Naveo Commerce

8 Signs That You're About to Outgrow Your eCommerce Platform

eCommerce

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It's a difficult decision choosing the "right" time to change eCommerce platform - that's why we commissioned our latest report to help eCommerce Directors and Digital Marketing professionals judge whether their existing solution can support their business strategy.

In this free, 24-page report you'll learn:

- Key eCommerce strategy planning tips
- 7 "Quick Wins" – without needing to re-platform
- 8 warning-signs that you're about to outgrow your eCommerce platform
- Easy-read checklist to help you decide whether you're ready to take your online business to the next level!

Key eCommerce Strategy Planning Tips

Ecommerce moves at lightning speed, with new technical innovations continuously being created. The most important question many companies ask is how can they grow online? What strategy should they employ to realise that growth?

Unsurprisingly, there isn't a universal strategy, as each business is different and the strategy depends on the goals to be attained, but usually the universally important objective is to increase profit. To increase profit you need to assess the business as a whole, analysing all sales channels along with future plans.

Many brands do fail to provide an eCommerce experience in line with the overall brand strategy and some still underestimate the power and influence a compelling eCommerce website can have.

Have you got the basics in place?

Let's look at some key tactics that should be employed as part of an eCommerce strategy:

Performance of the website – responsive templates, speed, functionality, good search facility, quick single page checkout and an expanding choice of payment options, social media share links, shoppable content and personalisation, all help to increase conversion.

Product range - selection, availability and visual merchandising.

Optimal imagery – good quality, as many views as possible, and it always helps conversion to show fashion on a model, and lifestyle shots.

Seamless online and offline integrated marketing plan in a coherent 'brand voice'. Central to any successful digital strategy is ensuring you provide customers with a smooth, seamless brand experience covering all touchpoints from laptops and mobile devices to apps and in-store shopping.

High levels of customer service – ease of contact, product information and meet customer expectations with a shopping experience they'll recommend.

CRM Analysis – build customer loyalty and segmentation through data analysis.

Customer reviews – essentially free PR when receiving good reviews and recommendations. However, it does not always suit the luxury end of the market.

Fulfilment – offer a range of delivery choices including Click and Collect, next day, weekend delivery and even same day where possible. Returns process is also important – easy returns across all channels and many customers appreciate a free returns service.

Optimise existing site - Before launching multiple international sites, a business should maximise sales of their existing site – perhaps making it multi-currency.

International – implement multi-lingual sites only where there is clear ROI – remember Google translate is NEVER good enough.

Trends that may affect your online growth

Delivery on Demand

As Amazon continues to monopolise the frictionless, impulse purchase side of eCommerce, with Prime members anecdotally converting at almost 75%, retailers need to compete where Amazon currently can't – bespoke delivery services.

Amazon's delivery service has very much been geared up for the enormous volumes they handle, and as such, specific delivery times, in-flight delivery information and bespoke delivery requirements (such as installation) aren't available. Retailers can use this to their advantage, by increasing customer satisfaction driven by a better service will drive growth in this area this year.

For all of Amazon's strengths – and financial clout – there are weaknesses in its current business offering. Retailers and wholesalers are specialists in their chosen sectors and will have deep knowledge of the products and the market, as well as detailed understanding of their customer's needs, that Amazon cannot match. And this is unlikely to change anytime soon. Where do your strengths lie? Do you offer customer service, sales reps and niche expertise? Play to your strengths.

Agility and the Ability to Change
With Brexit on the horizon, but no clarity around what it might actually mean to retailers selling to the EU (and beyond) or sourcing goods internationally, companies are going to need to apply legislative changes rapidly, and likely handle a raft of other adjustments with limited notice or preparation – particularly those selling to the Irish Republic.

Rapidly fluctuating currency rates will affect anyone trading internationally and could impact profits as costs and order values change according to the current exchange rate.

Coupled with ageing eCommerce platforms which will need to address security flaws and obsolete technology with equal urgency, the importance for a business to be able to react quickly is more important than ever.
Could your eCommerce site respond rapidly to a threat or opportunity presented by the constantly changing retail environment?

