Factors to Consider when choosing eCommerce Web Site

What are the questions you must ask and answer when developing an e-commerce presence?

- What is your vision & how do you hope to accomplish it   
- What is your business and revenue model?  
- Who and where is the target audience?  
- What are the characteristics of the market place?   
- Where is the content coming from? (Content is why your customers visit) important for foundation   
- Develop an e-com presence map  
- Develop a timeline  
- Develop a detailed budget

What are the factors that must be considered when building an e-commerce site?

- Hardware  
- Software  
- Telecommunications capacity  
- Website/Mobile platform design   
- HR  
- Organizational Capabilities

What are the 5 major steps involved when building an e-commerce website?

1) **Identify** specific business **objectives** for the site & develop a list of system functionalities and info requirements  
2) Develop a system design specification   
3) Build the site (in house or outsource all or parts to outside contractors)   
4) Test the system (unit testing, system testing, acceptance testing, A/B Split testing)   
5) Implement and maintain the site

What are the basic business and system functionalities an e-commerce site should contain?

Should include:   
- digital catalog  
- product database  
- customer tracking  
- shopping cart/payment system  
- on site blog  
- customer database  
- ad server  
- site tracking & reporting system  
- inventory management system

What are the advantages/disadvantages of building a site in house?

Advantages:  
-ability to change and adapt the site quickly as the market demands   
  
Disadvantages:   
- higher cost  
- greater risk of failure  
- time consuming process  
- longer staff learning curve (delays time to market)

What are the limitations of using design templates to build websites?

- cuts development time, but can limit functionality

What are the limitations of outsourcing the hosting site?

- places the burden of reliability on someone

Define the systems development life cycle and discuss the various steps involved in creating an e-commerce site.

**Systems development life cycle:** a methodology for understanding business objectives of a stem and designing appropriate technology solution  
  
5 steps:   
1) Identify specific business objectives for the site, and develop a list of system functionalities and information requirements  
2) Develop a system design specification   
3) Build the site; either by in house personnel or outsourcing   
4) Test the system (unit testing, system testing, split A/B testing, acceptance testing etc)   
5) Implement and maintain the site

Discuss the differences between a simple logical and simple physical website design.

**Logical design**: includes a data flow diagram that describes the flow of information at your e-commerce website.  
Details about:   
- the functions that will be performed  
- the data bases that will be used  
- security & back up procedures  
  
**Physical design**: translates the logical design into physical components.   
  
Has details about:   
- the specific model or server to be purchased  
- software that will be used  
- size of telecommunications link  
- the way the system will be backed up/protected and so on

Why is system testing important? Name the types of testing and their relation to one another

System testing: involves testing the site as a whole, in the same way a typical user would use the site when it's finished.   
  
System testing should be done whether the system is outsourced or built in house.   
  
It is important to verify that the system has 0 defects, otherwise the customers find it as an ineffective system.

Communication errors may occur if the system is not tested.   
  
Types of testing:  
**Unit Testing**   
- tests the websites modules one at a time   
  
**System Testing**   
- tests the website as a whole, in a way a user would use the site   
  
**Acceptance Testing**   
- verifies that the business objectives of the system as originally conceived are working   
- requires that company's personnel and departments works on this system and confirms that there are no defects   
  
**A/B Testing (Split Testing)**  
- involves using two different versions of a web page or website to different users to see which one performs better   
  
**multivariate testing**   
- is a more sophisticated way of testing. Involves identifying specific elements (such as headline, image, etc.) on a web page and creating versions for each element then creating a unique combo of each element and version to test.   
  
These testing processes help ensure that there are no defects for the website, and ensures that the website is implemented in the most effective way possible.

**Tier architecture**

The web server is linked toa tier architecture.

The Web server is linked to a middle-tier layer that typically includes a series of application servers that perform specific tasks.

A multi-tiered site typically employs several physical computers, each running some of the software applications and sharing the workload across many physical computers.

8. Name five basic functionalities a Web server should provide.

Processing of HTTP requests, security services, file transfer protocol, search engine, data capture, e-mail, and site management tools are the basic functionalities all Web servers should provide.

Chapter 4 Discussion Questions

9. What are the main factors to consider when choosing the best hardware platform for your Web site? The hardware platform refers to all the underlying computing equipment that the system uses to achieve its e-commerce functionality.

The objective is to have enough platform capacity to meet peak demand, but not so much that you are wasting money.

When choosing the best hardware for your needs you need to understand the factors that affect speed, capacity, and scalability of an e-commerce site.

The most important factor affecting the speed of your site is the demand that customers put on the site.

10. Why is Web server bandwidth an important issue for e-commerce sites?

Web server bandwidth is an important issue for e-commerce sites because the greater the bandwidth available, the more customers can simultaneously access a Web site without degradation of system performance.

**Data will be delivered and provides each packet with**

Data will be delivered, and provides each packet with the same level of service.

A higher quality of service will be required if the Internet is to keep expanding into new services. The network architecture is limited by a number of requests being made to a single server.

This slows down performance because the same file is being sent out a thousand separate times to each client rather than it being broadcast once.

The Internet is also still largely cable based. Copper cables use a centuries-old technology, and fiber-optic cable is expensive to place underground.

The wired nature of the Internet restricts mobility of users.

6. What are some of the major technological advancements that are anticipated which will accompany the Internet of the future?

Discuss the importance of each.

The two most significant changes for the Internet are coming in two areas: fiber-optic trunk line bandwidth and wireless Internet services. The increased bandwidth and expanded wireless network

**For example if hackers redirect customers to a fake**

Network servers, they threaten the integrity of a site.

For example, if hackers redirect customers to a fake Web site that looks almost exactly like the true site, they can then collect and process orders, effectively stealing business from the true site.

7. Why is adware or spyware considered to be a security threat? Adware is a potentially unwanted program (PUP) that is typically used to call for pop-up ads to display.

Adware can also contain a browser parasite that monitors and changes the settings of a user’s browser or send information about visited sites to a remote computer.

