

10 Ecommerce Mistakes B2B Businesses Make

PLUS 10 EXAMPLES OF HOW
SUCCESSFUL ONLINE COMPANIES
AVOIDED THESE MISTAKES

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Introduction

Many B2B businesses have jumped on the ecommerce bandwagon in recent years as they watched competitors increase market share by giving today's B2B buyers what they want: a convenient way to shop and buy online.

B2B customers' buying behaviors and expectations are changing.

Sixty-four percent research half or more of their work purchases online, nearly **75%** say it's more convenient to buy from a website than it is to buy from a sales representative, and **93%** prefer to complete a purchase online when they've already decided what to buy.

As a B2B seller, you need to ensure that you consistently offer an online experience that:

- Meets customer expectations
- Drives sales
- ✓ Improves brand loyalty

To do that, you need to avoid making the following ten B2B ecommerce mistakes that can prevent your business from becoming the next B2B success story.

How B2B customers research and make purchases



research half or more of their work purchases online



say it's more convenient to buy from a website than a sales representative



prefer to complete a purchase online

1. Thinking B2B buyers don't want to order online.

While some B2B buyers still prefer face-to-face interactions with salespeople, most of today's B2B customers want to buy online. This is true for all types of B2B buyers, but especially for millennials who have never known a world without the internet. Now that they're entering management positions with purchasing power and perform half of all B2B research, millennials expect to be able to buy products from businesses online—just as they do in their personal lives.

72%
of B2B customers
prefer the
convenience of
online purchasing

Seventy-two percent of B2B customers prefer the convenience of online purchasing. They value having self-service access to accounts and orders, controlling the entire buying process, and having 24x7 access to information.

While more complex orders may still require some interaction with knowledgeable salespeople, ecommerce is the sales channel most B2B buyers want to use to research, purchase, reorder, and even get assistance. As more and more customers continue to shift their buying behaviors online, B2B ecommerce has become essential for increasing sales, revenue, and customer loyalty.

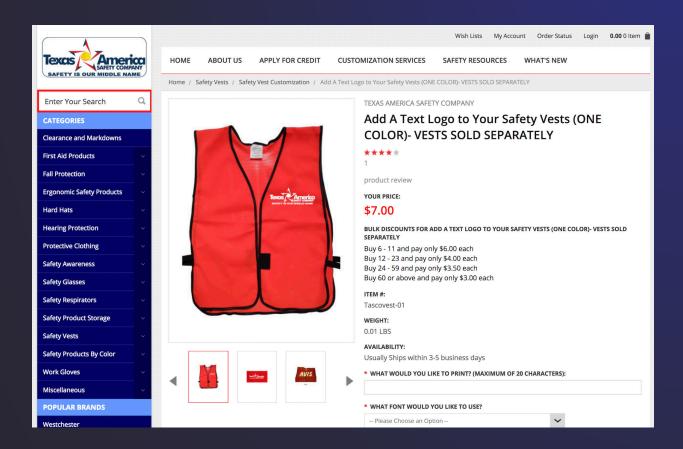


How Texas America Safety Company avoided the mistake of thinking B2B buyers don't want to buy online.

Texas America Safety Company started selling occupational safety supplies through the oil patch in West Texas more than 20 years ago. For many years, they visited as many customers as possible with delivery vans and sold products directly from their vehicles. In 1996, they launched their first website and discovered the benefits of selling online.

"Adding our products online and effectively marketing our website was able to dramatically increase our sales. We now have a thriving business thanks to the internet."

- Gary Brownlee, Vice President, Texas America Safety Company



2. Not providing a B2C-like shopping experience.

Amazon and other B2C retailers have essentially trained customers to expect their online shopping experiences to be quick, easy, and convenient from start to finish. The same buyer who shops with Amazon in the evening and on weekends orders from a B2B company's ecommerce site during the workday and expects a similar experience. From personalized product recommendations and special offers to an easy ordering process and fast fulfillment, businesses need to give B2B buyers the B2C treatment.

B2C consumers have become used to shopping on ecommerce sites that are beautifully designed and easy to navigate, and now expect the same type of experience from their B2B suppliers' websites. They want high-resolution product images, detailed product descriptions, advanced search capabilities, payment options, personalized promotions, live chat, and other common B2C features of ecommerce shopping.

Does your B2B buying experience include these common B2C features?

