10 Commonly Overlooked But Critical Vetting Questions For Your B2B Ecommerce Software Selection

10 Critical Questions For Selection Of Your B2B Ecommerce Software

Whether you are selecting your first business to business (B2B) ecommerce software or are ready to take the next step in your digital journey your choice will be business-critical.

B2B ecommerce sites now need to deliver much more than a reordering portal for existing customers. With the right solution your ecommerce platform will now be an essential part of your customer acquisition and retention strategy and the key to scaling your business.

There are some important questions to ask as part of your selection process. Here are our top 10.

1. HOW DO I CHOOSE A SOFTWARE PROVIDER?

Ideally you will want to begin a long-term partnership with your B2B ecommerce software provider, so you will want to know that there's a good fit in terms of approach and objectives.

While there are many new and exciting things happening in the world of ecommerce you should take steps to confirm that your provider is well established, credible and reliable. They should be happy to tell you what in-house expertise and resources they have and how much experience they have of B2B ecommerce.

In the past many ecommerce solutions have been based on simpler business to consumer (B2C) requirements and have needed extensive customization to make them fit for purpose in a B2B environment. Some providers are still trying to catch up with the requirements of B2B organizations. In contrast, for example, Cloudfy has been designed from the outset to meet the needs of B2B ecommerce.

2. HOW ARE FEES CHARGED?

Many businesses are now looking at software as a service (SaaS) as an alternative to an on-premises solution. This is because SaaS is available in the cloud for a regular subscription fee without the need to invest in software licences, IT infrastructure and hosting. However, not all pricing plans are the same. Some providers like Cloudfy have a straightforward flat fee while others could charge a variable fee as a percentage of each transaction or overall volume of sales, which can make costs difficult to control.

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3. CAN I SEE CASE STUDIES?

While every business is different, the best way to reassure yourself that a potential software provider has the knowledge and experience you need is to ask for similar case studies and testimonials.

You will want to see a good range of projects with evidence that your provider can identify and provide robust solutions for a variety of business- and sector-specific requirements.

4. WHAT WILL THE DISCOVERY PROCESS BE LIKE?

Whatever your requirements, you will want to know that your provider will take time to understand your specific requirements. Whether you are looking to consolidate platforms and business systems or take your business to the next level your chosen provider should have a tried and tested process for understanding and delivering a solution tailored to your needs.

5. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF IN-COUNTRY VERSUS OUT-OF-COUNTRY HOSTING?

Your ecommerce site will need to be hosted for people to discover it online. Your choice can affect your site's security, performance, and uptime, which will all have an impact on your site's ranking on search engine results pages (SERPs).

Even though the internet can be accessed around the world, the location of your server can influence your website loading times. Generally, the closer to your users, the faster your site's speed will be. Even a one-second delay in page loading time on your ecommerce site will reduce customer satisfaction by 16%. More than half of your website visitors will leave if your pages take more than three seconds to load. Solutions like Cloudfy are hosted on Microsoft Azure, so you will always have consistent, fast performance.

6. WHAT B2B FEATURES ARE PRE-BUILT?

B2B sales are complex, involving multiple decision makers, each with their own roles and requirements. There are many steps in the buying process and each needs to be handled with the same high level of performance. You will want to know that all your essential functionality is available without complex customizations.

For example, features like Cloudfy's Product Ledger allow you to track and audit the movements of stock across multiple warehouses. You can easily transfer from one warehouse to another and make stock adjustments. The stock availability feature means you can filter by stockkeeping units, allocated and free stock, so you can see at a glance what has been ordered or shipped.

Other key requirements you will want to check could include simple and complex promotions, dynamic product catalogs with customer-specific pricing, advanced search options, and multi-site support, including multiple delivery locations.

7. WHAT'S BEST: PRE-BUILT OR BESPOKE INTEGRATIONS?

Many of the best B2B ecommerce platforms like Cloudfy already have pre-built enterprise resource planning (ERP) integrations for leading systems such as SAP, Microsoft Dynamics and NetSuite. Depending on your requirements, it will be important to check whether this is an option for you.

An alternative bespoke integration, either directly or via a third party connector, will add another level of complexity to your solution and could be expensive and time consuming to implement.

8. CAN I RUN MULTI-SITE ECOMMERCE FROM A SINGLE PLATFORM?

International ecommerce and selling to multiple sectors are top options for business growth so you will want to know that your software can support multi-site operations easily and effectively. The alternative is to build and maintain separate online stores using different languages and currencies to suit local markets, which is prohibitively expensive for most organizations.