Adware is a security threat because it has the potential to compromise the computer and allow more malicious code, or malware, to be downloaded.

Spyware is a program that can be used to obtain information such as a user’s keystrokes, e-mail, instant messages, and even take screen shots of a user’s computer.

In addition to compromising the user’s computer, spyware can capture passwords and other confidential data.

8. What are some of the steps a company can take to curtail cybercriminal activity from within a business?

To prevent cybercriminal activity from within a business a company needs to determine who has access to the firm’s network and control that access using usernames, passwords, and access codes.

Authorization management systems establish where and when a user is permitted to access certain parts of a Web site.

9. Explain some of the modern-day flaws associated with encryption.

Why is encryption not as secure today as it was earlier in the century?

Encryption is the process of transforming plain text or data into cipher text that cannot be read by anyone other than the sender and the receiver. In symmetric key cryptography, both the sender and the receiver use the same key to encrypt and decrypt the message.

**3 Things to Consider When Choosing an Ecommerce Platform**

Selling online is easier than ever before.

Largely thanks to the incredible ecommerce enablement technologies options available to merchants of all sizes.

But, all of those options make selecting the right ecommerce platform for your business even more challenging. Which one platform out of the hundreds of options should you choose?

It will take a bit of research on your part, but knowing where to direct your search makes the difference.

In general, there are three big buckets of consideration factors to bring into the forefront: features, integrations, and price.

**1. Features**

The first thing you should consider when choosing an ecommerce platform is its features.

Will you only sell online, or is a brick and mortar location involved?

Your unique situation will dictate the features necessary to run your store efficiently.

If you’re selling in a physical location, choosing a platform with point of sale options is essential.

In these instances it’s advantageous for sellers to consolidate offline and online commerce enablement hardware and software to one provider.

The ecommerce platform’s dashboard will be something you interact with on a daily basis, making it of utmost importance.

Processing orders, managing inventory, generating discount codes, and producing reports are all potential capabilities accessible via an ecommerce dashboard.

Regardless of your combination of online and brick and mortar channels, mobile responsiveness of your ecommerce platform is paramount.

The ecommerce platform you choose should have themes that are mobile-friendly, or at the least have mobile-friendly checkout screens.

This way, you can be sure customers will have an optimized checkout experience whether they purchase from a desktop, smartphone, or tablet.

**2. Integrations**

It takes more than an ecommerce platform alone to run your business.

As such, ensuring the platform you choose is able to integrate with the other software you use is critical.

Take a look at the platform’s app store, extensions, add-on library, modules, and plugins (each platform has their own jargon for these integrations) and determine if the software you’re currently using is readily available.

A few important integrations for you to consider include your email marketing solution, Amazon Marketplace compatibility, and fraud management tools.

If your email marketing solution is more powerful, seamless integration with your ecommerce platform is vitally important.

You should be able to do everything from as simple as collecting emails on your ecommerce site to segmenting email lists by purchase behavior.

If you sell product through the Amazon Marketplace in addition to your online store, integrations can help you consolidate these orders into one workflow.

If you have to treat Amazon as a totally separate order queue, headaches will likely follow. Consolidation is best and your ecommerce platform should facilitate that.

Integrations that all businesses must consider are fraud solutions.

The ecommerce platform you choose should integrate readily into your fraud mitigation stack, as well as your fraud management software.

Your store needs to protect itself from accepting fraudulent orders and be ready to respond quickly and comprehensively when fraud does occur (because it will).

**3. Price**

The bevy of ecommerce platform options come with an equal variety of pricing structures.

Take a look at your budget and determine how much allocation is possible for facilitating ecommerce transactions.

Remember, there will be related expenses, too, including hosting fees, processing fees, transaction fees, and others.

If the budget is tight, there are open source ecommerce platform options like the free tier of Amazon’s Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2).

If budget isn’t as much of an influencing factor, there are totally customizable enterprise solutions available.

Clearly, the cost of enterprise solutions matches the capabilities provided.

If you’re somewhere in the middle of the budget road, it’s best to look for platforms that charge monthly amounts and not those that charge a percentage based on sales or transactions.

This way, your business can grow without incurring increased costs from your ecommerce platform.

Choosing an ecommerce platform from the hundreds of solutions on the market can be challenging.

But, if you keep these three factors in mind as you begin your search, you’ll be able to narrow the field and make the right decision for your store.

E-commerce

*1.      Name the six main pieces of the e-commerce site puzzle.*

**The six main pieces of the e-commerce site puzzle are human resources, site design, organizational capabilities, hardware architecture, software, and telecommunications.**

*2.      Define the systems development life cycle and discuss the various steps involved in creating an e-commerce site.*

**The systems development life cycle are system analysis/planning, systems design which is a description of the main components in a system and their relationship to one another, building the system which is outsourcing, testing which contain unit testing, system testing, and acceptance testing  and implementation is the last step in the cycle which is putting it to work.**

*3.      What are the three main factors to consider when choosing the best platform for your Web site?*

**The three main factors to consider when choosing the best platform for your Web site are Page deliver, page generation and page content.**

*4.      Why is Web server bandwidth an important issue for e-commerce sites?*

**Web server bandwidth is an issue for e-commerce sites because you have to make sure that you have enough room for all of your customers to hit your site at the same time.**

*5.      Compare and contrast the various scaling methods. Explain why scalability is a key business issue for Web sites.*

**Horizontal scaling is when you are employing multiple computers to share the workload.  Vertical scaling is increasing the processing power of individual components.  Scalability is a key business issue because it refers to the ability of a site to increase in size as demand warrants.**

*6.      What are the eight most important factors impacting Web site design, and how do they affect a site’s operation?*

**Eight most important factors impacting Web site design is functionality (pages that work, load quickly, and point the customer toward your product offerings), informational (links that customers can easily find to discover more about you and your products), ease of use (simple fool-proof navigation), redundant navigation (alternative navigation to the same content), ease of purchase (one or two clicks to purchase), multi-browser functionality (site works with the most popular browsers), simple graphics (avoids distracting, obnoxious graphics and sounds that the user cannot control), and legible text (avoid backgrounds that distort text or make it illegible)**

