

Selling to BIG Companies Online

B2B Ecommerce



The most successful B2B ecommerce webstores are equipping SME suppliers with the confidence and opportunity to win big contracts with FTSE 250 and Fortune 500 companies. This checklist will help suppliers understand what these companies are looking for in a B2B ecommerce webstore:

Q. Does your webstore allow lots of buyers to be linked to a single account?

Before your B2B webstore can be used across an entire organisation, it firstly needs to be capable of having hundreds (if not, thousands) of buyers linked to a single online account. The customer will also require a very quick way of onboarding all their buyers themselves.

Points to Consider:

- Does your B2B webstore have the ability to link large numbers of different level buyers to a single customer account?
- How complicated and long does it take the customer to setup new buyers on the webstore from scratch?
- Is it possible for large lists or departments of buyers to be setup quickly and if so; are they automatically notified with welcome and webstore explainer packs?

Q. Can customers control their own buyers via your webstore?

Bigger companies usually have lots more buyers to co-ordinate and control. Many successful B2B suppliers therefore support this requirement by incorporating multi-user management or e-procurement as an integral feature of their B2B ecommerce webstores. Once setup and relied on this can deliver long-lasting positive effects for the supplier-buyer partnership.

Points to Consider:

- Is it possible for a customer to setup different levels of buyers, allowing them for instance to control which B2B catalogues and products their buyers are each allowed to view and order?
- Can the customer setup budget frameworks and order limits for their buyers on your webstore?
- Is it possible for the customer to setup order approval work-flows based on authorisation controls which kick in automatically, sending email messages to senior buyers or department heads when certain purchasing limits or budgets are exceeded?

- Do you offer spend analysis tools for customers? Suppliers can sometime be nervous providing this information but senior buyers (often pivotal decision makers) at larger companies greatly value suppliers who offer this level of service.

Q. Will your webstore link to the customer's own purchasing system?

Punch-out is a term that's perhaps better known within the procurement departments of large companies. It's used to describe how the software (e.g. Oracle, SAP, etc...) they use internally (to manage their purchasing) can be connected directly to their preferred suppliers' webstores.

Once connected via punchout, buyers can securely browse for products, and build baskets on your webstore; but upon checkout their shopping carts are instead transferred directly into the buyers own internal e-procurement systems where they can be formally approved before being submitted.

If you're a supplier, a key advantage of punchout is a more prominent presence for your products on the computer screens of more potential buyers. It also makes it far easier for a large customer to control their buyers spending, making it more likely your company will retain the customer's long-term business.

Points to Consider:

- Does your webstore have punchout capabilities allowing it to integrate with the various major purchasing systems used by large companies?
- Does your webstore support single sign-on (SSO) which allows the buyers identities to be automatically obtained from a big customer company's own systems (and saving them the hassle of setting up potentially hundreds of new buyers in your webstore).
- If you've got punchout and SSO capabilities, are your Sales Agents fully aware of them? and actively talking about the benefits the customer can achieve from them (e.g. stricter spend control, faster buyer onboarding, etc..) when negotiating contracts and prices.

Q. Are you personalising each user experience?

Personalising individual user experiences on your B2B webstore not only makes a buyer's job easier, it perhaps more importantly helps you target better conversion rates and increased average order values. The fact is business buyers have been accustomed to having their ecommerce webstores heavily personalised via their B2C experiences and they're expectations are for these same to be true in work. This is why independent analysts like Garner are saying over 70% of B2B sites will be offering personalisation features by 2018 and furthermore that these same sites will be outselling those without personalisation by a sizeable 30%.

Points to Consider:

- Have you built a comprehensive picture of all the buyers in the organisation you are supplying and segmenting them according to their individual personas and needs? This can take time, but is well worth the effort for suppliers selling to large organisations which have lots of users, with widely different roles, abilities and requirements.
- Is your webstore able to deliver different default customer experiences to match each persona type identified? For example, does your webstore offer a simple bare-bones type experience for an occasional buyer/researcher or a more advanced, customized experience for users whose requirements are more sophisticated and bespoke?
- Is it possible for individual users to personalise their webstore settings and preferences via their My Account settings - for example, can a user with the appropriate permissions choose their own personalised webstore settings relating to language, display layouts; product catalogues, wish lists, order pads, address books, order histories, saved baskets and quotation tools?
- Does your webstore greet users with relevant personalised messages when they login? Such tailored messages can be a very effective way of communicating within large groups of buyers.

