

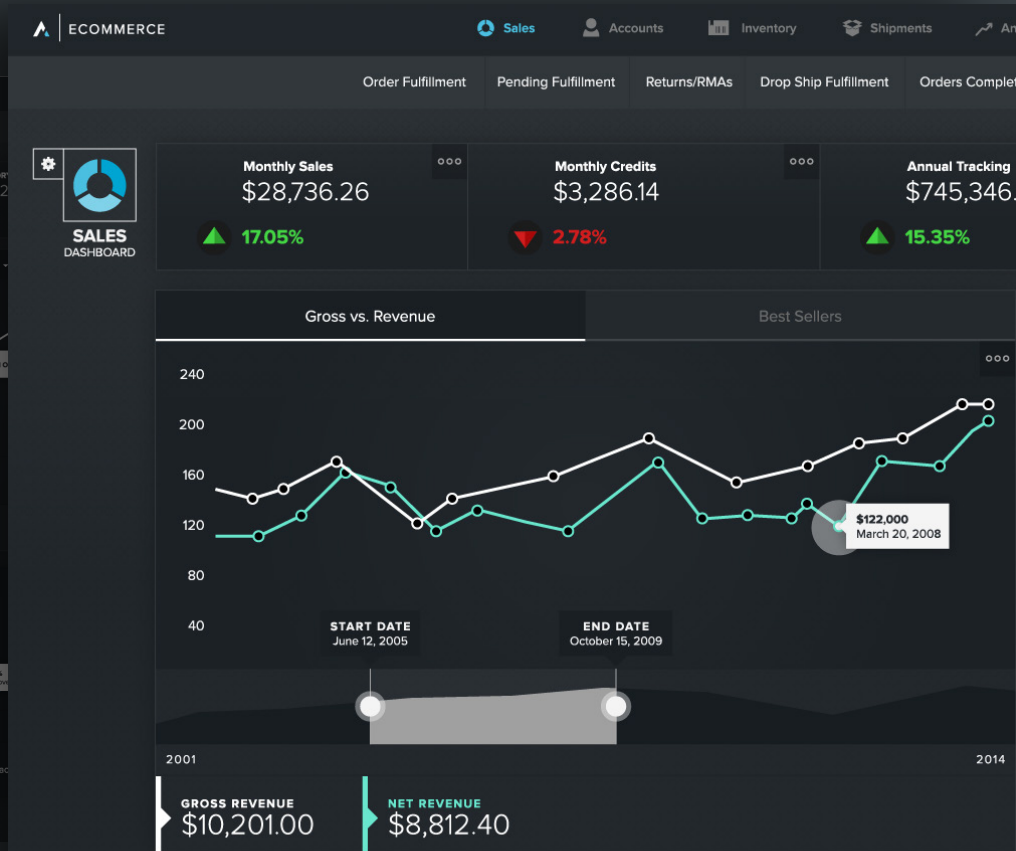
CLARITY



10 Things to Look For in eCommerce Solutions

# Introduction

Choosing an eCommerce platform for your enterprise or B2B website generates many concerns regardless of whether you're an administrator, manager, marketer or CEO. Internet business evolves at dizzying speed, and you face incredible pressure to find the right eCommerce solution. The prospect of ripping-out and replacing your system in two or three years generates fear and caution. You need a scalable and customizable solution that integrates with your content management system and fulfills other important business objectives.



# Fulfilling Business Needs Before Choosing a Platform

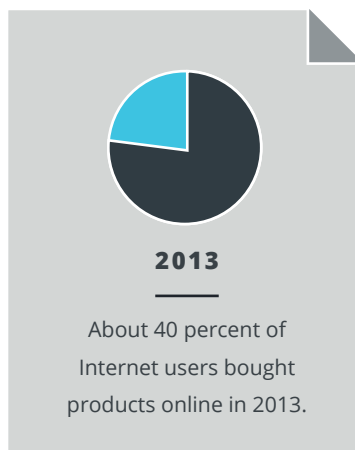
Many platforms can be used with any CMS system or independently of a CMS. Automation, administrative tools and marketing capabilities play key roles in turning your website into a top sales performer. Here are the top 10 issues to look for in an eCommerce platform helps to guide your decision based your business objectives:



*All businesses looking to add or replace eCommerce from their offerings are doing so with an eye towards growth.*

## 1. Why Scalable eCommerce Tops the List

Choosing an eCommerce platform shouldn't be a cyclic chore for enterprise or B2B companies every three or four years, but the need for data and service-related integrations increases geometrically. All businesses looking to add or replace eCommerce from their offerings are doing so with an eye towards growth, so scalability issues are the top concern of managers seeking eCommerce solutions. About 40 percent of Internet users buy products online, and revenue in the United States topped \$38 billion in 2013. [1] ICANN, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, recently added 500 top-level domain names to keep up with the increasing demand for relevant URLs. [2] Your eCommerce platform needs to keep pace with demand, or you'll be replacing your system. Look for a system that is built for growth that can handle unlimited SKUs and transactions. One of the keys to scalability is the ability to integrate data and business systems. Your business operations need to be scalable at every level. Automation helps by saving time and resources, managing inventory and fulfilling ordering processes. Scalability isn't just about speed. Your platform needs to connect with SEO to promote growth, optimize content for marketing and address issues like optimizing customer-friendly URLs and page titles. Your solution should not only handle growth but also encourage it.



## 2. Customizable eCommerce Solutions for Your Needs

Custom solutions become increasingly important for companies that want to differentiate their operations from their competitors. Your eCommerce platform should function as a business partner to measure, design and build your website so that it's capable of identifying proprietary triggering events and influences. You need to be able to brand your site with the company color scheme, custom store design, full control of processes and wide selection of HTML and CSS templates.

No out-of-the-box solution can possibly fit all operations. Your marketing strategies, product line and customers' needs create an ever-changing dynamic. If you want to keep your customers returning, your site needs to interact with customers in custom ways. You have custom application needs, so you need a platform and vendor that integrate custom solutions that range from designing simple forms to interacting with customers on social media networks. If you have multiple stores with different branding strategies, you need design customization. The right platform can match a technology solution to any business problem.



### 3. Administrative Tools Designed to Facilitate Business

A suite of administrative tools and custom modules allows you to implement custom business solutions for your enterprise website. You can install and configure new software, establish best-practice backup and recovery protocols, provide 24/7 support and evaluate and upgrade database design and security.

Effective admin tools allow authorized staff to manage resources and groups, import and export information and customize how your online store works. You can easily enhance customer relationships, optimize marketing and facilitate invoice processing.

### 4. Reporting Features

Websites need accurate and timely reports to guide daily and long-term business planning and transform back-end data into actionable front-end marketing and operational decisions. You need quick, visible reports on all aspects of your operations from inventory management to cash-flow strategy. It helps when your platform consolidates data from multiple business areas to give you the ability to perform complex analyses.

Automatic alerts can prevent expensive mistakes, and real-time reports optimize the decision-making process by analyzing margins, profits, sales patterns and the tax consequences of key business decisions. You can monitor engagement, website performance, product affinity or other areas of concern when you have highly customizable, intuitive reporting features.

The best eCommerce platforms connect invoicing, inventory, cash flow, sales trends, website metrics and on-site behavior analyses to guide staff decisions. Keeping informed is easier when you have the ability to customize reports and integrate third-party analytics.

### 5. Business Intelligence

Business intelligence means different things to different companies, but all BI involves in-house products and accessories, customer interests and behavior or information about your competitors and market trends. Business intelligence includes many indicators and analysis parameters, and only the most robust platforms can handle these multiple issues effectively.

## 11 TOP BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE CONCERNS

- Understanding buying patterns by analyzing big data
- Managing relationships with your best customers
- Creating promotions and incentives based on customer buying habits and behavior
- Providing the technology for supply chain analytics
- Optimizing logistics
- Capturing and archiving critical customer and supplier information
- Determining optimal times for restocking inventory
- Optimizing logistics
- Studying loyalty-related criteria
- Gathering intelligence about alternative manufacturers of critical parts and accessories
- Integrating pattern-recognition abilities to identify actionable business insights
- Managing network access and security to protect data



## 6. Integration Capability

Integration is a key concern for cautious administrators, decision makers and B2B principals. No platform is a bargain if it can't grow or adapt to your systems without expensive add-ons or fixes. You shouldn't have to replace your architecture every few years to accommodate evolving business needs. Using an eCommerce system with a tier system allows administrators to change single tiers as needed, and advanced rollover systems protect your business capabilities from downtime and service interruptions.