*7.      Name and describe three tools used to treat customers individually. Why are they significant to e-commerce?*

**Three tools used to treat customers individually are personalization which is the ability to treat people based on their personal qualities and prior history with your site, customization which is the ability to change the product to better fit the needs of the customer and speaking directly to the customer on a one-to-one basis.**

*8.      What are some of the policies e-commerce businesses must develop before launching a site and why?*

**A few policies e-commerce businesses must develop before launching a site are a privacy policy which is a set of public statements declaring to your customers how you treat their personal information that you gather on the site and accessibility rules which are a set of design objectives that ensure disabled users can effectively access your site.**

**5 Factors to Consider before Choosing the Platform For e-commerce Web Development**

With its incredible perks, eCommerce industry has grown widely to many businesses across the world. The lower setup cost and better marketing strategies that the online market claims have helped it to come up as a preferred startup choice for many entrepreneurs. The first step towards starting your new eCommerce business is the development of an effective eCommerce website. But there are certain factors to be considered before choosing the platform for your eCommerce website that you should discuss with your eCommerce website development partners to stand out of the crowd.

5 Factors to Consider before Choosing the Platform For eCommerce Web Development:

**Decide Your Budget**

Before choosing your eCommerce website development service provider you need to decide your budget and this will determine the platform of your eCommerce website. Going for the cheapest should not be the choice in this highly competitive eCommerce market. You have to work on it by taking estimates from your eCommerce web development service provider and then accordingly choose your platform and the cost it adds to your budget.

You can well discuss your requirements for the eCommerce site with your eCommerce web development service provider based on the range of eCommerce product you want to sell. With this, you need to choose the platform, according to the additional Backend services it can provide, like – inventory management, user-friendly admin control, automated delivery management, etc.

**Need For Customization**

Most eCommerce businesses prefer a newly hosted platform that is highly customizable in the context of the functionality and is loaded with plentiful of features to fetch its customers an incredible shopping experience.  So you need to tell your eCommerce website development company about your customization needs, which may be in the designing or user interface, etc., and the additional features you require for your eCommerce website.

**Design**

Along with a good functionality, your eCommerce website requires an appealing website design that is able to craft an astounding shopping experience for your customers. The eCommerce web development and design company you choose should have a good website designing team working in coordination with the development team, so as to offer you an appropriate eCommerce platform that has an ideal support towards incredible design themes.

**Website Management**

Another important factor that needs to be thought upon is website management, which includes the process of regular upgrades and updates. For a hosted eCommerce site the regular upgrades are managed by the hosting service provider. But in case you have your own site, you need to manage this process of regular updates and upgrades. In this case, you need to ask your eCommerce website development service provider to build a user-friendly Backend platform for you to easily manage the updates.

There are varied eCommerce platforms to choose from, but these points will preferably help you to choose the most appropriate eCommerce business platform for you. With this, if you wish to start your new eCommerce business, we can help you with our expert eCommerce web development services. You can contact us at –sales@endivesoftware.com

**7 things to consider when choosing an ecommerce platform**

**Ecommerce has been growing steadily in popularity for the last 10 years.**

**Online sales jumped up nearly 15% last year across the board, and they’re predicted to only increase in the future.**

**If you’re starting a business and selling products and/or services, an ecommerce site is crucial in order to capitalize on this explosive online sales growth.**

While you could hire a web developer to get your business started, those costs can inhibit your ability to grow rapidly.

Opting for an already-developed ecommerce platform saves you time as well as money.

The double-edged sword, however, is that there are tons of options available to you—how do you know you’re choosing the right one?

This article outlines some things you’ll need to consider when you’re looking for the best ecommerce platform for your business.

**1. Pricing and Payment**

The first thing you should consider when searching for an ecommerce platform is the price.

Whether you’re a small business just getting started or an already established brick & mortar business moving online, you need to know exactly what you’ll be paying.

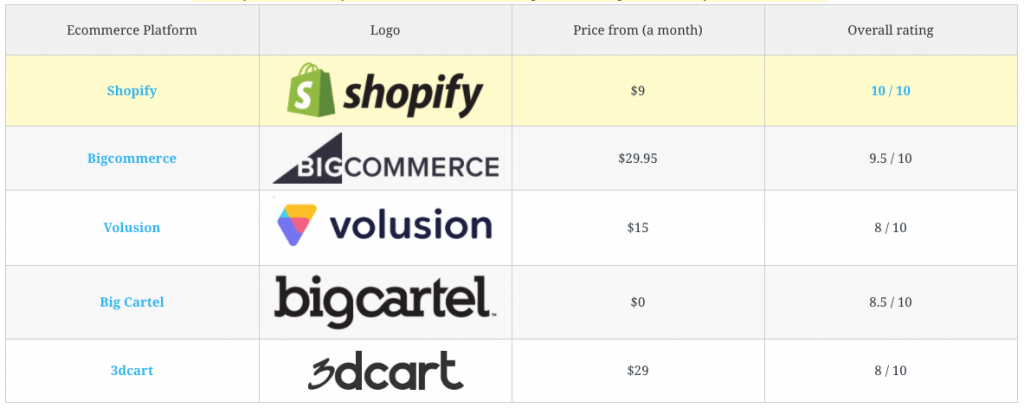
Almost all platforms will have a monthly fee. Depending on the type of platform you get (self-hosted vs. hosted) the costs may vary.

You should also consider the processing fees that will be associated with the platform.

Don’t sacrifice the things you’ll definitely need for a cheaper price.

Try to weigh the pros and cons of each to get the best for your budget.

Below is a great chart of just a few of the top platforms from Ecommerce-Platforms:



You should also consider how your customers will be paying.

Some platforms don’t offer the ability to pay via third party vendors (such as PayPal).

This could end up being a huge inconvenience for your customers – a frustration which can lead to shopping cart abandonment.

