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Managing an ecommerce pivot during an economic crisis

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Businesses need to provide a frictionless way to conduct commerce, not just at the point of sale, but also to handle all the exceptions, returns, fulfillment, supply chain, pricing and discounting. Image credit: ChiefOutsiders

By [Scott Koerner](#), [Robert Burgess](#), [Jay Dunn](#) and [Dan Sackrowitz](#)

It is no secret that the pandemic has made digital channels a mainstay of revenue growth. Ecommerce businesses are booming, and those that were already leaning into digital are thriving.

Conversely, companies that lacked the infrastructure for ecommerce are now scrambling to accelerate their business through digital.

Ecommerce data is specific, measurable and actionable. These qualities allow businesses to learn easily from the data and make course corrections as needed.

So how exactly can a company new to ecommerce optimize digital channels to provide a frictionless customer experience from first touch, to transaction, to support?

Seamless

In the past, business-to-business commerce was more of a high-touch environment, often relying on trade shows or other physical meeting places.

Now, digital transactions have taken the place of those high-touch environments.

Businesses need to provide a frictionless way to conduct commerce, not just at the point of sale, but also to handle all the exceptions, returns, fulfillment, supply chain, pricing and discounting all of which now needs to be accomplished digitally.

Customers are now looking for the business-to-consumer experience in a B2B environment. When determining how best to provide frictionless, but exceptional customer experiences using digital channels:

1. Do not reinvent the wheel

Learn from existing best practices how to accelerate and grow ecommerce.

B2C companies have been doing this for decades, so business leaders do not need to reinvent the wheel. They have perfected the logistics and know how to get to product and checkout with the fewest number of clicks.

With some modifications, those best practices can be applied to the B2B world in both product and service delivery.

2. Leverage customer data

With a wealth of ecommerce technologies available, greater and quicker access to customer data allows businesses to react and adjust much more rapidly than in the past.

Learn how customers want to do business with you and how they absorb information so you can meet them where they are. The key to success in this area is to keep things as simple as possible.

Success means developing a sound strategy and carefully managing tactical execution to avoid random acts of marketing.

If there is a lack of in-house talent for this critical function, outsourcing this role can help accelerate growth with strategy development and execution oversight.

Better performance requires attention to what is truly valuable: conversion, post-purchase marketing, repeat sales and customer nurturing. These things go beyond marketing campaigns and Web site traffic. They are fundamental to running a better ecommerce business.

3. Reverse engineer the sales process to shape the digital strategy

B2B companies now making a shift into ecommerce need to ensure that their organization is equipped to support the channel. They must also have reasonable goals and expectations.

Digital marketing agencies help with promotion, awareness and driving traffic, but the biggest opportunity for most ecommerce businesses is not in spending more money on tactics to grow business, but rather to get better performance from the business.

By identifying the target revenue, profitability and channels required to meet business goals, CEOs can reverse engineer the sales process.

Knowing the channels from which business comes from over a given time period will help shape the digital strategy. This, in turn, reveals where to focus marketing and guides the foundation of the marketing plan.

Now, it is just a matter of developing messaging, branding and promotions.

Every ecommerce strategy must ensure that the tactics deployed are targeted. Web site traffic is an important component, but the customer experience on the site is equally as important.

Paying attention to the customer experience will maximize the money spent driving traffic.

Bottom line

First, provide an exceptional customer experience. Second, put solid operations in place. Third, drive traffic. Transactions will occur if the customer journey on the company Web site is the best it can be.

CEOs need to look at their entire business with a holistic view.

Improving ecommerce often has little to do with marketing. It is about performance. It is about getting more out of every customer. It is about raising average order value and increasing units per transaction to drive sales, growth and profitability.





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