Expanding Online Product Range

Multi-channel businesses expanding their product ranges need to consider the implications of their increasing catalogue size and if their current platform can cope, not only with the number of SKU's, but also the increasing complexity of any integrated third-party solutions – back office, order management, PIM or Content Management. If any fail, your website may go down. Online sales will increase versus in store sales. Click & Collect continues to increase in popularity, which may create issues due to lack of holding space in stores for orders from the website.

Physical products aren't the only thing customers are looking to buy online any more, and the inclusion of services, installation and sector-specific features such as appointment booking, collections and consultation are becoming more commonly available to purchase online. Is your company able to offer your full suite of products and services online, or are customers still forced to go in-store or to contact your call-centre to purchase?

7 "Quick Wins" Without Needing to Re-Platform

#1

Product Selection & Availability

Ensuring you have the right product selection, which is available in all varieties at the right quantity without being under or over stocked, seems a pretty basic rule. However many business still don't quite get it right. Range planning is one of the most crucial business tools, involving analysis and future forecasting along with market knowledge.

If you have a platform capable of internationalisation, you can really make the most out of its localisation features and make some very basic and easy quick wins by tailoring product and sizing, or perhaps by offering limited editions or extra colour ways. Having a 'pre-order' or 'email me when back in stock' feature on-site can help maximise sales and limit availability issues with the customer.

#2

Integrated Marketing Strategies

Creating a cohesive integrated marketing strategy guarantees your customer will hear one 'brand voice' and will understand the brand's values and ethos. Digital strategies should be integrated between email, social, affiliates, PR and offline printing so you are actually telling the customer the same relevant story which flows and allows the customer to connect with your brand. Most modern platforms are pre-integrated with the most well-known digital marketing suites and CRM systems, or offer lightweight alternative tools to allow you to target customers quickly and effectively.

#3

Third Party Search & Affiliates

Historically, ranking number one on Google was the Holy Grail every business wanted to achieve online. It's still true that an effective search engine strategy will have a huge effect on your inbound traffic and will even improve the efficiency of your paid search initiatives. Working with SEO experts to identify the best way to build into your site's content to increase natural rankings on search engines will help drive more traffic to your site, and will also improve customer engagement.

Paid search can also help, but can be expensive and requires close monitoring of the metrics and ROI of campaigns to eliminate underperforming keywords. Many companies fall into the trap of investing a little money into PPC and abandoning their efforts because they don't see any real returns. A cost-effective paid search strategy is a huge undertaking and should never be under-estimated or approached in a tentative manner. Affiliate programs, especially those around voucher and discount sites are as popular as ever, and it can be an effective way of introducing new visitors to your brand. Always ensure you understand the impact of the discounts (and commissions) you are offering these customers, however, as they can often be very low-margin and low-loyalty customers.

#4

Payment Options

As mobile eCommerce has grown in market share, new payment methods have become more popular. Using on-device stored credentials for payment as well as some of the ever-growing number of alternative payment methods can be an effective way of increasing conversion on your checkout.

Apple Pay, for example, has become considerably more popular in recent years, but is only really effective where the demographic of your site matches those who typically use Apple devices, and use Apple Pay on a regular basis. Ultimately, you must weigh the convenience and demand of your users with the costs and complexities of supporting multiple payment options and decide what is best for your specific situation.

#5

Improved User Experience

Are you providing your customers with the optimum experience online? This is a question businesses should ask themselves all the time, constantly reviewing the customer journey, ensuring your website loads quickly and your setup is scalable to cope with increases in traffic is another pretty basic rule.

As sites become more complex, and offer the consumer more and more information, this increased data requirement can often be the cause of poor load speed. Cloud-based hosting and content delivery networks (CDNs) can help with this issue, along with basic housekeeping tasks, such as ensuring images are in the correct format, and scripts & style sheets are optimised.

From a usability perspective, simple intuitive navigation and menus are essential but often overlooked, as is search functionality that returns relevant results to the customer. It's crucial to understand your primary user's needs, behaviours, goals and motivation for using your website when configuring search.

Different retail sector customers have different needs around search, and default behaviours are typically sub-optimal. For example, the way colour and sizing is used when searching clothing and fashion is very different to how it is used for furniture, but they are equally important for both. By understanding how your customer searches for what they need, you can ensure that your on-site search feature is up to scratch.

