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E-BOOK

Why Salesforce Outperforms Shopify in Manufacturing & HLS

Learn why Manufacturers and HLS customers prefer Salesforce Commerce's Unified Catalog, Connected Platform and Trusted AI over Shopify Plus.

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Salesforce Commerce makes 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 1 of them in the system, instead of 10 of them 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 relationship in one place and is a must-have for any manufacturer and HLS company.

I recently interviewed a customer success rep at a company that went live with Salesforce B2B Commerce and Order Management a few months ago. He described his interactions with customers as 'night and day.' Before they implement-ed Salesforce for ecommerce, he had to investigate several places to try to problem solve a customer's issues. He would dive into the ERP (while allowed him to look at only one record at a time), emails and into SharePoint to find relevant. 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 Salesforce, he was able to view all customer interactions in a single screen and proactively ask ques-tions. Instead of being at the mercy of the how well the customer could describe their issue, he had all their recent orders, invoices, and in-flight orders all at his finger-

tips. All the complexity of customer interactions were on a single view for the rep to assist the customer. This type of complexity is across every manufacturing and HLS customer I've encountered over the past 7+ years. Every time I think there is a 'simple manufacturer' we uncover some additional complexity that proves us wrong.

Lastly, if you don't have a robust data and integration strategy for integrating multiple ERPs into a single commerce application, then 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. Giving IT a defined data model and pre-built flows allows new acquisitions to easily service orders. The key is taking the complex systems and applications and makes it simple for their customers.

We 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 along side ordering products and looking up order status.

A fuel and gas customer just bought Salesforce Commerce 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 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 they are buying. According to Salesforce's recent State of the Connected Commerce 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.

We Need a Platform, not a Stand-alone Website

While Shopify Plus is an easy to setup and use ecommerce site, it is not a platform. It is a commerce application that is designed to sell products online. Just because there is an App store or you can offer integrations to other applications doesn't mean that Shopify is a platform that developers build on.

Here is the litmus test: what quoting tool or case management software runs on the Shopify tech stack? None, all the third-party applications are built solely for commerce.

Manufacturing customers need an industry-leading CRM platform to manage sales, service, marketing, integrations all from a single code base. Add in Commerce and

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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's 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.

Artificial Intelligence isn't new to Salesforce. For almost a decade, Salesforce has been using machine learning—branded Einstein—to help their customers better analyze data and make predictions. Today, the Salesforce platform makes over 80 billion 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, especially Shopify Plus. The complexity that manufacturers and HLS customers have with their customers demand more than a stand-alone website or an app store that connects to tech stacks that needs to be continually updated and refreshed. They need self-service orders powered by an entire platform.

Salesforce's Agentforce is poised to power the next generation of ecommerce websites by seamlessly integrating AI-driven customer service capabilities directly into the commerce experience. Agentforce leverages Salesforce's robust data ecosystem, including Sales, Service, and Marketing Clouds, to provide unparalleled insights and automation. By tapping into Einstein's machine learning capabilities, Agentforce enables businesses to deliver personalized and proactive customer support at scale—turning self-service interactions into opportunities to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Unlike Shopify Plus, which relies heavily on third-party integrations, Salesforce's unified platform ensures that every customer interaction is informed by a 360-degree view of the customer, creating a seamless, AI-enhanced ecommerce journey.