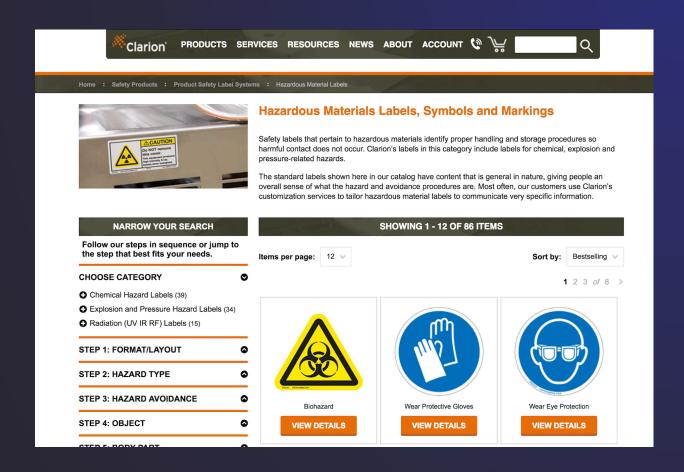
- High-resolution product images
- Detailed product descriptions
- Advanced search capabilities
- Payment options
- Personalized promotions
- Live chat

How Clarion Safety Systems avoided the mistake of not providing a B2C-like shopping experience.

Clarion Safety Systems has been a designer and manufacturer of product safety labels and signage in the B2B market for over 25 years. When they realized their old website wasn't meeting the needs of their customers—it had confusing navigation, lacked calls to action, and had a poor overall user experience—the company switched ecommerce platforms.

"Now, everything is more streamlined for our customers. They can take advantage of simplified product navigation and shopping to quickly and easily find the specific safety label or sign they need."

Angela Lambert, Director of Sales, Marketing, and Standards Compliance, Clarion
 Safety Systems



3. Not understanding the importance of mobile B2B ecommerce.

Businesses make a huge mistake when they ignore the mobile channel. Sixty-one percent of B2B buyers use smartphones to research work purchases and 60% say mobile plays a significant role in purchases. From researching products and requesting price quotes to completing transactions and contacting customer service, B2B buyers use mobile devices along the entire path to purchase and beyond.

In addition to building an ecommerce site that is optimized for **mobile**, leading B2B businesses create mobile apps that provide a faster and more accessible way to engage customers. In addition to being a great differentiator, mobile apps can support everyone involved in the B2B ecommerce experience—from customers and channel partners to field sales and internal teams. They can integrate with your ERP system and include everything from bar code scanning and product information to customer-specific pricing and ordering capabilities.

61%
of B2B buyers
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to research work
purchases

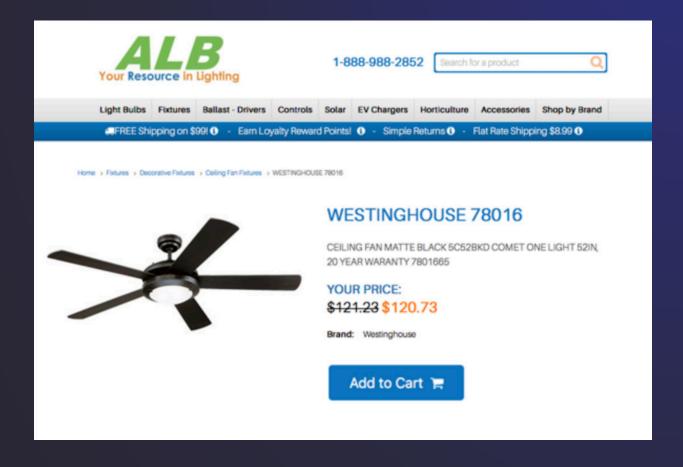


How Atlanta Light Bulbs avoided the mistake of not understanding the importance of mobile B2B ecommerce.

Atlanta Light Bulbs began selling online in 1999. Adopting ecommerce early gave the brand an edge for nearly two decades, but competitors began gaining market share in recent years by launching their own online presence. The company responded by expanding their digital offerings to include a mobile app and improved marketing features.

"Our customers love our mobile app! We're able to give it to our commercial customers, too, set them up, put their favorite products in their phone, and then say, "Here, bam! All you've got to do is order on your phone and you're ready to go."

