

Creating Epic Digital Experiences for B2B Companies

WHITEPAPER

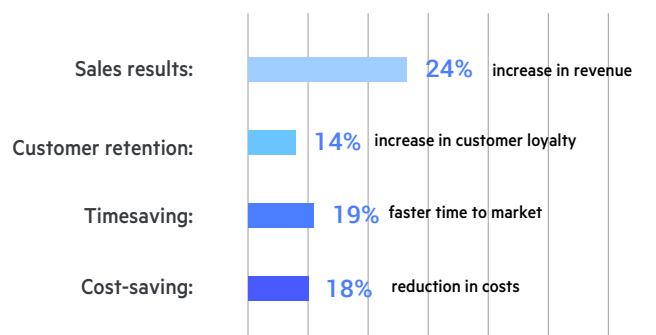


Many people associate seamless digital experiences with B2C companies in highly competitive markets that need to keep consumers engaged throughout the buying process. But B2B customers expect the same effortless, enjoyable experiences. After all, they've grown accustomed to these experiences while making personal B2C purchases.

B2B ecommerce lags behind B2C simply because B2B businesses are worried they could disrupt their current business model or cause channel conflict. Thankfully, ecommerce and the wider digital experience doesn't have to be complicated and it's possible to create a B2C-inspired shopping experience even when you serve the B2B world.

Whether it's an easy-to-use ecommerce system that enables business customers to browse your stock or a progressive web app that enables them to quickly order on the go, your business customers deserve the same customer-centric digital experiences that are so common in the B2C world.

There are a number of clear [business benefits](#) to improving your digital experience:



What is a Digital Experience?

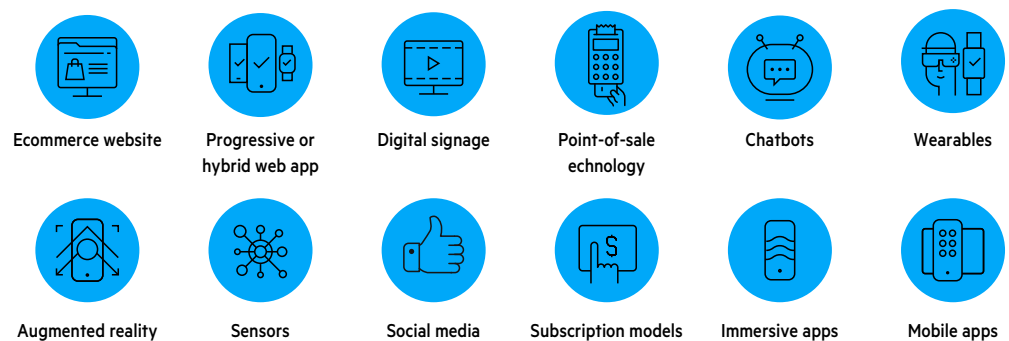
Put simply, these are digitized customer experiences. What that experience looks like depends on your business and the audience you're serving but, typically, it's a series of intuitive, tailored interactions across different platforms and touchpoints. Businesses must align around three key areas to build a digital experience:

- Coordination of web and app development efforts
- Management of the whole experience as a product
- Enabling digital elements (content, data and business logic) of the business to work together

[A B2B customer is more likely to choose your company if they know they can access information](#), products and services via different methods while getting personalized results along the way. Whether that's an ecommerce website with an accompanying mobile site, a progressive web app or on-premises technology that allows them to log in and order while visiting a physical location (a la the self-service kiosk at McDonald's).

The good news is, focusing on your digital experience can have a direct, positive impact on revenue. [Research from Dimension Data](#) revealed that 84% of businesses that improved their customer experience saw an increase in revenue.

Although often associated with B2C marketing, these powerful technologies/elements can all elevate B2B digital experiences:



The goal for each of these elements is to deliver your content in the way that best suits your customers and the devices they use. Not every business will benefit from all these elements, so consider your customer when it comes to developing the right digital experience for them.

Digital Experience Puts You Ahead of the Competition

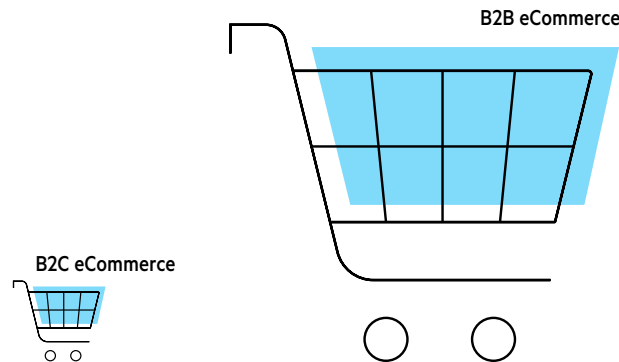
While there are some fantastic digital experiences out there for B2C customers, B2B businesses are lagging behind.