Enterprise eCommerce platforms must be versatile when it comes to integrating applications, software and UI enhancements. Built-in features for connecting with popular APIs allow out-of-the-box integration for PayPal, Amazon and Google Checkout. The advanced architecture of a multitiered system adapts to your business goals, your current software and applications and your customer's changing needs.



## 7. Easy-to-Use Dashboards

Enterprise and B2B selling involves many specialized analytics that only custom widgets and unlimited charts, tables and graphs can provide. An ideal eCommerce platform for any enterprise business offers a bird's-eye view and the ability to sharpen focus on specifics. Your site should integrate with your enterprise software, CRM and other business applications. If you can't find the widget you need from a large selection of options, a B2B eCommerce expert should be able to write the custom code that you need for dashboard monitoring.

A strong B2B dashboard improves conversions by channeling Google Analytics information where it's readily available for every authorized user. Your website's backlink profile should be available in the administrative dashboard. Repeat customers are crucial to sales, so you want the strongest dashboard monitoring of customer retention, traffic analysis, cart abandonment and opt-ins for emails and newsletters. Intuitive and easy to use, the best dashboards are invaluable resources for finalizing marketing decisions, tracking key performance indicators and customizing the displays with drag-and-drop tables, graphs and charts. Above you can see an example of a dashboard from a forthcoming Clarity eCommerce release.



## 8. Marketing Support and Powerful Analytics

Your eCommerce solution shouldn't require using separate systems and software for intuitive marketing support. Choose a platform that supports integrating email campaigns, newsletters and third-party marketing vendors like MailChimp, Constant Contact, Fishbowl and others.

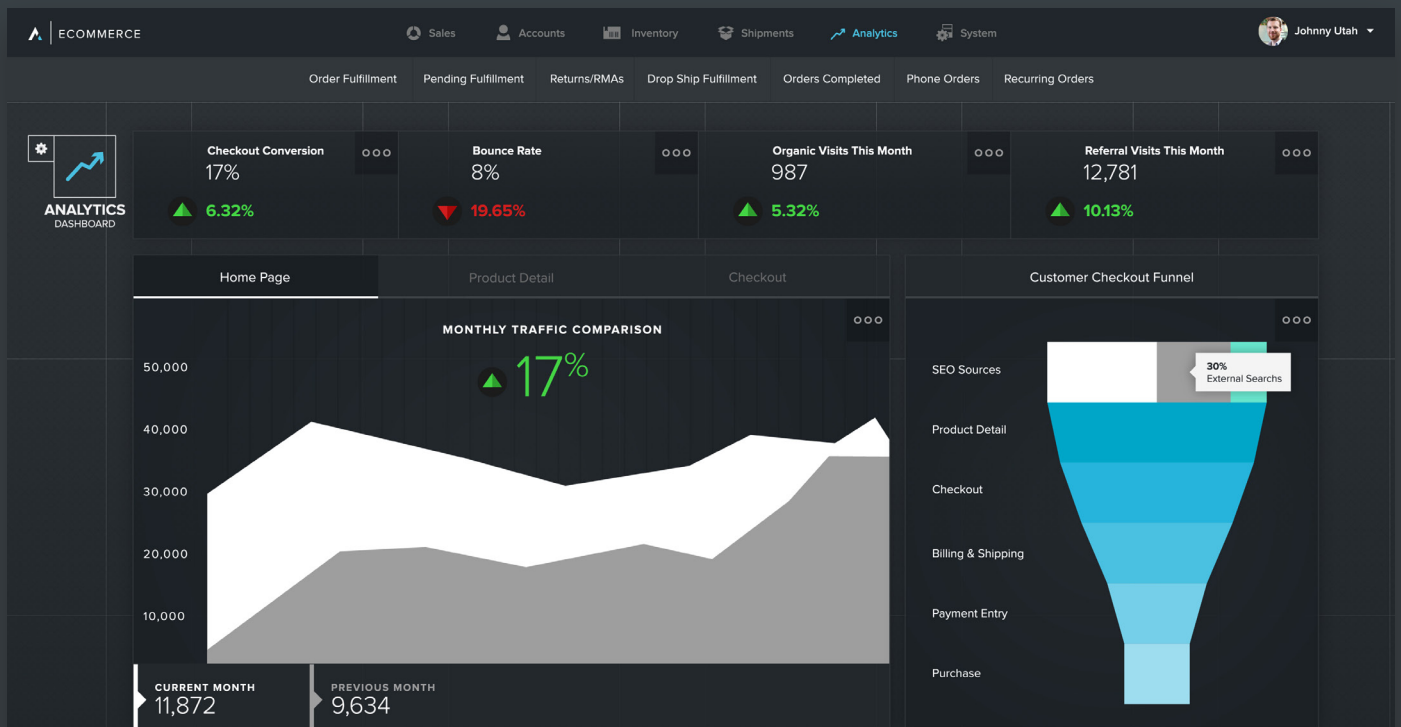
The best eCommerce platforms offer a suite of marketing services such as conversion tracking utilizing Google Analytics, goal tracking, content performance reports, keyword analyses and sales tracking. Built-in SEO features are a big advantage in effective digital marketing.