Don’t take this risk; decide which forms of payment you’ll accept first and remember this when you’re looking at the different software.

**2. Integrations**

Another factor you should consider when looking at ecommerce platforms is their integrations and plugins.

Most platforms, such as Shopify, will have plenty of tools for you to run your business.

Your business needs will be a determining factor when deciding on the plugins that will work best for you.

When looking at the different platforms, think of what tools you’ll need or already use for your business.

Here are some of the most popular types of plugins that you should look out for:

* Accounting plugins to help with sales, taxes, revenues, and profits
* Email marketing tools to help you keep in contact with your customers
* A platform that helps you reward your customers for using your products
* Apps to help with shipping your products

**3. SEO Friendliness**

Ecommerce businesses are not exempt from working on their SEO (Site Engine Optimization). In fact, it can be highly beneficial to have your store rank high in search results. You want your customers to find you when they’re searching for products like yours.

Some of the most important factors when looking for an SEO friendly platform include:

* The ability to add a blog to your website
* The ability to use your own domain name
* The ability for customers to leave reviews

You can learn more about SEO for an ecommerce website here.

**4. Mobile Friendliness**

Did you know nearly 60% of searches are done from mobile devices?

Often those searches continue on to a purchase from a mobile device.

This means its important to look for platforms that allow customers to easily access your website as well as make a purchase on their mobile device.

Below is a great example from Shopify:

**5. Customer Service**

A key aspect of any business is its customer service.

As the experience provided by traditional brick-and-mortar businesses is based in a physical store, they typically have more control over how smoothly their business runs.

Ecommerce is a whole different ballgame; software outages and server downtimes are often out of your control, and will prevent any of your customers from accessing your business.

Odds are that at one point your servers will crash at the worst possible moment.

This can affect both your revenue and your brand image.

Having someone to call at any time to help you get things up and running again is a huge factor when you’re looking at ecommerce platforms.

Take a look at each platform’s customer service—are they available 24/7?

How are you able to reach them?

How many levels of support are offered, and what does each cost?

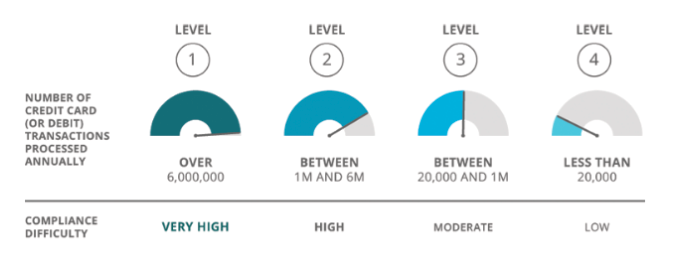
Think about these questions and make sure you ask them before you decide on your platform.

**6. Security**

No one want to enter their credit card information on a sketchy website, which is why security is becoming one of the biggest concerns among consumers.

While most software today will have robust security as standard, always check to make sure your platform supports HTTPS/SSL for a safe and secure checkout for your customers.

Also, make sure that any platform you choose is PCI (Payment Card Industry) compliant. BigCommerce explains more here, and below is a screenshot that gives you a taste of what it takes to become compliant:



**7. Scalability**

All business owners hope their business will grow in the future, but you may not know to what extent.

Nonetheless, it’s important to look for a platform that will scale along with your business.

You don’t want to pay for features and storage that you’re not using when you first start out.

You also want to keep up with higher demands as your business takes off.

Choose a platform that you can scale to your business size and that won’t charge you outrageous fees for doing so.

**The Takeaway**

Starting any new business is challenging, but moving away from the traditional store front to an online version can be a little daunting—especially with so many options for you to start with—which is why choosing an ecommerce platform is so difficult for many business owners.

Figuring out what your store will need as you grow and keeping up with trends is a challenge, but it is well worth it in the end to create processes that work and will scale with your business.

Knowing what to look for ahead of time makes choosing a platform an easier process and can help you find success!

What features do you look for in ecommerce software? Let us know your thoughts in the comment section below.

**10 Important Factors to Consider Before Choosing a Web Host**

Like most things, making a decision on which web hosting company to choose can be tough.

With all the companies out there each promising to have 99% uptime, unlimited resources, and knowledgeable support, there has to be a way to cut through the jargon and make an informed decision. Right?

**This guide will help you make that decision by showing you how to compare apples to apples.** By understanding what hosting companies mean by what they say, you’ll be able to decide which hosting company and package best suits your needs.

**1. Price**

This is the aspect most of us will look at first when choosing a hosting provider; however, it shouldn’t be the deciding factor.

When you see price differences it’s helpful to remember the old maxim that we get what we pay for.

**Jumping on the cheapest offer you see isn’t necessarily the best idea**, especially if you rely on your site to make money.

Things like non-outsourced support and quality hardware cost money, and a hosting company that charges $1.99 per month likely won’t offer these features.

Take a closer look at the features that each host provides, and THEN compare prices.

**Further reference(s):**

* HostMonk – A site with comprehensive list of hosting companies and their packages. Use this site to compare prices of almost any web hosting companies’ hosting packages.
* WHReviews – Reliable web hosting shopping guide.

**2. Area of Focus / Specialties**

It’s a fact that not all web hosts are right for all different kinds of customers.

Some offer great shared plans but don’t have solutions that are good for growing businesses, while others have great enterprise solutions but aren’t the right fit for someone with a small recipe blog.

**Look into a company’s specialty or area of expertise before you buy**, and go with one that understands your particular needs as a customer.

You can find reviews and recommendations on the Web, and many of these will talk about a particular company’s strengths and weaknesses.

**3. Tech Specs / Limitations**

Take a good, honest look at your site and figure out what you want it to do.

**If you’re hoping to host a blog, an e-commerce site, rich content, and videos, then you shouldn’t go with the cheapest hosting package you can find**.

A cheap hosting plan probably won’t have the RAM, processing power, and disk space to serve all these needs, and you’ll spend more time dealing with downtime or load issues than you would like.

Look to see what you are getting with the cheap host and what features are included in the cost.

