to prevent your re-platforming outlay from going through the roof. In the majority of cases, retailers entail higher costs of migration than anticipated or budgeted, because they are not aware of all the components of re-platforming.

This results in implementing a site that either compromises on certain aspects of customer experience, or the inability to sustain the initial experience, owing to lack of provisioning in the operational budget.

TCO is a financial estimate that helps you determine direct and indirect costs of a product or system. TCO goes beyond the initial purchase price or implementation cost to consider the full cost of an asset over its useful life.

$$\text{Total Cost of Ownership} = \text{Purchase} + \text{Cost of Running} + \text{Cost of Running}$$

ROI is the ratio of a profit or loss made on an investment and shown as a percentage of increase or decrease in the value of the investment.

$$\frac{\text{Return (benefit)}}{\text{Investment (cost)}} = \text{Return on Investment}$$

TCO and ROI are frequently confused and misused, but you should use them together to properly evaluate your eCommerce projects. Don't pay too much attention to costs and too little to benefits. Rather, forecast and compare costs over the life of a project.



A proper TCO analysis often shows there is a large difference between the price of something and its long-term cost.

To decide, you must understand the TCO of each of the potential solutions along with the potential ROI. Consider the future costs and returns for a set period and explore the following considerations:



Use your old platform and add 3rd party features



Build a solution using open source.



Choose a small vendor that will pay closer attention to your needs.



Choose a mega, faceless, corporation and be just another customer.

TCO Elements

The purpose of TCO is to provide a complete scope of project costs, including those costs for technology, processes and people. Given that eCommerce platform costs include a great deal more than the purchase price of the system. One good method for TCO calculations is to be meticulous about collecting all the appropriate and associated costs for the project. Consider a complete list of costs and returns over a three or five year term. Some are overlooked and could differ substantially between your options.

Once, you have determined all the components necessary for your re-platforming project, you can compare the eCommerce platforms based on the components offered as a part of the platform and the ones that will require third party applications. This will help ascertain a holistic TCO, which will in turn act as a great tool to finalise the eCommerce platform.

On page 12 we have created a comparison chart for some eCommerce platforms that can help you create a TCO model for your re-platforming initiative.

Company Information	BetterCommerce	Shopify Plus	Magento	Salesforce	SAP Hybris
Headquarters	UK	Canada	USA	USA	USA
Industry Experience	Founded 2015	Founded 2004	Founded 1985	Founded 2004	Founded 1997
Cost & Time to Market					
Average Deployment Cost	£20k	£18k	£40k-100k	£500k +	£600k
Revenue Commission	Flexible	x	7-10%	0.5-3%	x
Time to market	1-3 months	weeks	3-6 months	6+ months	6+ months
Annual Licensing cost	none	none	£18-25k	none	varies
Dedicated IT Team Required	Not required	Not required	Required	Required	Required
Customization	Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included	Not Included
Business Model					
Hosting	Cloud	Cloud	On-premise	Cloud	On-premise
Modular	✓	✓	x	x	x
APIs	100% API Driven	Limited API	Limited API	APIs	APIs
One-click Integrations	✓	x	x	x	x
Features & Functionality					
Full stack of technology	✓	x	x	x	x
Internationalization	✓	x	x	x	x
Multi-language	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
Multi-currency	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
Omnichannel	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Multiple Sites	✓	x	x	x	x
Personalization	✓	x	x	x	x
Search	✓	x	x	x	x
Payment Gateway	✓	Third Party plug-in	Third Party plug-in	Third Party plug-in	Third Party plug-in
Mobile App	Open Source	Additional	Additional	Additional	Additional
Analytics and Reporting	✓	x	x	x	x
Order Management	✓	x	x	✓	✓
Unlimited PIM	✓	x	x	x	x
Marketplaces Connector	✓	Via Partners	✓	✓	Via Partners
Programming Language	HTML, CSS	HTML, CSS	Php	Proprietary Language	c, c++
Front-End	Flexible CMS, Fully Customisable through APIs	Shopify templates only	Third-party agencies	Third-party agencies	Third-party agencies
Maintenance					
Ongoing Support	Dedicated Service Team	External agency/experts	External agency/experts	In-house Team	In-house Team
Upgrades	Free of charge	Free of charge	Free of charge	Free of charge	Additional charge
Updates	Every 3 weeks	Regular	x	6 times per year	x
ERP/CRM Integration	Dedicated Service Team + Partner Network	Third-party Agencied	Third-party Agencied	Third-party Agencied	Third-party Agencied

