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E-BOOK

Unified Commerce on Salesforce

Learn why customers prefer a Unified Catalog Connected Platform and Trusted AI over traditional ecommerce solutions.

Making the Complex Simple

Manufacturers don't grow organically; they grow through acquisition. Increasing sales isn't as simple as adding new customers into new markets. Since revenue and profits increase due to acquiring other companies, this presents a unique set of complexities such as:

• Multiple ERPs storing customer master data
• Different distribution centers for shipping and fulfillment
• Large product catalogs with complex customer entitlements

The key to bringing together these disparate systems is a unified commerce platform that scales. Whether creating a single portal with multiple brands in a single website or launching multiple websites in different regions of the world, having a single unified commerce solution is critical for manufacturers and HLS customers as they support customers and grow through acquisition.

This poses a huge challenge: tying together disparate data sources – whether from marketing, sales, or service—into a unified view of the customer. Internal users need to see only one customer record, which also makes it much easier to invite that user to access the portal when there is only one of them in the system instead of ten from different master data sources. The consolidated data reduces errors and allows for that customer to have a single login to view all their digital relationships in one place—a must-have for any manufacturer and HLS company.

A customer success rep at a company that recently implemented a unified commerce platform described his interactions with customers as 'night and day'. Before the implementation, he had to investigate several places to try to problem solve a customer's issues. He would dive into the ERP (which allowed him to look at only one record at a time), emails, and into SharePoint to find relevant information. Due to the complexity of their different systems, this rep was completely dependent on the customer to describe their problem and then scramble to figure it out.

However, after they brought all order and inventory data into a single platform, he was able to view all customer interactions on a single screen and proactively ask questions. Instead of being at the mercy of how well the customer could describe their issue, he had all their recent orders, invoices, and in-flight orders at his fingertips. All the complexity of customer interactions was available in a single view for the rep

to assist the customer. This type of complexity is common across every manufacturing and HLS customer encountered over the past 7+ years. Every time there seems to be a 'simple manufacturer', additional complexity is uncovered that proves this wrong.

Lastly, without a robust data and integration strategy for integrating multiple ERPs into a single commerce application, each new acquisition will feel like a science project. The key is to bring together order complexity from multiple ERPs with different distribution centers and fulfillment requirements into the front office for a unified experience. Providing IT with a defined data model and pre-built flows allows new acquisitions to easily service orders. The key is taking complex systems and applications and making them simple for their customers.

They Need a Portal, Not an eCommerce Website

Talk to any hard-core manufacturer, and they will tell you that they don't need an ecommerce website. A stand-alone website that just takes orders won't move the needle for their customers. What they really want is a portal—with their customer's entire digital relationship—so their customers can self-serve. It turns out that ecommerce is too limited for what manufacturers and HLS businesses and what their customers really need to do business with them.

This is where manufacturers need the ability to easily add content to their self-service portals. Everything from granting visibility to open service cases, to allowing finance to come in and pay down on invoices, to any other internal CRM data can easily be exposed to customers through clicks, not code. Internal users can simply 'drag and drop' data (e.g., Cases, Invoices, Assets) on a portal page, set the security, and publish in minutes, not months. This allows customers to view all this critical information alongside ordering products and looking up order status.

A fuel and gas customer just adopted a unified commerce platform because 80% of their customers were calling in to support for 'order on behalf' on their self-service portal. One of the biggest customers told the marketing director, "I'll use your portal once you let me pay down invoices." This isn't a shopper who wants to browse,

checkout with a credit card, and then receive their products. This is a large distributor who needs to see available products, real-time inventory, and a simple way to pay down invoices.

Manufacturers and HLS companies want a 'one-stop shop' where customers, distributors, and partners can all self-serve. They want to avoid costly and time-consuming activities such as:

- Customers calling sales reps to find out if products are under warranty
- Customers calling service reps to find out if inventory is available to purchase
- Finance sending out emails and reminders to get invoice payments

None of these use cases directly involve purchasing online but are critical in servicing online orders. When it comes to ecommerce, serving the order is as important as the products being purchased. According to a recent industry report, 88% of customers say that the experience a company provides is as important as the products or services it sells. A digital transformation that focuses solely on ecommerce and not on order servicing will alienate customers and ultimately fail.

The truth is that portals aren't sexy, but they are powerful. They expose internal data to external users so that they can self-serve with sales, marketing, and service. Customer expectations have been higher.

Every CIO is looking for an 'Amazon-like' experience for their buyers that simplifies the purchasing process and allows their customers to 100% self-serve. For that, an ecommerce website is just too limited. Manufacturing and HLS customers need a connected portal where they can expose their digital relationship with customers so that they can scale through self-service.

The Need a Platform, Not a Stand-alone Website

While many easy-to-use ecommerce sites are available, they are not platforms. They are commerce applications designed to sell products online. Just because there is an app store or integrations with other applications doesn't mean these solutions are platforms that developers build on.