Do they charge for additional domains, support, backups, etc?

Call them. Ask questions. Tell them what you envision your site’s needs to be. Just don’t take it for granted that they take your site as seriously as you do.

**4. Tech Support**

In most people’s opinions, this is the big one.

When my site, for some unknown reason, goes down, can I call up and get a real, live person on the phone?

And, more than that, can they find out what’s wrong and fix it, or at least tell me what I need to do to get my site back online?

Before going with a host look into their reputation for customer support.

See what kinds of different ways you can contact them when you need support – email, toll-free phone, chat, and so on. Are they staffed 24/7? Do they outsource support?

You’ll find that, like in price and technical specifications, all hosts are not equal.

Some hang their hat on their support crew, and some view customer support as an afterthought. Steer clear of the latter.

**5. Features / Add-Ons**

This area of consideration comes down to the following question – **What makes this hosting company special?**

What extra incentive do they provide to make hosting your site with them just a touch more attractive?

Whether its multiple data centers, energy-saving practices, or additional features such as regular data backups or free domain privacy, hosting companies often offer more than just servers.

If you see one that offers something you need or find important, that can be a good indicator that you should look into using that company.

**6. Hardware**

You might have to do a bit of reading (or question-asking) to get to the bottom of this one.

What kind of machines does your hosting company use?

Are they top-of-the-line, out-of-the-box new machines, or are they cobbled together from what might be spare parts and chicken wire?

If the hosting company doesn’t say what kind of servers they use, you’ll want to ask, since hardware can affect the performance of both their servers and your site.

**7. Customer Reviews / Satisfaction / Reputation**

This is one of those factors that you’ll have to get a little creative to get the real story on.

Do a Google Blog search for a particular hosting company, or look them up on Twitter – whatever you have to do to see what their current (or former) customers are saying about them. Are they easy to contact for support?

What’s the average time it takes to respond to a ticket? When they find a problem with a site, what’s their course of action?

This is one of the great things about social media – ask a question about a company, and you’re more likely than not to get a few answers.

**Further reference(s):**

* LifeHacker readers’ favorite web hosting (list)
* Web Hosting Talk – one of the largest web hosting community on the net.

**8. Email Features**

This is one of those areas where you might not have considered asking your host for help.

If you have a spam problem, then it may be because your hosting company doesn’t provide an adequate solution to stop it.

Look into or ask about your provider’s spam solutions and general email practices. No matter what they say, email isn’t dead quite yet.

**9. Control Panel / User Interface**

Even if you’re the least tech-savvy person in the world, there are some things – installing WordPress, setting up email, setting up FTP accounts – you should be able to do without calling your hosting company’s support line.

Does your provider use cPanel or Plesk to make updates and modifications easier, or do they use some clunky interface that no one can figure out?

You’ll most likely be the one working with it, so if you can’t figure it out, then that’s going to be a problem.

**Further reference(s):**

* Try a cPanel Demo
* Try a Plesk Demo
* cPanel vs Plesk

**10. Scalability / Room to Grow**

Finally, an important thing to consider about your hosting provider (and the plan you choose) is whether or not they fit into your plans for the future.

In other words, what you consider adequate hosting now might not meet your needs two years from now, once you start selling your wares online and getting some good traffic to your site.

Any web-based enterprise should have its eye on growth, so if a hosting company might have difficulty accommodating that growth it could pose an issue.

Does the host have VPS or Dedicated Server solutions?

Will they be able to easily upgrade your account?

Transferring from one host to another takes valuable time and effort which could be avoided if the company can scale their solutions for growth.

As with all these factors, do some research, get some opinions, and make an informed decision.

**11. Bonus**

Last but not least, we’d also like to share with you some useful resources that might be handy when it comes to web hosting.

* Ruby on Rails Hosting – A comparison of services that provide ROR hosting.
* Understand Cloud Hosting – "Cloud Hosting" has been quite a buzz these days, but do you know what it means?
* 10 Solutions For Your Cloud Hosting Needs – Sitepoint and their fair share on cloud hosting needs.
* Who Is Hosting This – Find out who is hosting which website

**6 important aspects to consider while selecting an e-Commerce platform**

When it comes to evaluating e-commerce technologies there is never a ‘one size fits all’ solution. The job of the CTO and the Program Manager becomes increasingly difficult to map the business requirements and expectations. The team needs to set-up meetings across the board with different cross-departments. Having outlined the requirements, you come across the critical phase of technology evaluation, where every parameter from development flexibility to total cost of ownership is considered. But as e-commerce websites mature along with the raising expectations of online customers, the question is what should every CTO analyse in their evaluation? Based on my experience of developing e-commerce platforms here is my 6 important picks crucial in every technology evaluation.

**Scalability & Security**

For your ecommerce store nothing can be more devastating than an unresponsive customer interface that drives the end user away. A response delay of a second can cost revenue loss which in-turn may benefit your competitor. So you need to ask questions like average number of visitors in peak hours, maximum orders per day, average page visits, how bulky can the product catalogue get, and what is the infrastructure, software and hardware support you would need etc. While developing e-commerce sites you have to consider a contingency plan that would reflect for a long term. It is often prudent to develop a scalability plan for 2 years that can save cost and effort in the future.

Security is one of the common reasons that have inhibited the growth of e-commerce industry and in good measure. You need to evaluate the robustness of the platform in terms of authentication (LDAP, active directory etc.), file permissions, and authorization – protecting customer data which is often done through third party applications like authorize.net or CyberSource.There needs to be an action based security (including SSL certificate installation which is a must for e-commerce sites) during implementation though that is a different chapter altogether.

**Flexibility**

An e-commerce site is among the most dynamic sites on the internet. If you are a site administrator you would never have a moment to breathe among frequent product updates, changes in catalogues, discounted price, quick publishing of landing pages, and seasonal campaigns.