Projected Benefits

ROI is a complete analysis of the project's costs and benefits, not just a list of projected benefits or a simple payback calculation. Any benefit could be part of the analysis, including intangible or soft-dollar benefits. Consider the following:



Cost savings



Increase in efficiency & effectiveness



Reduced reliance on developer or IT resources



Increased sales across multiple channels



Improvements in conversion rate, basket value, life time value, etc



Reduced risk (e.g. of downtime, breaches, vendor misalignment)



Higher quality customer data



Improved brand perception and Customer loyalty



Better ability to execute marketing initiatives

Caution of Other Benefits

Some vendors will provide an endless list of their customers achievements using their platform. They can be a useful resource in an evaluation, however be aware that no two businesses are the same. Customers, culture, management, location and strategy are a few elements that differentiate businesses. Even two grocers in the same market, selling the same products and using the same tools, would achieve different results.





04 THE TOUGH QUESTIONS

Key Considerations

This chapter discusses the key considerations for a successful re-platforming project. Once you have set up a clear process and team for re-platforming, as well as having defined your goals, your next challenge is to evaluate and finalise your next eCommerce platform. Let's call this your total Commerce platform, its relevance has evolved way beyond being just a vanilla eCommerce system anymore.

This chapter helps you understand the questions you should be asking and analysing before you finalise your new Commerce Platform. This way you won't have to worry about re-platforming again for years to come.

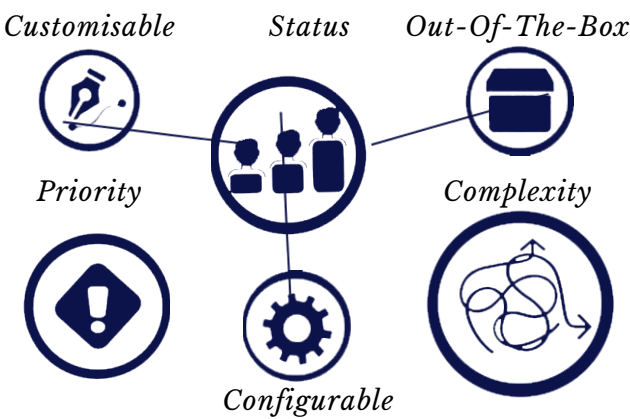
Requirements and Feature Mapping

This is the foremost consideration when

you are evaluating the platforms for your business. The starting point would be simply listing down the features & capabilities you have now and defining your wish-list, thinking of the features that you'd like to have.

The output from the exercise would be a documented gap analysis including your requirements: what you have today and what you'd like to have going forward. It's also beneficial to evaluate competitor websites in the industry and look for best practices that you could learn from. Adapt these for your business, to deliver a better experience for your shoppers.

The aspects that you need in order to make a well evaluated decision and create a quantifiable comparison matrix for different platforms follows as below:





It's important to go through all the modules & features available out-of-the-box in the platform and how they map to the requirements of your business. Every business is unique and so are its needs. If a platform works for one business, you can't assume that it will work for yours as well. Go through the detailed features list, map it against your specific requirements.

We cannot stress enough that while evaluating features & capabilities, skimming through the one-line feature definitions is not good enough. You must do a deep-dive and ask as many detailed questions to ensure that you get the maximum capabilities out-of-the-box instead of relying on customisation. Some questions for example:

Does the platform provide Product Information Management (PIM)?

How much product content enrichment is possible - Images, video, rich content, attributes, reviews, stories, look-books, dynamic categories, guided navigation?

Product discoverability – how easy is it for users to find the product – predictive search, keyword redirections, 'did you mean' search?

Does the platform depend a lot on 3rd party plugins or does it provide the majority of capabilities out of the box?

Is the platform available as a suite of modules or do you need external modules to make it work?

How easy and quick is it to manage the content across the website – change the hero banners on the website, the ability to manage the mega menu without any hassle or dependency on the technical staff?

How many types of promotions are offered out of the box?

Does the platform provide voucher capability?