Doug Root, CEO, Atlanta Light Bulbs



4. Neglecting SEO.

When you consider that **89%** of B2B buyers use the internet during the B2B research process and that **73%** of traffic to B2B company sites originates from a search engine, ignoring SEO is one of the biggest mistakes a business can make. It's absolutely imperative to show up in non-branded searches for terms that B2B buyers use at the beginning stage of their customer journey.

Start by building a keyword strategy based on an understanding of which search terms customers are using on Google, and then implement **SEO best practices** to optimize on-page content (including product pages) and meta data. The right SEO strategy can increase organic search visibility, authority, and on-site engagement so you can attract and convert more customers.



of B2B buyers use the internet during the B2B research process



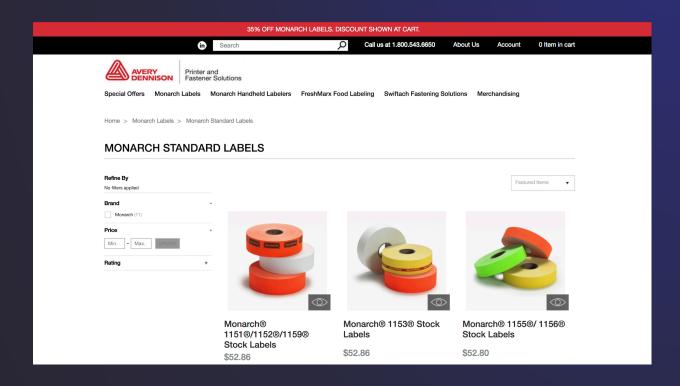
of traffic to B2B company sites originates from a search engine

How Avery Dennison avoided the mistake of neglecting SEO.

Avery Dennison provides sustainable packaging, labeling, printing, and attaching solutions for businesses. In the past, the company's main marketing strategy was sending hard copies of their large product catalog to customers, but that changed when they launched their ecommerce site. While they still send out the catalog, Avery Dennison attracts and converts more customers online with a fully optimized website architecture and content that appeals to search engines as well as users.

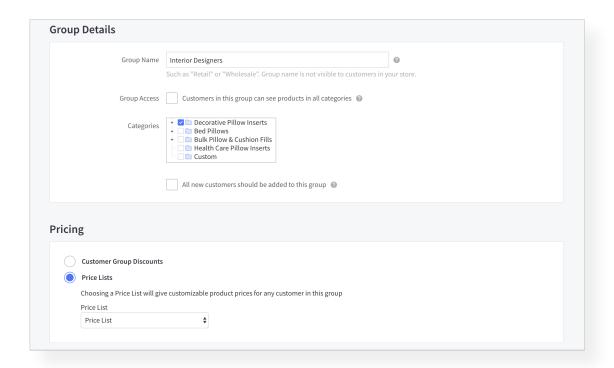
"Customers are now finding us on Google. We've seen a fair amount of revenue increase just from organic traffic alone. That's revenue we might not have captured if we didn't have this site."

Roxanna Holley, Ecommerce Merchandise Manager, Printer Solutions, Avery
 Dennison



5. Thinking you can't offer custom ordering.

B2B customers are used to negotiating special pricing terms with companies, and many businesses make the mistake of believing they won't be able to offer this level of customization through their ecommerce site. You can show customers their specific pricing and discounts by segmenting them into groups on an ecommerce platform. Creating customer groups enables you to personalize purchasing with customers according to their unique needs and pricing terms.



You can also use quoting tools to enable custom orders. With an app like **Quote**Ninja, customers can quickly and easily request a price quote 24x7 that you can review and respond to within regular business hours to let them know if the unique order can be filled. If it can, you can place that customer in their own unique customer group so that they won't have to go through the quote engine the next time they order. With one click they can check out in the future at their negotiated price point.

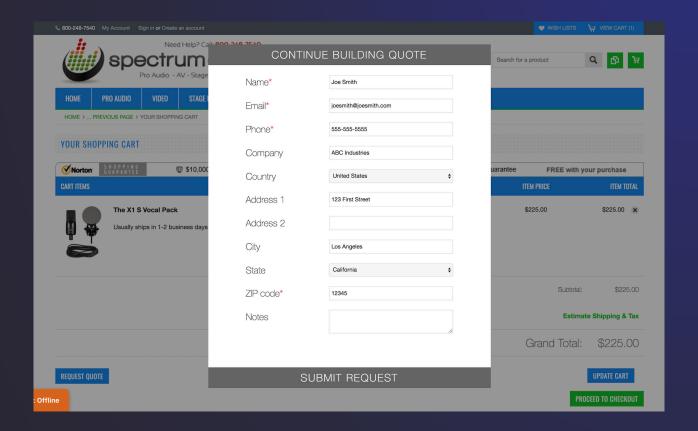


How Spectrum Audio avoided the mistake of thinking you can't offer custom ordering.