- Are promotions and product recommendations displayed on the webstore curated and based on the individual user's anticipated needs?
- For valuable contracts with large companies consider setting up a personalised and dedicated webstore or portal. This can demonstrate significant commitment to your large enterprise customer and will also give you greater opportunities to personalise and brand up the entire site without compromise.

Q. Can business buyers 'on the move' order from their mobiles?

More and more business is being carried out on the move, and we know smartphones are now a permanent part of business people's lives. Retailers already can't survive without a mobile first webstore and the exact same is now true for B2B suppliers. According to a recent Salesforce survey of B2B buyers, over 80% of Millennials said mobile is vital. Perhaps most tellingly, 70% of older B2B buyers also shared this view.

Points to Consider:

- Is your B2B webstore responsive in its design and touch optimized for mobile device use?
- Do you have a large customer which has buyers located in overseas markets? If yes, then consider the fact mobile first capability may be especially important to them given it may be their only or most reliable connection choice. Remember to mention this when tendering and promoting your mobile capabilities to big international businesses.
- For many vendors, having a dedicated mobile 'app' may no longer be necessary; but if the items you're selling have barcodes, then an App which allows buyers to quickly scan and re-order can deliver real practical benefits – particularly when aimed at helping buyers located in non-office environments (e.g. on factory floors, in workshops, on building sites).

Q. Are you offering extra self-services online to save the customer time?

B2B suppliers who incorporate a range of useful services into their B2B webstores which the customer can self-manage are able to safeguard customer satisfaction levels. This is particularly sensible when dealing with large companies who may be operating around the clock or in multiple time zones.

Points to Consider:

- Does your B2B webstore fully integrate with your ERP and finance systems. This is technically important before you can start providing the most effective services for your customers to self-manage via your website such as:
 - *Invoices & bill payments*
 - *Credit limits & statements*
 - *Order histories*
 - *Goods returns*
 - *Scheduled & continuity orders*
 - *Re-ordering*
 - *Spend analysis*
 - *Onboarding new buyers*
 - *Controlling buyers*
 - *Document exchange*
 - *Quotations*
- If you do have customer self-services in place, remember to promote them on your telephone messaging systems and to ensure your call center representatives promote them each time a customer contacts them on the phone or via email. Bear in mind these services may be more often utilised by non-purchasing administrators
- Consider whether there are any customer specific digital materials in your business which could be more effectively served to the customer via your B2B webstore or portal? For example, are there repositories of user guides, environmental impact or product origin certificates, etc... which a large customer would find useful to be able to access on demand?

Q. Is your online support desk adding, or robbing credibility?

Providing expert support via your B2B webstore is vital if dealing with large companies with strict KPIs. Delivering a constant stream of highly specialist knowledge, is also the very best way to build, and promote your service reputation within the customers' business and differentiate from online B2B box-shifters like Amazon Supply and Alibaba – who will often struggle to achieve excellence in this particular area.

Points to Consider:

- How obvious are the support links and phone numbers on your webstore – they should be inviting and the user shouldn't need to look hard for them.
- Are you offering Live Chat? This can be a major time saver when delivering online support and also a valuable opportunity for sales-reps to maintain their connections with buyers. Remember where available, to utilise canned messages and enable automated agent routings features to help deliver fastest customer satisfaction. Also, remember to integrate these conversations directly into your CRM so they can feed your client knowledge for support and sales follow-ups.
- Are initial response times to support requests on the webstore fast, even if the initial response is just an acknowledgement (ideally personalised) that sets expectations?
- Are customer's account manager's profiled and contactable via the B2B webstore – consider placing photographs of the team members you have looking after the account to add a personal touch and to help build relationships.
- Do you have FAQs and Explainer Videos on your webstore. These can be great investments and time savers when dealing with big companies that have large user bases especially.
- Do you monitor social platforms? Whether you're using them to administer support or not. The bigger the customer you're selling to, the bigger the negative impact of a poor support experience (which is not addressed and responded to) can have.