With multi-storefront functionality you can launch and manage multiple stores from a single platform. You won't have to synchronize and maintain multiple sites and inventory, and your bespoke sites can include tailored designs, product ranges, pricing, and specific offers and promotions.

9. ARE SALES & ORDERING APPS AVAILABLE?

As digitization touches every aspect of B2B operations, the ability to place orders and handle customer inquiries anywhere and at any time is increasingly important. This is an option that you should look for from your software provider.

It's almost five years since Forrester released their report 'Death of a B2B Salesman'. While the role of your sales representatives is changing they remain essential and need the right tools to meet your customers' expectations. A mobile sales app will allow them to close deals from their base, a customer's location, or a trade event. They can provide up-to-date information on your products, inventory levels and customer account details in real time. They can digitally create accurate quotes, place orders and sign-up new customers wherever they are.

A customer ordering app will also make it much easier and convenient for your B2B buyers to re-order products on any device whenever they need them so sales will increase while your expenses are reduced.

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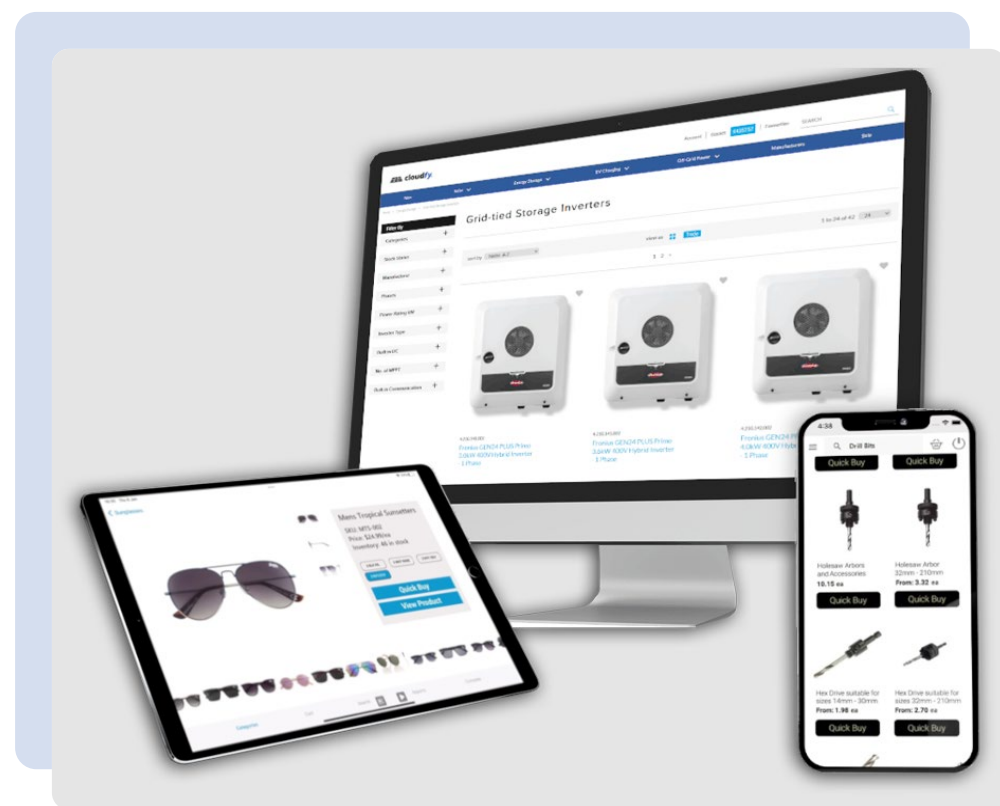
10. WHAT PRE-LAUNCH TESTING TAKES PLACE?

Whether you are launching your first B2B ecommerce site or migrating to a new platform you will want to know everything is working perfectly before you go live. Working in partnership with your software provider, you should have a robust pre-launch plan to test and verify your system from end to end in a safe environment.

This should include detailed knowledge of your data, systems and objectives and should allow you time to review and confirm that all your requirements are met in a safe testing environment. Your key users should have time to learn and troubleshoot the solution before it is approved and launched.

WORK WITH A TRUSTED PARTNER

To answer all these questions and the many others you will certainly have about the best B2B ecommerce software for your manufacturing, distribution, or service business the expert team at Cloudfy will be happy to help.

Cloudfy has been designed from the beginning to meet the needs of B2B ecommerce and you can launch a new site in weeks rather than months or even years. You can fully integrate orders, pricing, product and stock data with a range of ERP, warehouse and accounting systems.

Upgrade your B2B Ecommerce Stack with ease

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