Spectrum Audio sells professional audio and video gear to consumers and other businesses. As both a B2B buyer and a seller, they understood that businesses want the ability to request a quote online. They knew that adding this simple but effective feature to their ecommerce site would improve customer engagement and boost sales.

"Once we moved to BigCommerce, we built a comparable app in three days using their API that allowed customers to request a quote, receive it in their email, and check out at the quoted price. This simple addition made a tremendous impact on our website — I'd expect a revenue drop of 40% if we turned it off."

- John McCann, CEO of Spectrum Audio



6. Not providing payment options.

The way B2B companies make payments varies. Paying via mobile wallet may be a common practice for one company, while another may only pay with paper checks with net 60 terms. You don't want to lose a potential customer just because you aren't equipped to handle a variety of offline and online payment methods—especially when you consider that B2B organizations who offer flexible payment options can see sales increase by 17% and average orders improve by 21%.

Make ordering from your business as frictionless as possible by enabling customers to buy using corporate accounts, credit, mobile wallets, net 30 terms, checks, and other methods they prefer. You should also make reordering a one-click process to simplify recurring payments. Many businesses forget that the payment process is a key part of the customer experience, and a hiccup during this crucial phase can prevent a sale with a customer who could become a key driver of revenue for your business.

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21%

increase in average orders

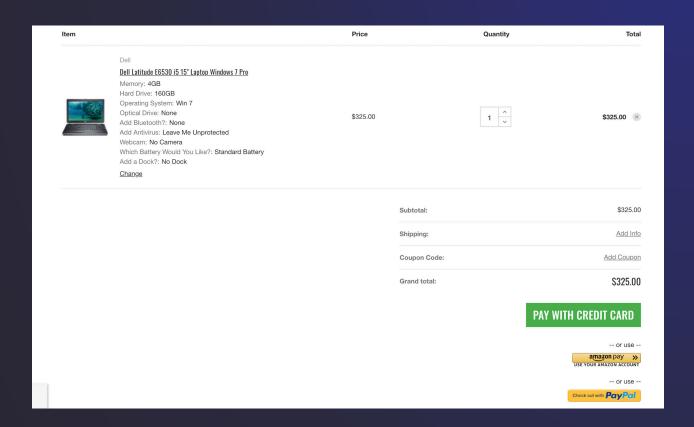


How Discount Electronics avoided the mistake of not providing payment options.

Discount Electronics began more than 20 years ago and has grown into an online superstore for new and used computer products. From selling pagers and fax machines back then to smartphones and customized laptops today, they've figured out how to evolve with their customers' needs. One of those needs was being able to pay for products with a digital wallet, so the company added Amazon Pay as another payment option.

"When we introduced Amazon Pay and an expedited checkout process in our BigCommerce store, we saw a significant lift in conversions—more than 10%—almost immediately."

- Rick Culleton, CEO, Discount Electronics



7. Not providing comprehensive product information.

Seventy-six percent of customers say the most important factor in a website's design is that it makes it easy for them to find what they're looking for. When they find the product they're searching, B2B buyers expect high-resolution images of the product and highly detailed product descriptions that include things like exact measurements, materials used, model or part numbers, compatibility with other tools or products, data and diagrams, installation information, and even available inventory.

Simply put, successful B2B ecommerce companies display products in ways that help customers make easier buying decisions. Optimize product descriptions for the search engines and provide personalized product recommendations for cross-sell and upsell opportunities.