Can you have multiple users managing different sections of the website?

Can you give access to certain users for one website and another set of users for another website?

"Every business is different and so are its needs."

These are some basic examples of the kind of questions you should be asking, there are no predefined set of questions. You must evaluate every aspect from the perspective of its suitability for the business, rather than the 'cool' factor attached to it... The devil is in the detail.

Platform Road-map

You cannot do the platform evaluation purely on a features analysis and what your business needs today. You must do it through how the platform would evolve with your business



or vice versa, over the next one, three or five years. On average, businesses re-platform every five to seven years. So, you should try to ensure that the platform you pick today is mapped against your future goals.

Nobody can accurately predict the state of the business environment or trends over next five to seven years. Yet, you can always make an intelligent deduction based on the pace of growth and industry buzz. Always consider the same while evaluating the potential for commerce platforms.

The questions you should be asking to evaluate a new platforms' 12-month road map are:

Is the platform evaluating the futuristic technologies to innovate? Do these technologies / features align with your vision? Do they add value to your business going forward?

Is the platform looking at incorporating the personalisation into the platform? How would this be achievable and what level can the flexibility extend to? Does personalisation add value to your business?

Does the platform support omni-channel capabilities? Even if your business does not need this today, with the way technology is evolving, would you need the capabilities in the future?

Is a chat bot listed on the platform road-map? Could you use these in your business by starting with simple order status tracking bots and then again for complex product ordering systems?



Cloud native vs Cloud Hosted vs On-premise

Cloud based applications could be further classified as:

Cloud Native

Cloud Infrastructures like Microsoft Azure or Amazon Web Services host cloud native applications and deliver them as Software as a Service (SaaS) model. The primary benefits could be:

- Shorter implementation of time
- Updates roll out to all the customers without any hassle
- Provides higher quality of software & service. Including economies of scale that would otherwise be unaffordable for small businesses.

This is a true cloud-based application architecture and provides higher availability, scalability and robustness.

Cloud Hosted

Cloud hosted applications are those which dedicated serves (managed by the vendor or business themselves) host. This kind of hosting environment is reliant on the physical / virtual server infrastructure and can also be referred to as IaaS (Infrastructure as a service). This is another variant of hosting a server on-premise.

All three models of hosting have their own respective pros and cons. You need to evaluate them from the perspective of

their suitability for your business. Some important questions to ask are:

Do you have enough IT resources to maintain your own server(s) infrastructure? What happens if one of the servers goes down?

How often are the servers patched? Who does the patching and is it done one by one or all at once? Does patching requires a planned outage of your web store?

Do you want to be a technology company, or would you rather focus on your business, leaving the managing of nuts & bolts to the experts?

How much control do you want to have over the system? Are your release cycles aligned with the cloud-based platform provider or do you want to have your own separate release cycles?

How is the performance across the three different models? In general, the performance would be comparable across all the three models.

What about reliability & availability of the system? Cloud based systems will provide higher availability for your system as they have a dedicated team monitoring all the infrastructure.

Finally, costs. Cloud gives you power to work on an operational expenditure model and increase your expenses as your

business grows. On-premise model generally requires significant capital expenditure irrespective of the size of your business.

Evaluating your platform's cloud maturity level and mapping it against your business needs will help you solidify your decision.

Time to Market & Migration

Simply put, the time it takes from signing the contract to when the site goes live. This time could vary from a couple of weeks to several months depending upon the size and complexity of your business and the platform you select. While

"Most vendors make it look simpler than it is. They tend to overlook certain basic elements which could have long term implications on your business."

Some of the questions to ask about time to market and the actual migration exercise are:

How much time did a similar business take to go-live on the platform?



evaluating the platforms, you should emphasise more on getting maximum capabilities out-of-the-box and reduce the possibilities of customisation as much as you can. This is a significant factor that effects your time to market. The output from feature ó requirements mapping exercise would prove quite useful to deduce the same equation.

Migration would be the main cut over when you decide to switch from the old platform to the new one. Though not urgent, it's quite important to gather this information beforehand and not have any surprises. You could end up with a lot of unnecessary hassle at the time of migration if this has not been planned.

What were their challenges immediately after going live?

Ask for a cutover / migration checklist

Did the SEO rankings drop after the new site live for other customers or were they retained?