Here is the litmus test: What quoting tool or case management software runs on the tech stack of such solutions? None—all the third-party applications are built solely for commerce.

Manufacturing customers need an industry-leading CRM platform to manage sales, service, marketing, and integrations—all from a single code base. Add in Commerce and Order Management requirements, and it is no wonder that customers understand that they need much more than a stand-alone website to service their customers.

Manufacturers and HLS businesses need a platform because customer expectations have never been higher. When their customers call in or go online, they expect to be connected to all their critical data, such as orders, cases, warranty, invoices, and more. When all this data is brought into a unified platform, customers see dramatic results:

Platform

38%
faster integration

Commerce

28%
increase in
conversion rate

Service

35%
increase in
customer satisfaction

Building your commerce on a trusted and connected platform is a multiplier that increases customer satisfaction, increases revenue, and reduces the cost to serve. All the additional features that customers want in ecommerce—like personalization and automation—are powered by a platform. They tie into the ecommerce experience but ultimately are driven from external systems and need a single platform to unify them for an exceptional customer experience.
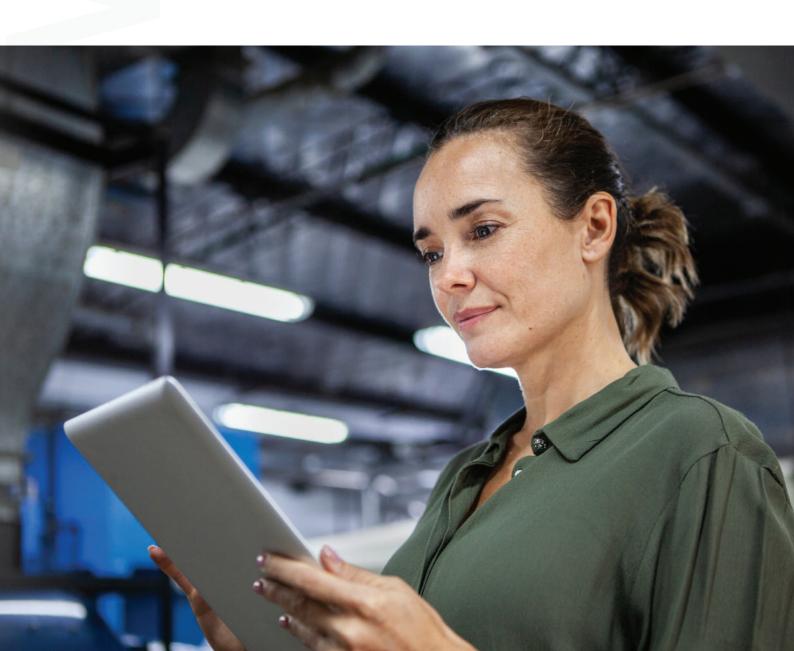
And a new wrinkle to the connected customer is Artificial Intelligence (AI). In the last year alone, customers have come to expect greater personalization and AI in their self-service experiences. A commerce platform doesn't have access to all the data to drive personalization at scale. A commerce platform is too limited to be able to have trusted AI.

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Artificial Intelligence isn't new to the unified platform discussed. For almost a decade, this platform has been using machine learning to help customers better analyze data and make predictions. Today, this platform makes over 80 billion predictions per day. You could combine every ecommerce website in the world, and they couldn't touch that level of scale.

Again, launching commerce on a platform that connects sales, marketing, service, and AI is a multiplier that you can't find on any stand-alone commerce application. The complexity that manufacturers and HLS customers have with their customers demands more than a stand-alone website or an app store that connects to tech stacks that need to be continually updated and refreshed. They need self-service orders powered by an entire platform.

They Need to Scale,
Not Just to Sell

Since manufacturers grow through acquisition, the only way to get a high ROI on their newly purchased company is to scale. Unique brands, different disconnected ERPs, multiple fulfillment systems—all these need to work together so that the business can scale.

This means that B2B Commerce inherently handles:

- Multiple languages, multi-currency on a single portal
- Parent/Child businesses with different catalogs, buying rules, and entitlements
- Security and compliance for large-scale operations, extensive product lines, and international supply chains

Having hundreds of buyer groups or splitting orders for fulfillment are not a custom requirement—they are table stakes for any B2B customer. They need a commitment to globalization and scale for the largest manufacturers in the world to deal with the complexities that go beyond the typical consumer ecommerce site.

A unified commerce platform has always been designed to handle large B2B enterprise-scale solutions. Most ecommerce applications started in SMB and then moved up to the enterprise space. However, a robust platform that has served large manufacturers from its inception was designed to manage complexity and allow businesses to scale.

Let's Connect About Unified Commerce & Trusted AI

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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.

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