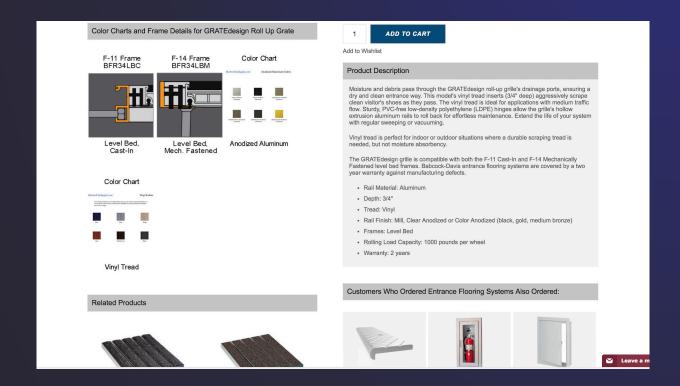
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How Harbor City Supply avoided the mistake of not providing comprehensive product information.

Harbor City Supply has provided a wide variety of hardware products to retail and commercial customers for over 50 years, and has been selling online since the late 1990s. When they redesigned their ecommerce site a few years ago, one of their goals was to make product pages more user-friendly. Since many of their products are complex, the company included detailed descriptions, diagrams, and other helpful resources to make it easy for customers to make a purchase with the exact options they need.

"We're fast, responsive, and offer a wealth of information to help the customer make the right choice. Our extensive "How To" blogs are featured on many category and product pages to answer many questions our customers have prior to making their selection."

- Gary Lederman, Chief Financial Officer, Harbor City Supply



8. Thinking social proof is only a B2C tactic.

In many ways, B2B buyers are similar to B2C consumers. They want to know that they're buying a great product at a fair price from a reputable company that has earned the confidence of other satisfied buyers. Millennials tend to place special importance on their peers' advice on social media where they interact with people both personally and professionally, so ignoring this channel isn't an option if you expect to grow your business.

Establishing a presence on social media builds relationships with prospects and customers and enables you to promote your business as an industry leader. Provide tips that help customers use your product and share reviews, testimonials, case studies, and other information that will attract, engage, and convert customers.

Millennials now perform

50% of all B2B research.

Ignoring social channels isn't an option if you want to grow your business.

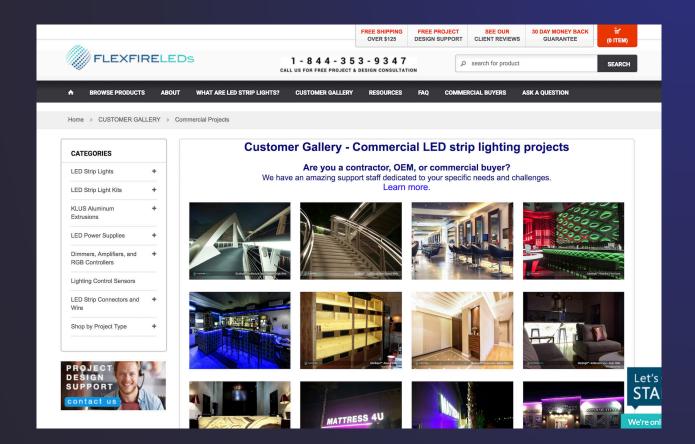


How Flexfire LEDs avoided the mistake of thinking social proof is only a B2C tactic.

Flexfire LEDs is well-known for creating unique interior and exterior lighting experiences with their linear LED strip lighting products. Leveraging usergenerated content—including customers' online product reviews, photographs, and videos—contributed to the company's 832% revenue growth.

"We relied heavily on (and still do!) our online reviews and customer submitted photos to build trust in our company and products. Word of our product and service traveled fast and we started picking up sales through referrals."

- Brent Mauriello, Founder & CEO, Flexfire LEDs



9. Believing that B2B ecommerce requires price transparency.

There's quite a bit of debate in the industry about whether B2B businesses should be fully transparent with their pricing. Proponents argue that price transparency builds trust and reduces friction in the sales process, while opponents cite the fierce competition in the industry and say making pricing available to the public enables competitors to underbid them.

Fortunately, you can have it both ways. You can segment customers into groups to display individualized pricing only after they log in to their account. Customer groups allow you to offer discounted pricing to customers for entire categories, specific products, or your entire store. You can still use your site to enable product visibility to prospects, but since they won't be logged in, they will be required to contact you for pricing.