Q. Does your B2B webstore have all the right buyer tools for the job?

B2B buyers at larger companies need the right tools from ecommerce webstores to make their jobs easier. Suppliers who provide them can significantly increase average and repeat order levels.

Points to Consider:

- Does your webstore's search and navigation work in harmony to consistently return accurate results quickly, on mobile devices especially? Ecommerce technology aside. the biggest search superstars are companies who put real thinking time into implementing highly logical taxonomies which mirror and predict how the buyer actually thinks. The best, typically utilise features like search bar auto-completes, multi-faceted filtering and personalised results sorting as well.
- Is your webstore communicating real-time stock availability information and highly detailed delivery estimates?
- Is your site making it easy for buyers to quickly purchase items in bigger bulk quantities – for example clearly displaying quantity and price breaks or offering scheduling features that incentivize companies to place larger orders by enabling them to schedule multiple deliveries across a longer period of time.
- Are you offering matrix ordering facilities which allows items with multiple variants or options (e.g. waist, length, main colour, trim, etc..) to be displayed on a grid; which the buyer can then quickly insert quantities against? This can be hugely advantageous if you're distributing or wholesaling clothing for example as it saves the buyer having to serially select from drop downs to order a quantity of each permutation in a range.
- Do buyers have the ability to setup and save order pads and contract lists online. Order pads are still hugely popular with big company procurement teams and heads of departments, who often see them as an opportunity to add extra structure and influence over their team's purchases. Whether it's to highlight lists of negotiated priced items or to assist a buyer whose role is to replenish stationery cupboard contents – order pads still have a big part to play in B2B and the more buyer relevant functionality you can build into them the better.

- Placing single orders containing hundreds of different items is not an unfamiliar task for lots of buyers in large companies. To make this more manageable, does your B2B webstore allow buyers to upload lists of part numbers and quantities, saving the effort of browsing and searching?
- It's not unusual for buyers to build an order over the period of several days or even weeks in a large company. To help support this, does your B2B webstore allow buyers to save and name baskets and allow colleagues to add to them before they're placed.
- Does your customer describe the products you supply differently? Perhaps using product names or codes that are only familiar to their organization? If they do, then is your webstore accommodating this?
- If your customer has buyers who are located internationally, does your webstore support their languages and do your translations extend to covering the product content as well.
- B2B buyers increasingly rely on images when researching and purchasing products, particularly those buyers using mobiles. Does your webstore provide clear product images with alternative angle shots which can be easily side-swiped with just a thumb?
- Highlighting quality and environmental credentials of a product (e.g. EN, ISO, Fair Trade, etc..) is particularly effective when selling to big organizations who usually have stricter targets or requirements in these areas to consider.
- Is your webstore content optimized more towards describing your products as 'objects' or selling them as 'solutions'? Incorporating buyer guides, product reviews, FAQs and other relevant advice alongside the usual technical specifications can hugely assist buyers' decision making process.

Summary

Large scale organisations require and mandate sophisticated B2B Ecommerce capabilities. 'Enterprise Class' capability is a pivotal requirement.

Suppliers wishing to win new market share with bigger companies therefore need to consider the following to achieve maximum advantage:

1. Providing more personalised B2B ecommerce facilities which are in maximum tune with the individual requirements of a big customer.
2. Leveraging the unique service expertise and specialist knowledge they have about the products they sell online.

SME suppliers who excel at this will win new market share with big companies; and also, create important differentials with their B2B competition which is likely to now include Amazon Supply and Ali Baba who are also weaker in these areas.

Find Out More

If you are interested in learning more about B2B ecommerce or the Netalogue™ B2B Ecommerce Platform please contact Netalogue at sales@netalogue.com or call **+44 1639 816130** for expert consultations, B2B ecommerce demonstrations and solution prices.

About Netalogue

Selling occasional items to large companies online is one thing; but transforming this into high value relationship which can involve hundreds of buyers across an entire organisation requires sophisticated B2B ecommerce technology with innovative and powerful features. Netalogue is a well-established B2B ecommerce platform which integrates with leading ERP platforms; it is used by leading manufacturers, distributors and wholesalers who successfully use it to sell their products and provide online self-services for customers which include the World's largest companies.

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