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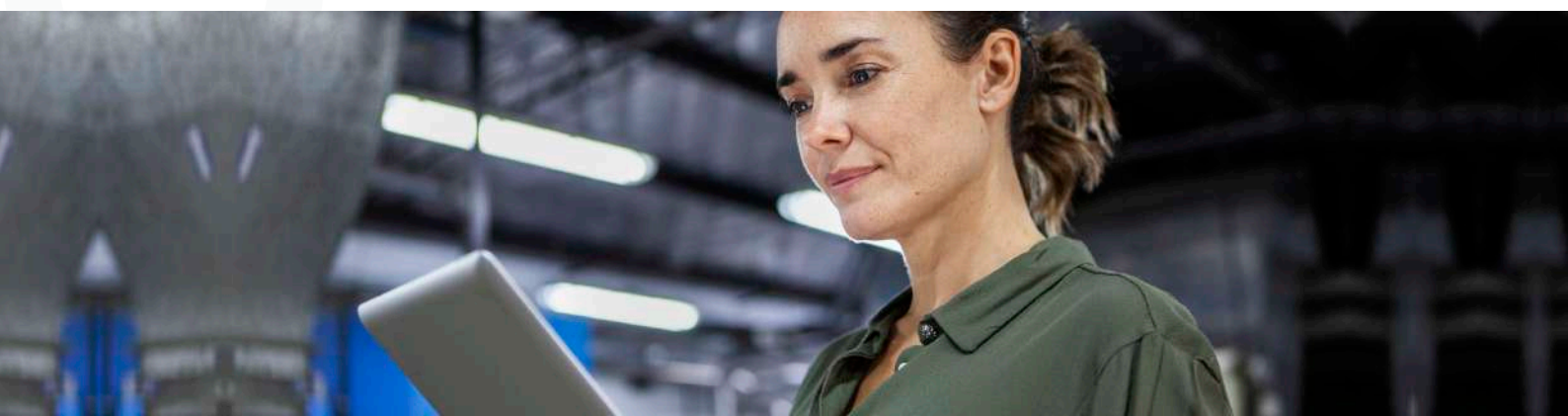
Having hundreds of buyer groups or splitting orders for fulfillment are not a custom requirement, they are table stakes for any B2B customer. They need a commitment to globalization and scale for the largest manufacturers in the world to deal with the complexities that go beyond the typical consumer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

Salesforce Commerce has always been designed to handle large B2B, enterprise scale solutions. Most ecommerce applications (like Shopify or Magento) started in SMB and then moved up to the enterprise space. Not B2B Commerce; it's first customers were large manufacturers looking to harness the power of the Salesforce platform for self-service commerce. From its inception, B2B Commerce has been designed to manage the complexity and allow businesses to scale.

Shopify Plus is Great for Easy eCommerce Use Cases

Here are three reasons to choose Shopify Plus over Salesforce Commerce:
- No need for a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system
- eCommerce doesn't need to be connected to sales, service or marketing data
- Simple e-commerce site without customer entitlements, real-time inventory, or complex shipping/fulfillment requirements

If you don't need these 3 things, Shopify Plus is likely a great fit with its easy to set up and maintain solution. The 'one size fits all' approach will allow customers to build a stand-alone website in a few weeks and start taking orders.

What it comes down to is easy v. simple. Shopify Plus offers an easy to set up and use ecommerce website. But manufacturing and HLS businesses are almost never easy. They have complex buying requirements and need to do more than just sell products online. For customers to truly self-serve, they need a portal—that is built on platform—to take their complex systems and simplify it.

In the end, that Salesforce's Commerce portfolio is the best unified commerce solution to help manufacturers and HLS businesses truly self-serve. And that's where Salesforce Commerce has been the best choice for hundreds of manufacturing and HLS customers.

Side by Side Comparison

Use Case	Salesforce Commerce	Shopify Plus
Cost & Total Ownership	↑ upfront costs licensing & implementation fees ↓ long-term costs lower due to comprehensive features & fewer hidden expenses.	↓ initial costs ↑ long-term costs for additional subscriptions, customizations & adding additional features
Customization & Scalability	Offers robust customization options at scale	Platform limitations, issues with large catalogs or complex workflows
Innovation & Roadmap	12 releases/year for Commerce, OMS & Experiences	Regular releases for commerce
Buyer Experience	Robust portal with entire digital relationship exposed	Ecommerce website to purchase products
Automation	AI-driven merchandising, A/B testing, advanced search, advanced event-based triggers	Event-based triggers
Omni-Channel Cart-to-Quote-Cart	🟢	🔴
Built in Marketing Automation for retargeting	🟢	🟠
Unified Customer View: Sales, Service, Marketing	🟢	🔴
Trusted Artificial Intelligence natively on Platform	🟢	🔴
Order Management natively on Platform	🟢	🔴
Order Support	🟢	🟠
Unified Catalog for multiple brands & sites	🟢	🔴
AI-Generated Predictions/Day	80 billion	Not Available
Best Use Case	• Use CRM for customers • Tie together Commerce with Sales, Service & Marketing • Complex entitlements & fulfillment, real-time inventory	• No need for CRM • Separate Commerce from Sales, Service & Marketing • Simple entitlements & fulfillment, no inventory

Let's Connect About Salesforce Commerce

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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.