Responsive templates are very popular with online retailers, as they can reduce the management overhead associated with catering for multiple device types. They are not a suitable solution for every situation, however, and many retailers still use bespoke mobile and table templates where this provides a better customer experience.

#6

Upgrade

Anybody who is using one of the major eCommerce platforms that have been released in the last 15 years will be familiar with the potential nightmare of the platform upgrade. Technology changes at a rapid pace, so upgrades are essential to ensure that your site remains secure, and offers the features and functionality your customer expects from their online retail experience. Upgrading your site to the latest release version can be the bridging gap before considering a re-platform project. It may be that upgrading your site before re-platforming is mandatory if your existing platform is falling out of vendor support before your new site is ready to launch.

#7

Redesign

Many businesses look to re-design their websites every 2-3 years to stay up-to-date with current online design trends and usability features. These projects must be undertaken with a degree of caution, however, as consumers are typically weary of change, and a significant redesign to a much-loved site can cause a temporary drop in conversion and engagement rates as well as negative coverage on social media channels.

Most effective digital operations now consider a continuous optimisation project as opposed to larger, more wholesale redesign projects, where A/B split testing is carried out on many smaller changes, and the effective ones are put live as and when they are ready. Multiple, small changes are made over a period of time with analysis to understand the impact.

There are a large number of 3rd party tools available which can support a redesign project, by engaging users, performing analysis on the behaviour of visitors to your site to understand the impact of any changes made. Because design and user experience can often be a very emotive matter within a business, these tools are often useful to offer an "independent" outside view of the changes being made.

8 Warning-Signs Your eCommerce Platform Can No Longer Support Your Business Strategy

#1

Your site is taking longer than 1 second to load

If your site is slow, visitors will be bouncing away from your homepage or struggling to delve deeper into the site, find products or get through the checkout. Market leading websites aim for a sub one second response time for all their pages.

Search engines also use site speed to grade the quality of a site for the purpose of ranking within their results. A consistently poorly-performing site will struggle to rank highly within search engine results pages, regardless of the quality of the content on it.
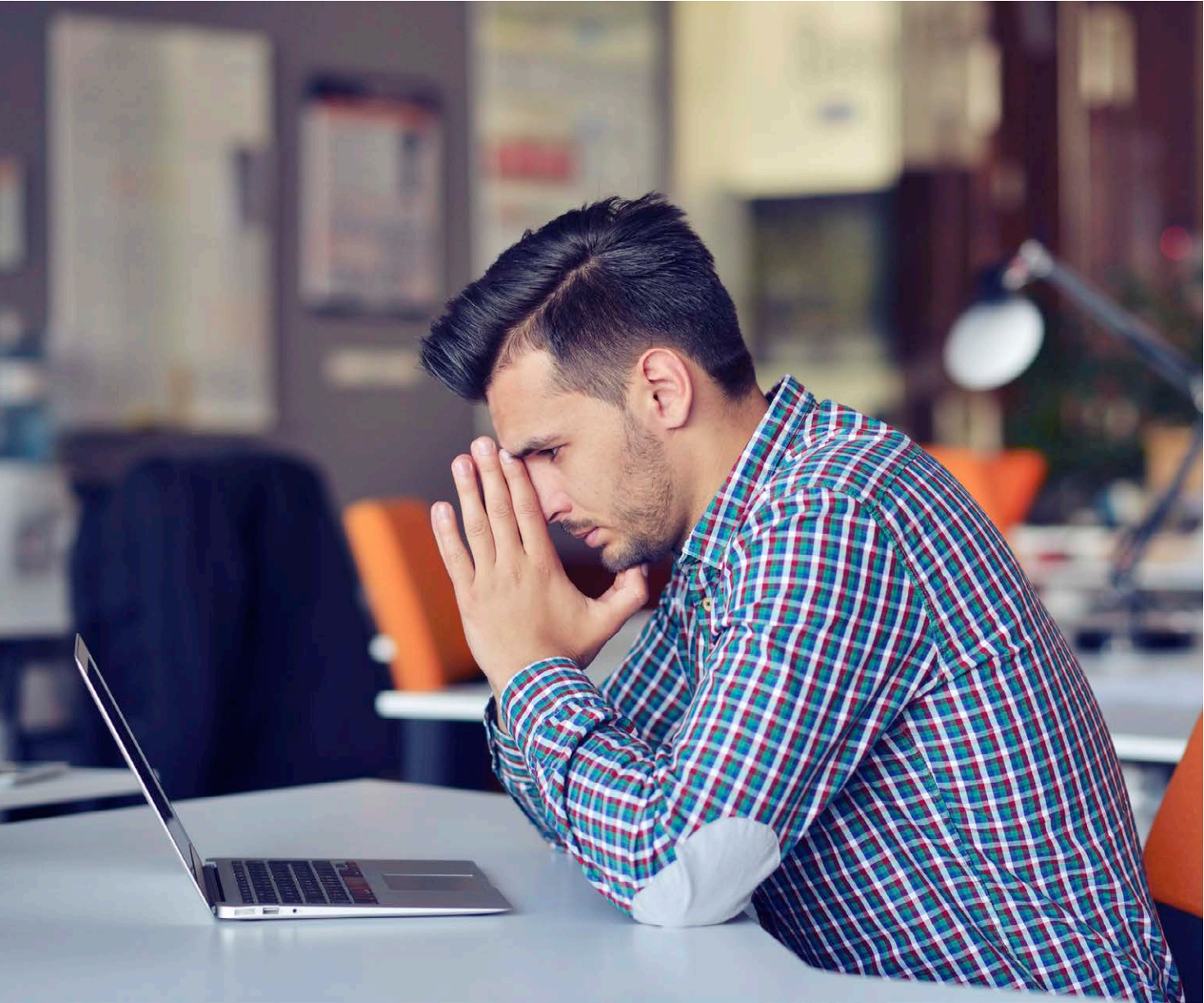
#2