How does the platform handle the old URLs and their conventions?

Are they retained or are they redirecting to new URLs?

How much time would it take to integrate with your other systems?

How are you going to generate different shopping feeds, e.g. for google shopping?

How much time would it take to configure/ set these up or does specific coding need to be done?

How is the data migrated from your old system to the new platform e.g. customer, product, order history and any other relevant data?

How would you do it on the actual cut-over date and how much time would it take to do?

This is not an exhaustive list of questions but would start a meaningful conversation with the platform vendor or your digital agency. Depending upon the size of your business and technology expertise, the answers to some of these questions may not be completely clear at first and that's fine.

The important aspect is to kick-off a two-way conversation and encourage your

platform vendor to provide as much insight as possible upfront. This allows you to reduce the potential for any surprises.

Scalability

There is a general misconception that scalability is a subject relevant only for large enterprises. This is not the case anymore. Shoppers now expect the same experience from all shopping web stores, irrespective of their business size. In fact, it's important for smaller business more than ever to consider scalability.

You may have an aim for what size you want your business to be in the future, therefore, having a scalable system would give you peace of mind that your site can deliver whilst growing.

Your existing eCommerce performance and future goals can help you forecast the number of visitors, transaction volume, product SKUs, number of online stores, and related metrics for next five years. You must ensure that your commerce



platform gears to scale in the future. It must also offer higher availability and optimised performance to shoppers during the holiday season, specific marketing campaigns, end of season discounts etc. Fail to do this and you risk losing business to the competition. An example of this is shown in our case study on page seven.

Ask your eCommerce platform provider as many questions as possible about scalability and capacity. Here are a few questions to ask:

How does the platform cope with the peak season demand and how does it cope with any unplanned high loads?

Are there monitoring tools or mechanisms that alert the website team in case of sudden spikes in traffic?

Would your business have access to real time performance monitoring of the web-store?

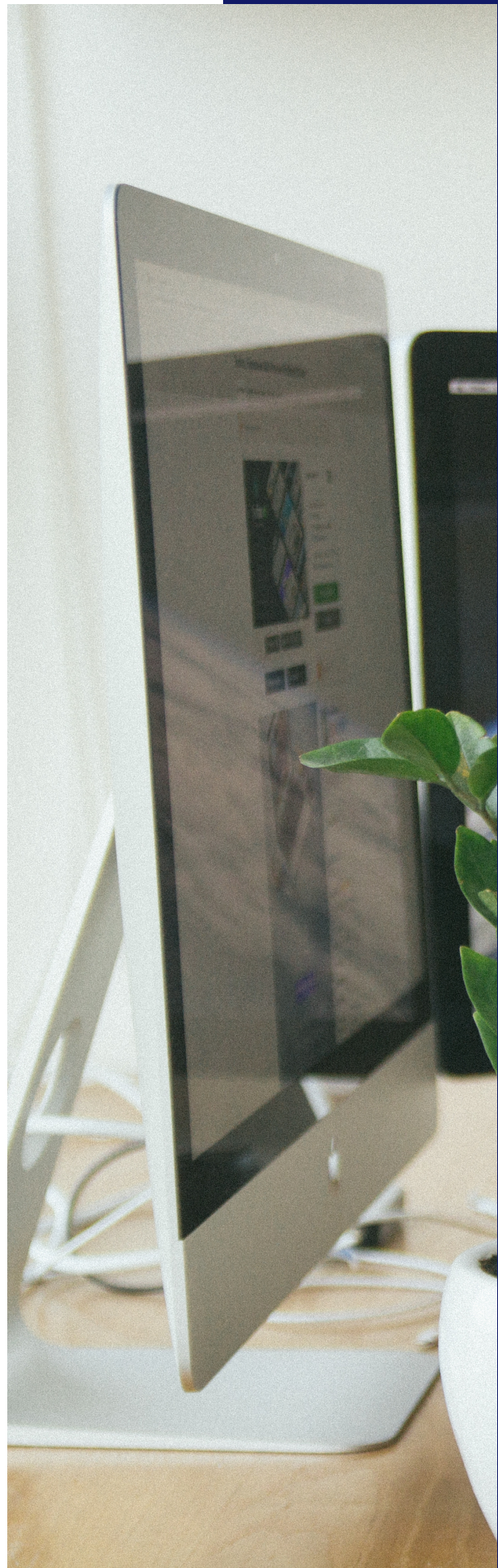
Who would be getting alerts in case of any issues and what would be the process for responding to alerts?