The technology needs to provide the flexibility to your e-commerce team make these changes in short turnaround time without much configuration or writing new modules. The solution should have the scope for inclusion of unanticipated customizations for time bound campaigns.  
Most of the modern platforms are developed are modular, inheriting the Agile development model often weaved into a single stack to decrease complexity thereby offering tremendous flexibility for the user. We have complete control over the site’s look and feel, potential integrations, that lead to quick rollout of information.

**Integrations**

During the dot-com era, most of the e-commerce sites theoretically had a front end interface integrated to the shopping cart facility. But modern enterprise level e-commerce integrations go beyond to ensure compatibility with various applications within the enterprise. The integration of e-commerce platform can happen using the REST API to plug applications to improve consolidation of data and collaboration between departments. So you may have the e-commerce platform working together with the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Supply Chain Management (SCM) or Enterprise Content Management (ECM) platform when content and metadata for product catalogue, pricing rules etc. can be stored.  
Another important aspect of Integration case you need to consider is the inclusion of conventional e-commerce modules like payment gateways and the shopping carts. While most of modern e-commerce platforms do provide out of the box integration for both phases, it is advisable that they are properly verified so that no stones are unturned.

**Mobility**

Mobile devices have penetrated to consumer purchase patterns across all sections and in retail websites the influence is increasingly more. The ideal strategy is to evaluate the analytics of people visiting your e-commerce site through mobile, tablets to base the decision on mobile strategy.  
As for the interplay of e-commerce platforms with mobility is concerned, there are essentially two basic methods how you can deliver mobile experience.

1.Responsive Design: Creating all modules of your e-commerce site, including user interface, shopping cart integration, product layout, templates etc. responsive. A way to achieve is using rich internet application platforms or more recently HTML5 components that can readily load on mobile browsers.

2.Dedicated Mobile Site: While responsive design is cost efficient and consumes less effort, having a dedicated mobile site developed that incorporates all your features in e-commerce platform can deliver tremendous flexibility in a long run. The evaluation needs to consider if the platform offers a native SDK and what form of flexibility it offers.

Either the choice is between responsive or mobile site, the important fact is in September 2013, e-commerce transactions (or popularly called as m-commerce) valued to $4.7 billion from tablets and mobiles [1]. The figure itself implies the necessity of having a mobile strategy for a CTO.

**Reporting and Analytics**

Reporting and Analytics delivers you key insights that act as a catalyst in your routine decision making. Popular e-commerce platforms like Magento, Hybris etc. provide out-of-the-box integrations with Google Analytics (GA). GA e-commerce tracking itself is a powerful tracking engine for e-commerce sites delivering information from transactions, time to purchase, typical sales cycle etc.

We can also integrate more sophisticated analytics applications like Omniture, Webtrends etc. that can provide information in depth to your site. Today with the advent of Big Data, information management has become more effective. If the volume of data you manage, and the velocity of transactions you handle on your website is huge, it is often advisable to consider solutions like MongoDB or Hadoop can deliver to the mix. You can leverage these solutions on a use case basis may it be to manage the data and metadata of your immense product catalogs or to run sentiment analysis of your comments or social media campaigns to identify receptivity for products. Having said, you must consider that integrating Big Data or analytics platform is an altogether separate but closely related project and is ideal to be considered in the Integration story that I discussed before.

Repeating what I mentioned in the beginning, what you need to ensure in your reporting & analytics section is a solution that offers real time information of site activity that helps you in your day to day tactical decision making

**Social Integration**

Social Media on its own have become a powerful channel for retailers to promote their products without much investment. Social Media plan if properly crafted and implemented can deliver decisive results to the customer. Hence, you should plan social equity within your e-commerce deployment. This not only includes addition of widgets to share products, but also allowing commenting and rating features through social channels that would improve personalization within the portal.

Another avenue is identifying social influencers who can deliver mileage to promotional campaigns and increase the success rate.

As internet shopping is increasingly becoming the way of life, it is necessary that we find the balance between offering customers a simple, efficient and intuitive platform that offers them a seamless experience, while providing a robust, flexible and scalable solution to administer to the team at the other end. The technology identified should be able to bridge between the two ends. Probably when I find more time in future, I would like to discuss more intricacies of technology evaluation in greater depth. Do keep watching this space.

**Key factors in selecting Web hosting hardware**

Targeting the Web hosting server that's right for your company is no small task.

You must balance every option to meet the demands of the customer; without overspending. Here are the critical points to keep in mind when you evaluate Web servers.

Before you make a decision on which Web hosting server to buy, ask yourself these questions:

* Have you taken all of your hosting needs into consideration?
* Have you thought about the software your server will be running?
* Do you know what the role of your server will be?
* Will it be able to meet the demands of that role?  
    
  If you don’t resolve these issues at the outset, you could be setting yourself up for a long string of problems down the road.
* In this article, we’ll review some of the primary issues to keep in mind when you’re preparing to buy a Web hosting server.
* We’ll also examine the pros and cons of specific kinds of server hardware.  
    
    
  What should you look for when purchasing a Web server?  
  In today’s aggressive server market, network administrators have a number of choices.
* Obviously, server price will depend on which options you are looking for.
* Before you take price into account, however, you should consider several other factors. Here are the most significant criteria for evaluating Web servers:
* **Operating System**  
  The operating system you plan to use on your server will play a key role in your purchasing decision.
* For example, a machine that will be running Windows 2000 Server will have different requirements than a Red Hat Linux-based machine.
* The Windows 2000 server requires at least a Pentium 133MHz processor with 64MB of RAM, while Red Hat 7 can be installed on a 386 or higher PC.
* **Storage**  
  If you’re going to host home pages for your typical Web surfer, you won’t need a lot of room to store data.

But if you’re going to host an e-commerce site that takes in thousands of orders daily, the server hosting the site will need room to store the database of user information and transactions.

* **Speed and Performance**  
  To keep customers coming back, your Web server must be able to keep up with the traffic it receives.

Customers will soon become ex-customers if they see “Web server busy” errors when they’re placing online orders.

To prevent such errors, make sure you note the processor speed and amount of memory available on all of the servers you consider.