According to a recent global survey from Progress, in general, 90% of digital transformation projects are cancelled or delayed, showing that many companies still aren't able to get these off the ground. That's despite the fact that 48% of businesses understand the need for digital experience.

A digital transformation takes your offline business into the online world and is an important step in creating a platform where customers can buy from you. By adding a

wide range of touchpoints to your digital presence, you have more opportunities for your customers to find you, interact with your content and then buy via your ecommerce site.

There might be a push towards B2C experiences but, [according to Statista](#), the global B2B ecommerce market is six times larger.



Many B2B companies are making a push toward a good desktop experience for ecommerce customers. But many still fail to look at the bigger picture and consider the buyer journey of their customers.

42% of B2B researchers use a mobile device during the purchasing process. Meanwhile, 70% of B2B buyers are watching video content during that journey. This typically takes place during the consideration phase of the buyer journey where they already understand their need for a product or service that solves a problem for them, according to a [recent Google study](#).

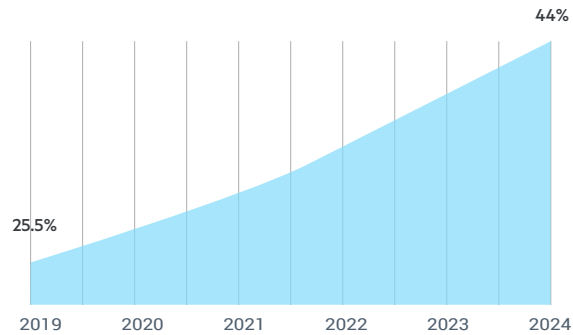


If you're creating content for buyers at the consideration phase in the journey, it should help to inform them further and position your business and products as the correct choice.

Businesses that don't address these shopping behaviors will soon fall behind.

It's clear B2B needs to follow the trend of B2C digital transformation. That's especially true when you consider that Millennials (who have come to expect great digital experiences elsewhere in their lives) are [making the majority of B2B buying decisions](#).

[Business Insider Intelligence](#) predicts mobile commerce volume to rise at 25.5% compound annual growth rate from 2019 to hit \$488.0 billion (or 44% of all ecommerce) in 2024.



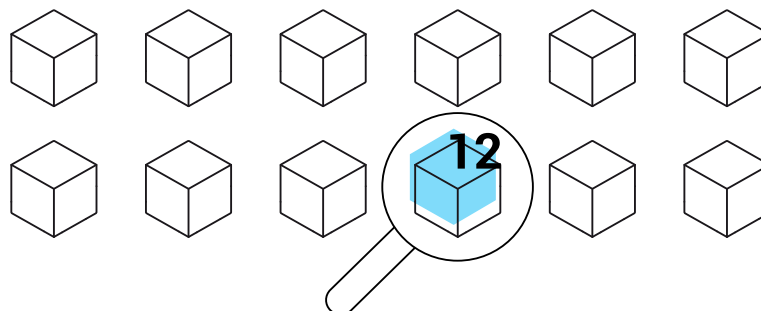
With more and more people using smartphones and tablets to make purchases in the B2C sector, they'll expect the same level of user experience from B2B companies. This means, the sooner you can get ahead of the game, the better. The rest of the B2B industry won't be far behind.

Individuals will come to expect an easy mobile purchasing experience whether they're buying something for themselves or for their business. This shows the importance of having a wide-ranging digital experience and not relying on a desktop website alone.

What B2B Customers Expect

Based on their shopping habits, B2B customers now expect a certain level of care and functionality from a B2B digital experience. These customers are researchers and spend their time looking for a business that can fulfil their needs.