What will be the cost implication of increasing capacity in coming years?

Would your platform be using a Traffic Queuing Manager?

Would the platform be able to sustain the high peak loads?

Scalability comes as a part of most cloud commerce platforms and is relatively more cost effective in a cloud model than others. If you decide to go for Cloud based, the chances are that the platform would be geared & designed for scalability. Yet it's important to get an explicit understanding of the facts before you decide on your partner.



Extensibility and Integration Capabilities

Whilst you cannot foresee or determine the future retail technologies and customer touch points, you can make sure that your eCommerce platform architecture is extensible to adapt to future advancements. One way to test this is to ask your platform provider if an API (Application Programming Interface) first philosophy is the basis that builds the platform. Solutions built with an API first philosophy are typically agile and flexible enough to integrate new applications into your existing systems.

APIs are the torchbearers of modern eCommerce retail. Find an eCommerce platform built with an API first mindset.

If your eCommerce platform is extensible, you can predetermine capabilities that your eCommerce site can add in the coming years and get APIs built for those capabilities. For example, if you have decided to integrate your eCommerce site with a future personal assistant or voice search or intend to add Augmented reality/virtual reality to your product pages, then it is better to have relevant APIs developed for these integrations.

The level and complexity of integration would depend upon the size & complexity of your business and the features available in the platform out-of-the-box.

"Commerce platforms can't exist in isolation. They need to 'talk' to other internal or external systems."

The primary integrations could be around, but not limited to:



*Enterprise
Resource
Planning*



*Central Relationship
Management (CRM)*



*Inventory
Management*



*Order fulfilment
system*



*Warehouse
management*



*Accounting
System*



*other internal /
external applications*

If your eCommerce site, store, social channels, mobile channels and call centres are working in silos, re-platforming is the perfect time to integrate them. You can then offer a single & consistent commerce experience across all channels.



This does require you to enlist all your internal and external applications and systems that need to connect with the eCommerce site.

Ask your eCommerce platform provider about the costs, support offered and resource requirements for the integration. They should be able to provide an integration plan for you, however don't take it as-is. Do some digging around from your end and evaluate its suitability for your business before making the call.

Ask the following questions:

What is the type of architecture on which the eCommerce platform is built on?

How much time and effort would ongoing and impromptu developments need?

Does the platform provide an API? What are the API capabilities?

Is it API-first, micro-services based or limited API architecture? All these have different implications and your decision must be driven by the suitability for your business.

Does the platform provide an open API for any inbound integration (data/messages sent by other systems to platform)?

Does the platform provide web-hook provision for outbound integration (data/messages sent by platform to external systems) or does every integration need custom coding?

What format of messages does it support e.g. XML/ JSON etc. What would your other systems expect?

What are the authentication mechanisms supported for data exchange between systems? Do not underestimate the value of authentication even if both the systems are part of your business.

Does the platform provide full logging of all the inbound / outbound messages and their respective responses? This is in case of any troubleshooting needs?





Omni-Channel

You may be a small business and you might say you don't have a physical store, therefore you wouldn't have to consider Omni-channel as an aspect. This thought is where you need a paradigm shift. Even smaller businesses need to cater to online, mobile friendly, mobile app, call-centre based services for customers.

Going further on digital itself and selling through other channels has become incredibly important e.g. through amazon, eBay, Facebook etc. You need to be considering omni-channel and what the platform offers from that perspective, disregarding the size of your business.

To offer a converged commerce experience to your customers, you need to offer a single, consistent and seamless commerce experience across the various channels. Your commerce platform acts as a hub for customer data, history, product information and sales performance across channels.

"Think beyond the standard eCommerce and think broader about it as Commerce Platform."

Ask the following questions:

How can you add value to your customers by adding omni-channel capabilities to your system?

How does the platform facilitate the development of a consistent commerce experience across channels?

What all capabilities are available out-of-the-box to support this and what custom development would you need to fill the gap?

Does the platform work against a single data store to enable a single view of the customer & product? Or do you need an external system to provide the much-needed single view?