Low processor speed and low-grade memory can greatly affect the performance of even the best servers.

* **Scalability**  
  Sure, the machine that you purchase will meet your needs today.

But what about when the time comes to upgrade?

Network administrators should take scalability into account when they select a machine so that the server can expand with the user load.

Be sure to ask questions such as “How many hard drives can I add?” and “How much memory can I put into this server?”

* **Manageability**  
  One of the biggest server headaches is simply *managing* the machines.

Is the server you’re looking at easy to take care of?

If you had to add or replace a hard drive or CD-ROM, could you do it quickly and without much effort?

Will users notice much downtime?

* Examples of Web hosting hardware  
  Now that you know what you need to look for, where do you begin to look?
* Actually, you have several options.
* Here’s a quick rundown of the options and their pros and cons:
* **Cheap custom-built server**  
  This server is the least-expensive route, usually consisting of desktop components such as IDE hard drives and low-end processors.

While this option will save you money initially, the server may eventually fail due to cheap parts that weren’t designed for the task of Web hosting.

Sooner or later, these parts will also need to be replaced, costing more money in the long run.  
**Pros:** Cheap  
**Cons:** Fails often due to low-quality parts

* **Expensive custom-built server**  
  The pricier custom-built server is the way to go if you have your heart set on building a machine.

The cost of building this server, however, is usually the same as purchasing a pre-built server with added options.

Also, you don’t receive a warranty with this server, so if something goes wrong, it’s up to you to fix it.  
**Pros:** Well-built machine that generally won’t fail as often as its less-expensive counterpart  
**Cons:** Costs are often not worth the time and effort; no warranty

* **Pre-built tower server**  
  This is the path network administrators choose most often because they know that when they purchase a vendor-built machine, they’re getting a well-designed and proven technology.

In addition, they can rely on technicians to help troubleshoot problems that may occur in the future.

But these servers are generally designed with a specific operating system in mind, and the software that comes with these machines is usually OS specific.

To have servers talk to one another, you often have to purchase machines from the same vendor.  
**Pros:** Service, warranty, and proven technology  
**Cons:** Vendor-specific parts; software that usually is not compatible with other vendors’ products

* **Pre-built rack server units**  
  The new kids in town are becoming the most popular servers to have around.

Products such as the Cobalt RaQ and StarBox iBox are touted as the network administrator’s dream.

These simple rack-mounted servers have all the functionality of a typical server but take up less space, produce less heat, and cost less.

But these machines do have their drawbacks.

For one thing, they can be difficult to upgrade.

For another, software can be tricky to install, and most units come with a standard OS that can’t be replaced.  
**Pros:** Small size, rack-mounted, affordable  
**Cons:** Limited scalability; proprietary operating systems and software

The best way to decide:  
To make the right choice, it’s essential that you know your target user base and what functions the Web hosting server will be performing.

While all of the hardware listed above can serve as a Web hosting server, each has its weak points.

It’s important for you to pinpoint which weak points you can live with.

The old adage “You get what you pay for” does not necessarily apply when it comes to Web hosting servers.

Depending on your situation, a cheaper server might be able to handle your needs just as well as a more expensive one.

If you’ve purchased a Web server within the past six months, we want to hear from you!

What factors did you consider when purchasing the server?

Have you had any regrets about the purchase you made?

Let us know by posting your thoughts below.

**18 Major Benefits of e-Commerce Business for Retailers & Customers 2018**

With increasing the need of eCommerce industry, every businessman is looking to have an online store where they can sell their range of products and services.

One can get a lot of benefits by opting for eCommerce as it delivers a comprehensive range of benefits to retailers and merchants.



Electronic Commerce is also known as e-commerce that consists of the purchasing and selling of products or services through electronic systems like computer networks and the Internet. In this modern world of technology, e-commerce is becoming a very significant option for many businesses as there are lots of companies that are interested in **developing their online stores**.

With increasing demand for online purchasing, more and more businesses are moving to e-store from brick and mortar stores.

In the US, more than 60% of people are purchasing goods online from the comfort of their home and this figure is increasing constantly.

By considering this percentage, we can say that e-commerce is expanding tremendously because of its complete range of benefits that any industry vertical can enjoy.

Today, e-Commerce has revolutionized the way companies are doing business.

Now, consumers can purchase almost anything online 24\*7 a day and get an ultimate shopping experience.

Before you opt for an e-Commerce business, have a look on its comprehensive benefits that you can enjoy:

**Convenience & Easiness:**

For many people in the world, e-Commerce becomes one of the preferred ways of shopping as they enjoy their online because of its easiness and convenience.

They are allowed to buy products or services from their home at any time of day or night.

The best thing about it is buying options that are quick, convenient and user-friendly with the ability to transfer funds online.

Because of its convenience, consumers can save their lots of time as well as money by searching their products easily and making purchasing online.

**Offer Product Datasheets:**

Consumers can also get description and details from an online product catalog.

For your customers, it is very much important to get information about the product no matter whether the time of day and day of the week.

Through information, your customers and prospects are making decision to purchase your products or not.

**Attract New Customers with Search Engine Visibility:**

As we all know that physical retail is run by branding and relationships.

But, online retail is also driving by traffic that comes from search engines.

For customers, it is not very so common to follow a link in the search engine results and land up on an ecommerce website that they never heard of.

**Comprise Warranty Information:**

No matter whether you are looking to choose including warranty information with product descriptions and datasheets or providing it from within an ecommerce shopping cart, you need to make sure that customers must be aware of important terms and conditions that are associated with their purchase.

**Decreasing cost of inventory Management:**

With e-commerce business, the suppliers can decrease the cost of managing their inventory of goods that they can automate the inventory management using web-based management system. Indirectly, they can save their operational costs.

**Keep Eye on Consumers’ Buying Habit:**

The best thing is e-commerce retailers can easily keep a constant eye on consumers’ buying habits and interests to tailors their offer suit to consumers’ requirements.

By satisfying their needs constantly, you can improve your ongoing relationship with them and build long-lasting relationships.