Your product management workflows are getting increasingly complex

The consumer demands more information when making a purchasing decision than ever before - product information management has become an increasingly important part of a successful online operation.

Complex workflows during product creation, product attributes needed for search and configuration, pushing of product information to 3rd party partners or distributors can all be requirements which point to the need for a Product Information Management (PIM) system to streamline the product management aspect of your operation.

Often, these systems also benefit the wider business and not just the digital channel, so they are worth investigating if you do not already have one.

#3

Promotions are eating into your profits

Promotions online can often be complex, either requiring a number of complicated criteria to obtain, or applying a number of different incentives depending on the context of the offer.

The sheer volume of promotions available on a typical eCommerce site also means that most retailers require a way of ensuring that customers can't apply multiple discounts in a way that wasn't intended by the seller.

The ability to manage these promotions, and how they interact with each other, is an important aspect of any trading manager's role, and should not be underestimated. Some retailers spend many hours configuring promotional campaigns and product launches on their sites, whilst other are able to achieve the same result in a handful of clicks. The difference between a correctly configured administration system and one that has been stretched to "make do" can be the equivalent cost of several full-time employees every year.

#4

Drop-offs at checkout are affecting conversion

Drop off at checkout can affect conversion. Give customers the choice to check out as a guest with the option of becoming a registered user at the end of the transaction by entering a password. This seems simple enough, however some platforms simply don't have this functionality.

#5

You're failing to meet customer's delivery demands

Customer delivery demands are increasing, and customers expect to be able to choose from a range of options – you need a solution that can cope with Click & Collect, time slots and multiple delivery addresses – if you do not offer these services the customer will find a competitor that does.

Customers wish to have a slick experience when paying for their orders preferring single page and one-click checkouts. Now Amazon's patent on one-click buying technology has lapsed, many other retailers are looking to implement this streamlined buying mechanism – can you compete with Amazon's offering?

#6

Your platform's holding you back from going global

International expansion can be a key part of a growth strategy but some platforms cannot cope very well with the demands of multi-currency and multi-language sites. Having a single CMS and product catalogue is essential to running multiple sites effectively and profitably.

As international expansion increases more customers will expect their orders to be delivered duty paid so they know exactly how much duty and tax they need to pay at the checkout. It will also cut down on the international shipments refused by customers not prepared to pay the extra duties and taxes when their order is delivered duty unpaid. Does your solution calculate tax and duties accurately? Is it flexible enough to be able to comply when tax and duty rates change?