Does the platform support integration with your POS and/or Inventory system to facilitate single views?

*Does the platform provide e-receipts?
Does the platform support online / offline gift cards?*

Does the platform offer click and collect out-of-the-box?

Does the platform provide ability to check the stock across different stores based on post code?



Does the platform provide ability to buy online, return in-store?

Does the platform integrate with a live chat service seamlessly or offer it out-of-the-box?

Self-Service Capabilities

Empowering Business Users

There are many different people who run your store. It's extremely important that you empower all the people to deliver the best results without having any roadblocks. Having platforms which are highly dependent on IT staff or developers becomes a huge bottleneck thus hampering the business growth.

Today's eCommerce platforms are not dependent on IT departments for every deployment. They are accessible and equally manageable by sales, marketing, products and business teams. Your marketing department should be able to design, develop and implement any type of marketing campaigns through the eCommerce site without needing an intervention from IT department. Similarly, product managers should be able to add/delete/alter product SKUs and product information independently. Create independent admin accounts that are overseen by a single master Admin account.

This requires your eCommerce platform to offer independent control to each department based on their work area. Then create one master control administrator who has a clear view of what every department is working on.

Questions to ask are:

Will you need IT personnel to support the eCommerce site on an ongoing basis?

Or are your business users empowered to manage the site on their own?



What capabilities can be managed by the business users and to what extent?

What are the limits?

Analytics and Reporting

It is needless to say that data is the digital currency for businesses today.

Your eCommerce site stores every piece of information about your customers:



Create a list of information critical for your business to track, monitor, analyse and report. This will derive maximum benefit and offer customer delight. From

promotions, offers and differential pricing to personalised pages, every customer-centric effort would need comprehensive data analysis, including in real-time.

"Most of the eCommerce platforms integrate third party data analysis tools in the site."

Though, there are others that offer analytics and reporting capability within the eCommerce solution. Check for the data and reporting tools available with your eCommerce vendor and assess its feasibility for your business goal.

You need to find out the type of data that eCommerce site captures, its storage location and accessibility. Ask if your eCommerce platform is GDPR compliant and if not, how would the platform provider support your goals for this? GDPR compliance is as much a responsibility of your eCommerce platform provider as it is yours.

Ease of Deploying Releases

Look around and you will find that every software company releases updates, be it your phone software or any business software. Commerce platforms are no exception, the platform companies keep releasing bug fixes, security patches and several enhancements on a periodical basis.

It may seem quite simple now to think that it would be straight forward to deploy these patches, Yet, if you've gone through the experience you would know that it's not as simple as it may seem.

When it comes to practical implication, deploying patches and releases needs to be done with careful consideration. This is to ensure that it does not break anything that already runs well.

Some of the questions you should ask

What is the frequency of releases from the platform company?

Do you want to deploy every release that comes, or do you want to queue them and do them in one bulk as per the suitability?

What is the process of release deployments?

Who handles doing the releases? Does your IT team do the releases manually or does it happen automatically online?

Should the releases be tested in a staging environment for proper regression testing?

How much time & effort you would need to spend on regression testing the releases and how often?

How do you ensure that the new release being made does not conflicts with any customisation you might have done in the platform?

Does the release deployment involve outage of the website?

If yes, how long and what is the business impact of the same?



05 SUMMARY

Retailers choose to re-platform to evolve. By staying ahead of change in not only technology but customer behaviour, your business will thrive. Set your own realistic expectations based on your own knowledge of your business and explore how the vendor will support you in achieving them. By asking all these hard questions you can really start to understand and organise your re-platforming plan.

You must have the right reasons for re-platforming, getting a new platform because of business goals puts your company in a far better standing than using it as a reactive tool. Time that you would need it taken away when done as such.

TCO and ROI are important aspects to look upon. These will help you align your business goals with your ecommerce platform provider. This will then help your business grow how you would like it to.

The overarching look of re-platforming may seem complicated, however, take each chapter step by step and use what you need to make an educated decision on which platform would be best for your business. Bite by bite you will eventually get the platform you and your business needs to run smoothly and grow exponentially to your goals.

We hope that this article has helped you understand more of what you need to know about re-platforming. If you are looking to re-platform we wish you luck and success!