Analytics capabilities should include determining how customers find your website, where people are getting referrals, what keywords were used in searches and other details like how many unique visitors come to the site, how much time is spent on each section, which bounce rates apply to certain website areas and other valuable information about customer behavior.

## Important SEO Features in an eCommerce Solution:

- Flat site architecture to facilitate search engine optimization
- Easy-to-optimize elements for creating headers, titles, URLs and other design and content features
  - Automatic creation of Sitemap.xml and Robots.txt
  - 301 redirects when needed

Below is an example of how Clarity eCommerce could handle analytics reporting in an upcoming release.



## 9. Shipping-Support Solutions

Few areas of eCommerce can be more frustrating than shipping. If you manufacture or carry great products and offer attentive and professional customer service, you don't want to lose control of the user experience after your products ship. An otherwise flawless transaction can easily be sabotaged by poor shipping. That's why the best eCommerce solutions offer multiple shipping options and support for split shipping. An intuitive eCommerce platform will inform customers when a partial shipment can be sent immediately, track all parts of the order and send the total invoice immediately or in separate installments based on shipping dates.

Split shipping allows your customers to break up their orders so that they can receive some items faster while waiting for inventory or to utilize different shipping methods for different parts of the order. A strong eCommerce platform can easily handle credit authorizations, printing vendor-specific labels and tracking multiple deliveries relating to the same order or customer.

Closely related to shipping, tax support can also prove challenging. The ideal eCommerce solution not only offers multiple shipping options but also provides tax support. There are more than 10,000 taxing jurisdictions just in the United States, and international shipping compounds the problem.

## 10. International Capabilities

Marketing becomes increasingly competitive, and a B2B eCommerce platform can help you grow your business and expand into international markets or hamper your efforts. According to the Social Times, eCommerce generates more than \$1.2 million dollars every 30 seconds. [3]

The Statistics Portal reports that global eCommerce sales topped \$638.16 billion USD in 2014 and could hit \$1.35 trillion by 2018. [4] Thought leaders and savvy marketers can't afford to ignore the opportunities that international marketing and eCommerce offer. A robust eCommerce platform needs built-in capabilities for multilingual marketing and ordering. Your website needs to accept payments in multiple currencies, calculate tax rates for foreign tax jurisdictions and optimize for multilingual SEO strategies.

Your platform also needs to handle customs and duties and estimate these costs precisely when setting B2B prices for large, wholesale orders. Invoicing and billing can become disastrous without a capable platform to manage currency conversions, translations and global shipping and tax calculations.



## Clarity Can Help

Contact Clarity for a free quotation, product demonstration or consultation about how the company can build an eCommerce solution for your business. Standard eCommerce vendors just won't do when you depend on massive scalability, powerful business intelligence tools, customizable applications and intuitive shopping carts. Your business depends on a suite of tools and features that can handle large catalogs of products and many shipping options. Clarity can strengthen your conversion ratios and provide human intervention at critical times in the sales funnel. You also get the latest support for integrating new applications, marketing efforts and administrative functions.

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