#7

Your development costs are spiralling out of control

When your platform doesn't have a CMS (content management system) you will spend a huge amount of time uploading and manipulating content, or a huge amount of money paying your digital agency to make those changes for you.
Modern eCommerce platforms are agile, with intuitive CMS to make changes as and when you want. The ability to upload content to the website by someone non-technical using a "drag and drop" interface is becoming a 'must have' to serve the needs of content hungry consumers.

Consider the cost to your business if:

You cannot control when and how your website updates. Your development costs are increasing, not decreasing. You need technical help to do anything on the site.

Find an eCommerce platform that puts the functionality in the hands of the marketers and removes the need for IT to be involved in every change.

#8

You cannot deliver a connected customer-centric experience

Many businesses take orders over the phone as well as via a website, smaller businesses manage this customer service function in-house on disparate unconnected systems, but as you grow there will be a need for call centre capability. If this is not an integrated function within your eCommerce platform, the customer service you offer could suffer.

For many businesses it is crucial to have an integrated OMS (order management system) to completely handle the order process from managing the inventory across channels to order fulfilment.
An OMS must integrate with back end systems such as accounting, invoicing, payments, fulfilment, warehouses and customer service. It must be able to support your business now but also meet any future needs - drop ship vendors, multiple warehouses and fulfilment such as click and collect, and in-store ordering.
This helps businesses to give their customers the best omnichannel experience allowing shoppers to buy anywhere, have their orders fulfilled by a variety of options and allow multichannel returns.

As a business grows, an integrated OMS will be needed to efficiently manage accurate inventory, process orders, reduce costs, increase customer engagement and eliminate the need for multiple systems and integrations.

About Naveo Commerce

The Perfect End to End eCommerce Partner

For retailers – big and small – for whom success depends on growing online, we provide the perfect End to End platform: a cloud-based SaaS solution, with Headless commerce engine, OMS and Fulfillment technology.

Since the beginning we had a dream – it was simple – to make buying online as smooth and easy as possible. In December 2019, Digital Goodie acquired Maginus, the two products have now combined and Naveo Commerce was born!

Naveo Commerce is the perfect end-to-end eCommerce solution: from first click, to hand-picked, to last mile, to doorstep smile. We are one of only a few companies globally able to offer the entire end-to-end commerce support to retailers and wholesalers. We also provide eCommerce website consultancy and implementation. Our partnership with Magento and Episerver continues to operate as a core consulting arm under Maginus, a Naveo Commerce brand.

Naveo Commerce is venture-backed by the US based eCommerce growth fund Black Dragon Capital. Today we employ retail industry experts and technology specialists in two different continents across three locations.

The Naveo Commerce platform has won awards for the best user experience in 2015, best online store of the year in 2013, and comet of the year in 2012. Our proprietary recommendation technology is praised by IGD Retail Analysts. What's more, we are listed alongside leading applications in the Gartner Digital Commerce Vendor Guide and eConsultancy's Top 100 Digital Agencies Guide – both for two years in a row.

Conclusion

The main indicators that you've outgrown your eCommerce platform are usually quite evident:

– Online profit has plateaued, or even reduced as customers are not receiving the online experience they demand and costs continue to increase.
– Your digital team are not able to use their time effectively or pro-actively. If you spend more time firefighting than innovating, you will never move forward and meet your potential online.
– Your development costs are spiralling as you try to keep up with changes in technology, often in an attempt to deliver a solution on top of poorly functioning code.
– You cannot deliver a customer centric, omnichannel experience that your board of directors now demands.
– The cost to maintain your site for

the next 3 years exceeds the cost to re-platform to a modern Ecommerce system.
– Your CIO is nervous about security and data loss through the site, or you are already aware of security flaws present in your technology stack.
– AND the Number 1 Indicator: Your competition is growing where you're not. New startups in your sector are able to offer features and incentives online which are beyond your capability, as you watch enviously from the sidelines.
– Technology should always support the business in achieving its strategic goals. If your eCommerce platform is dictating the direction your business is having to take, due to lack of features or cost of operation, then you need to seriously consider re-platforming.

To start a conversation about an upcoming project simply email hello@ naveocommerce.com and we'll set up a call.

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