

Navigating the Future of E-commerce:

Scaling Seamless Customer Experiences for Sustainable Growth

Customers Want Frictionless Commerce

E-commerce has evolved far beyond just facilitating transactions or hosting a product catalog online with a simple "buy now" button. The true essence of modern eCommerce lies in simplifying customers' lives by removing the friction associated with finding, ordering, and receiving products. Consider your experience with consumer-focused apps, such as food delivery services. The annoyance of repeatedly entering usernames, passwords, and payment details—or starting a new cart due to a lack of order history—are all forms of friction that detract from the purchasing process.

Amazon's One-Click purchase button serves as the ultimate example of friction removal for buyers. This feature streamlines the buying process, leading to increased sales for the company, estimated to grow by 5% annually. It's been estimated that this simple feature alone has contributed \$2.4 billion to Amazon's revenue. By creating a seamless buying experience, Amazon has set the standard that every consumer and business buyer now seeks when making online purchases.

The future of eCommerce is about creating a deeper relationship with customers by eliminating friction from every step of the buying and shipment process. However, as businesses strive to meet these increased expectations, they face the challenge of scaling operations without sacrificing the quality of the customer experience.

Disparate Data Causes Friction

The friction customers experience often stems from the disparate systems companies use to run their operations. According to recent studies, the average enterprise utilizes upwards of 65 different applications to manage its business processes. While this may initially seem necessary—after all, it's unlikely that a company's HR department and Marketing department would share the same information—the problem arises when systems that should share data—like Sales, Service and Commerce—don't integrate.

Different departments within a business typically select software based on their specific needs: Marketing prioritizes traffic and lead conversion, Sales focuses on reporting and KPIs, Service aims for lower case resolution times, IT is concerned with security, and Fulfillment is centered on getting products out the door efficiently. These systems were often purchased in isolation, with little regard for how they would connect with other applications.

For instance, many companies' Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems are decades old, predating modern eCommerce functionalities like email marketing or AI-driven personalization. This disjointedness experience creates significant friction for customers, as different systems handle various parts of their journey—orders, support cases, and payment processing—without effective communication. Attempts to connect these 'best of breed' systems can quickly become inefficient science projects, riddled with complex integrations and opportunities for error.

✓ Overcoming Friction with a Unified Commerce Application

The key to overcoming friction is adopting a unified commerce application that is built around the customer experience. This platform or 'hub' for all these disparate systems seamlessly come together and provide an Amazon-like buying experience across all devices. This application should focus on personalization, integrating customer data, order data and product information to create a cohesive and frictionless experience.

A unified commerce application not only simplifies the customer experience but also offers advanced product catalog management, streamlined ordering and checkout processes, and omnichannel capabilities. Businesses can extend their sales channels beyond traditional websites, allowing customers to engage through mobile apps, social commerce, and other digital platforms. By consolidating these functions into a single, unified platform, businesses can reduce friction and improve customer satisfaction, ultimately driving revenue.

✓ The Business Imperative: Sustainable Growth at Scale

The biggest challenge many organizations face is not the failure of their eCommerce sites, but their success. When a site achieves rapid adoption and high order volumes, the strain on IT and service departments can become unmanageable. This scenario often arises when companies launch a Minimum Viable Product without considering how it will scale in the next phase. Many businesses count on customer success agents or sales ops to 'fill in the gaps' with things like manually entering cases or re-keying in order data into the ERP.

Scaling an eCommerce platform is not just about handling increased order volumes; it also involves ensuring that the platform can integrate with existing systems, support new features, and maintain performance as the business grows—without adding head count. A lack of scalability can lead to operational inefficiencies, missed opportunities, and ultimately, erosion of profitability. It does no good to boost sales by 10%, while at the same time increasing the average cost to serve by \$10 an order.

✓ Strategic Scalability: Building for the Future

To avoid the pitfalls of stunted growth and operational inefficiencies, businesses must prioritize scalability from the outset. This begins with selecting platforms and technologies that not only meet current needs but also have the capacity to integrate well and grow with the business. A unified system that seamlessly integrates all aspects of the customer journey is essential, ensuring that each part of the business works in harmony without creating new bottlenecks.

Until bottlenecks and friction that hinder growth are addressed, businesses will struggle to move beyond incremental, single-digit growth. The real potential lies in unlocking exponential growth, which can only be achieved when systems are fully optimized and capable of scaling seamlessly.

✓ Automation and Growth

When data is unified, businesses can automate processes that were previously manual, reducing the risk of human error and ensuring consistency across operations. This automation not only streamlines workflows but also frees up valuable resources, allowing companies to focus on innovation and strategic growth rather than getting bogged down by routine tasks.

This type of automation and growth can't happen when data is spread across a number of disparate systems. These bottlenecks directly hinder a company's ability to scale effectively. Manual processes are often the 'band aid' required to bridge the gaps between these systems, preventing businesses from fully leveraging their data, ultimately limiting their potential for growth and transformation.

Automation within a unified system allows businesses to optimize resources and standardize processes, leading to more predictable and scalable outcomes. This transformation from manual to automated processes is where businesses see significant acceleration, as it enhances decision-making capabilities, reduces costs, and fosters a data-driven culture that is essential for sustained growth in a competitive marketplace.

Conclusion: Balancing Growth and Customer Experience

The eCommerce of the future provides a unified system that ties profitable and sustainable growth without compromising the quality of the customer experience. By focusing on scalable solutions that leverage automation, businesses position themselves to adapt swiftly to changing market conditions, expand into new markets, and capitalize on emerging trends. This proactive approach ensures that their eCommerce platforms remain not only viable but also highly competitive, enabling sustained growth and long-term profitability.

Contact us to learn about Customer Experiences for Sustainable Growth

About RafterOne

When we looked to structure the most comprehensive collection of strength, reliability, and quality for solid end-to-end commerce in the Salesforce ecosystem, we extended beyond experience. We sought to secure a spirit connection for solution builders, collaborative creators, and born leaders to do their best work as one problem-solving team.