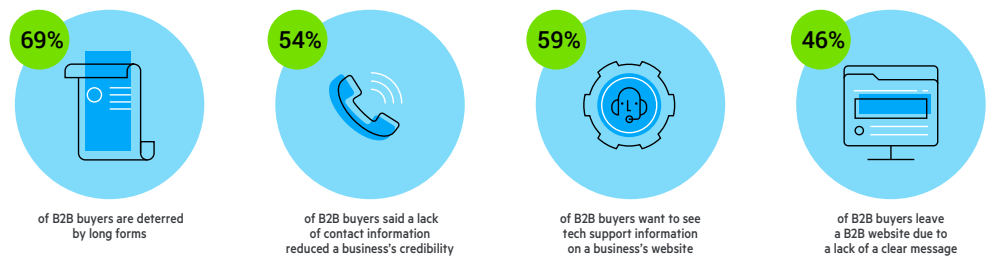
Yet they're also looking for a digital experience that's easy to use. This usually means they want an intuitive online experience that makes purchasing easy, but they'd like the chance to speak to a human if they need the support.



The content you create to attract your customers is important and you need to make a good first impression because B2B researchers do an average of 12 searches before engaging with a brand's website, [according to Google](#).

This means that even if they like the look of your website (or whatever shows up first when they start doing their research), they might continue searching to dig a little deeper in order to find out if what you offer really fits their needs.

Consider the usability of your online platforms and take time to map out the user journey.



If ecommerce isn't possible for every transaction, or you need to collect some information before an account can be created, make this as simple as possible because [69% of B2B buyers are deterred by long forms](#). Keep forms short to encourage people to get in touch or consider letting a chatbot collect information in a more natural way.

Busy B2B buyers want a straightforward process and, as things are, they aren't getting that; they're put off by long forms and clunky websites. When faced with this, some might choose to call (which requires a business to have enough staff to handle these call volumes), and some might drop off completely and go somewhere else entirely.

If you can create a digital experience that makes sense to the user trying to make a purchase or interact with your business, you'll reduce your inbound calls while still increasing conversions.

That being said, even if you have a fully functional website, app and associated digital touchpoints, it still needs to be easy for people to get in touch. [54% of B2B buyers said a lack of contact information reduced a business's credibility](#) and may cause them to leave a website.

This just goes to show how important content is in your digital experience. As well as contact information, [59% of B2B buyers want to see tech support information on a business's website](#). Even if this information isn't used, it shows that the business in question cares enough to support its customers.

On top of this practical information, buyers want to know what the business is about and [46% of B2B buyers leave a B2B website due to a lack of a clear message](#).

Buyer expectations of how the site will serve them tend to be quite high too, driven by the quality of digital experiences in the B2C world. [73% of B2B executives agree](#) that customer expectations for personalized experiences are significantly higher than they were a few years ago.

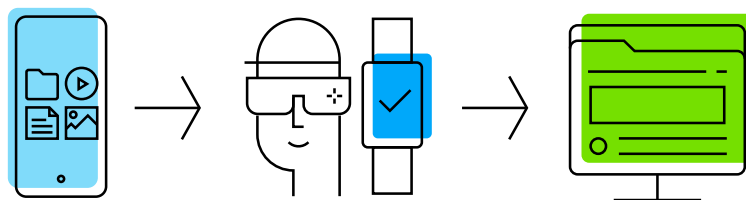
How to Create a Personalized Experience

There are a number of ways to segment your audience and provide personalized content. The most widely used method of communicating personalized content to potential buyers is through email. [Currently, 93% of B2B marketers use email to distribute content](#). This shows that this form of communication works but when so many people are expecting a personalized service, your digital experience needs to be more comprehensive and sophisticated.

On your ecommerce platform, this could be as simple as showing personalized recommendations for products based on buying history. But, there's so much more you can do to personalize the customer journey too.

You could go as far as using AI to analyze the customer's behavior as they move through the digital experience. Not only can this be used to learn what products they're most likely to buy but it can be used alongside real-time monitoring to deliver the right products and promotions via in-store digital signage. This high-tech example might not be right for all B2B businesses but it shows just what's possible with the right tools in place.

Personalized updates could also be delivered through wearables and via mobile too. This seamless handoff between devices and websites will continue to drive customers toward better engagement and, ultimately, conversions.



The key to all of this is listening to what your customers want. If you can create a digital experience that helps solve their problems, you're going to improve your customer retention as well as increase revenue.

How State Electric Brings the B2C Experience to B2B Commerce

State Electric Supply Co., one of the nation's largest and best-known electrical distributors, knew it needed to innovate to meet changing customer expectations in the B2B sector.