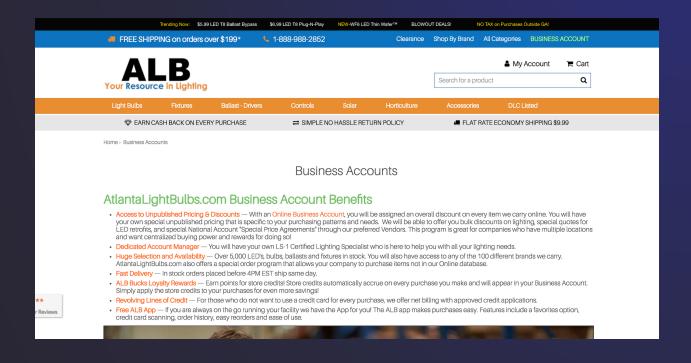


How Atlanta Light Bulbs avoided the mistake of believing B2B ecommerce requires price transparency.

Atlanta Light Bulbs has been supplying light bulbs, fixtures, and other lighting products to commercial and industrial customers since 1981. Their ecommerce site has evolved in many ways since it launched in 1999, including the addition of customer groups to enable the company to display different pricing to different customers.

"We use BigCommerce's out-of-the-box Customer Groups to give discounts to different groups based on how much they estimate they will spend with us. Our customers will sign up for a "Business Account" and let us know how much they plan to spend each year. Depending on that answer, we then drop them into various customer groups with percentages off the advertised price."

Doug Root, CEO, Atlanta Light Bulbs



10. Not integrating your site with other critical systems.

Fifty-seven percent of B2B executives say ecommerce platform integration is a top technology need. Failing to integrate your ecommerce platform with existing critical systems like your ERP, CRM, and PIM is a huge mistake that will make your business far less efficient. If you make the mistake of using an ecommerce platform that does not integrate with these other key systems, you'll have to manually sync information such as inventory, customers, orders, and pricing.

This approach ensures that you'll waste time, money, and resources manually performing processes instead of spending your time selling and serving your customers. Your best bet is to choose an ecommerce platform that is perfectly suited to your business and easily integrates with existing systems to improve efficiency and profits.

57%
of B2B executives
say ecommerce
integration is a top
technology need

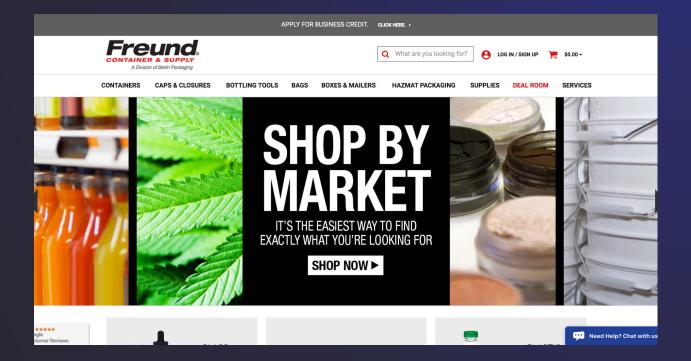


How Freund Container & Supply avoided the mistake of not integrating with other critical systems.

Freund Container & Supply has been selling containers, packaging, and industrial supplies to businesses for 80 years. When they launched their new website, they knew that integrating their ecommerce platform with their back-end systems was mission critical. Integrating their ERP enables Freund to better leverage data across systems to streamline and improve everything from inventory management to customer service.

"We can pass cart details over to our ERP, and if a customer calls our customer service line and references their PO number, we can locate the record right away... Being able to push things from our ERP into our BigCommerce store allows us to help customers see things like their credit limits, balances, and past due balances. It's empowering to our customers to have that data."

- Chris Hiller, General Manager, Freund Container & Supply



Final Thoughts

Don't let these common ecommerce mistakes derail your B2B business. Thoroughly evaluate and select an ecommerce platform that has all of the features and functionality B2B companies like yours need to be successful. From enabling custom ordering and flexible payment options to SEO and integrations, the right B2B ecommerce solution should include everything you need to increase conversions, boost revenue, and improve customer loyalty.

See how you can give customers an exceptional shopping experience while achieving a higher ROI with **the industry's #1 SaaS B2B ecommerce platform** for enterprise brands.



About BigCommerce

BigCommerce is the world's largest cloud ecommerce platform for established and rapidly growing businesses. Combining enterprise functionality, an open architecture and app ecosystem, and market-leading performance, BigCommerce enables businesses to grow online sales with 80% less cost, time and complexity than on-premise software.

Leading B2B brands choose BigCommerce



















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