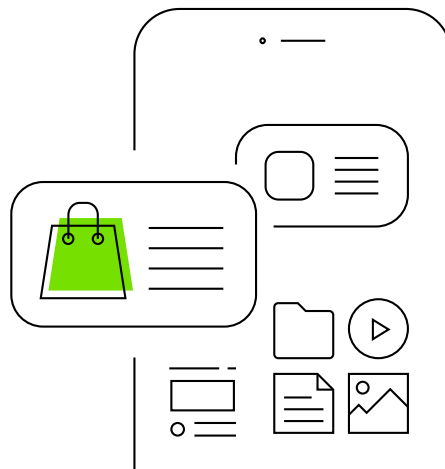
It looked to expand its market reach by offering an online catalog and shopping experience to manufacturers and partners.

“Our existing storefront did great, it was sturdy and reliable,” said Eric Sywenki, Lead of Digital Business and Online Solutions at State Electric. “However, it didn’t really deliver the feature-rich, aesthetically pleasing experience that modern online shoppers have come to expect.”

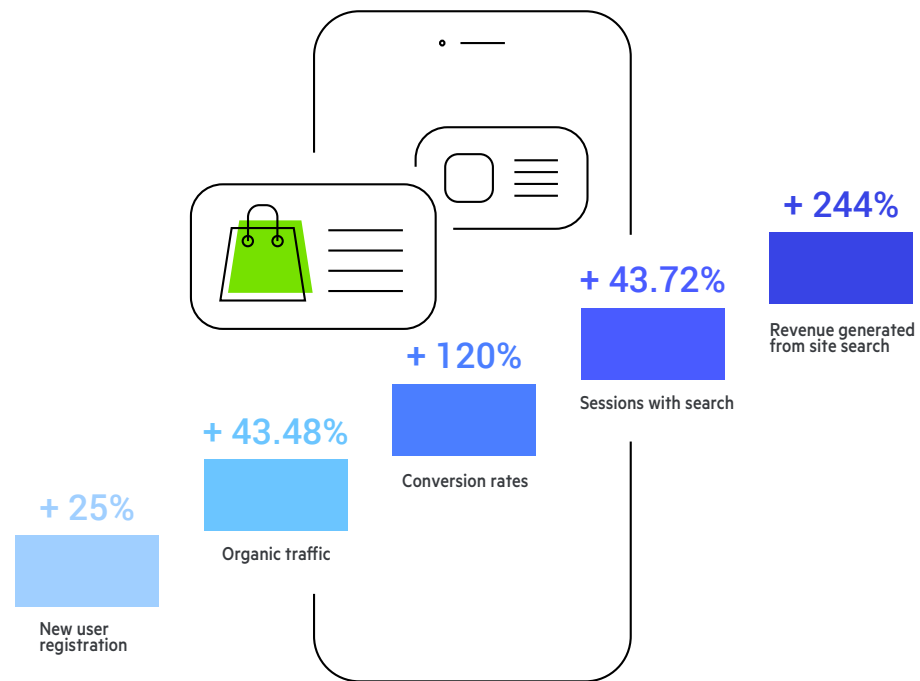
Working with Progress partner [Americaneagle.com](https://www.americaneagle.com), State Electric began building a new, B2C-inspired ecommerce experience and chose Progress® Sitefinity® to serve those experiences digitally.

To deliver a truly customer-focused experience, State Electric took advantage of Hawksearch, which enabled it to provide an AI-powered intuitive search experience on the ecommerce site.

Launched in 2018, the new State Electric ecommerce experience was an instant success, winning industry acclaim at the Affiliated Distributors (AD) Summit the same year. Sitefinity enabled State Electric to drive major improvements to both the frontend and backend of operations.



From the customer perspective, the new ecommerce experience is driving much more user engagement, including:



To find out more, [read the full case study](#).

Talk to an Expert

It's clear that the innovations we've seen in B2C digital spaces are having an effect on customer expectations in B2B industries. It's never been more important to create epic digital experiences for your customers that offer a seamless journey to a buying decision.







If you'd like to take a strategic approach to your B2B digital experience, **talk to one of our experts.**

About Progress

Progress (NASDAQ: PRGS) provides the leading products to develop, deploy and manage high-impact business applications. Our comprehensive product stack is designed to make technology teams more productive and enable organizations to accelerate the creation and delivery of strategic business applications, automate the process by which apps are configured, deployed and scaled, and make critical data and content more accessible and secure—leading to competitive differentiation and business success. Learn about Progress at www.progress.com or +1-800-477-6473.

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