**Competence:**

For effective business transactions, e-commerce is an efficient and competence method.

Setting-up cost is extremely low as compare to expanding your business with more brick and mortar locations.

Very few licenses and permits are required to start-up an online business than physical store.

You can save your lots of money by using fewer employees to perform operations like billing customers, managing inventory and more.

**Allow Happy Customers to Sell Your Products:**

With lots of customers’ reviews and product ratings, you can easily increase your sells as new customers find that your products are good and effective.

Make sure that you mention your clients’ testimonials, reviews and product ratings as such things can help your new customers to purchase your products.

**Selling Products across the World:**

If you are running a physical store, it will be limited by the geographical area that you can service, but with an e-Commerce website, you can sell your products and services across the world.

The entire world is your playground, where you can sell your complete range of products without any geographical limits.

Moreover, the remaining limitation of geography has dissolved by m-commerce that is also known as mobile commerce.

**Stay open 24\*7/365:**

One of the most important benefits that ecommerce merchants can enjoy is store timings are now 24/7/365 as they can run e-commerce websites all the time.

By this way, they can increase their sales by boosting their number of orders.

However, it is also beneficial for customers as they can purchase products whenever they want no matter whether it is early morning or mid-night.

**Economy:**

Now, you don’t have to invest your money in the physical store, insurance or infrastructure as all you need is a wonderful idea, unique products and well-designed website to reach your precious customers to sell your products and services.

We can say that this makes an e-commerce a lot more economical and reasonable.

**Boost Brand Awareness:**

As like e-commerce business can help B2B organizations to get new customers, so it will be helpful for e-commerce businesses to boost their brand awareness in the market.

Developing pages that can be indexed by search engines crawlers is one of the best ways to enhance your website’ search engine optimization and enhance the target audience on your site.

**Decrease Costs:**

One of the most positive things about eCommerce is that you can decrease the costs of your business.

Below are some of the costs that you can reduce by opting for ecommerce:

* **Advertising & Marketing Cost:** If you opt for ecommerce, you don’t have to spend your money on advertising and marketing. However, organic search engine traffic, social media traffic and pay-per-click are some of the advertising channels that are cost-effective.
* **Personnel:** A complete automation of check-out, billing, inventory management, payments and other type of operational costs lower the total number of employees that you require to run your ecommerce business.
* **Eliminate Travel Cost:** Now, customers do not have to travel long distances to reach their desired stores as ecommerce allows them to visit the e-store anytime without traveling. With few mouse clicks, customers can make their purchase and have wonderful shopping experience.

**Offer Huge Information:**

One of the best benefits of ecommerce for customers is they can get huge information that is not possible in a physical store.

We all know that it is quite difficult to equip employees to respond to customers who are looking for information on different product lines.

But ecommerce websites offer additional information to their customers without any hassle.

All the given information is provided by vendors so that their customers find it easy to purchase products with information.

**Analytics:**

We can say that business 2 business offers an excellent platform to organizations to launch their complete range of analytics campaign.

Through ecommerce, organizations can easily calculate and evaluate sales effectiveness, customer effectiveness, marketing campaigns, product mix, customer engagement and more.

**Expand Market for Niche Products:**

It is difficult for buyers and sellers to find each other in the physical world, but it becomes very easy for them with the inception of e-store.

Customers can search their required products on the web and can purchase it from any corner of the world.

No matter what kind of product customers are looking, they can find all types of products without any hassle.

**Scalability:**

With effective ecommerce solution, you and your organization grow and scale easily to meet market demand as well as customer requirements by introducing different sales channels and reaching market segments.

**Ability of Multi-site:**

With ecommerce platform, it becomes easy for businesses to launch channel specific and particular brand ecommerce website.

This ability enables you to provide co-branded websites for your specific customers and allows for websites catering to specific international spectators.

**5 Ways Technology Is Changing Ecommerce**

Tech-savvy customers are having an impact on the ecommerce world faster than ever.

The impact that tech-savvy customers are having on the ecommerce world is not just stronger than ever; it's faster than ever:

Gone are the days when customers would meander online trying to determine if an online order was worth the risk.

Instead, technology today is helping customers keep track of their purchases, and altering the ways in which those consumers interact with online retailers.

These trends, in turn, are affecting the big picture:

As technology changes business-to-consumer transactions, new opportunities for both sides of the sphere are emerging.

Consumers now have access to a range of tools that help them gauge prices, find alternatives, locate stores and receive coupons.

Retailers are seeing benefits as well, as technology helps them make stronger connections with consumers and build their brands faster.

Altogether, technology is revolutionizing how business-to-consumer transactions occur.

Here’s how:

**Mobile apps are changing consumer/retailer relationships.**

Apps are now affording retailers an opportunity to connect with consumers that goes beyond the boundaries of a brick-and-mortar business.

Brands no longer have to wait for consumers to walk into their shop or spot an ad that prompts them to engage with the business.

Now, businesses can reach consumers everywhere.

Even when customers aren't shopping, retailers can still be on their minds.

The constant presence of a brand’s app on a customer's phone reminds him or her that that brand is out there, as an option.

What’s more, location-enabled interactions, which deliver messages to customers who enter shops, are getting customers offline back into actual stores.

**Retailers are more on consumers' minds.**

Yesteryear’s email notifications are swiftly being crowded out by marketers in favor of smartphone push notifications.

These features and their apps allow marketing teams to command consumer attention as never before.

Promotions that once got filtered out by spam detectors or were scrolled over by consumers can now grab a user's attention right at his or her home screen.

Retailers are harnessing these updates to keep customers updated and informed about new sales and promotions.

**Personalized customer experience is growing.**

The fact that consumers want personally relevant shopping experiences is nothing new.

What *is* new? It's the fact that technology is making personalization standard.

These marketing techniques are becoming a popular method for those looking to build a loyal customer base.

With the advent of mobile personal assistants, ecommerce sites are realizing that automated services no longer cut it.

To better serve customers, ecommerce sites are finding they must adapt to the new customer service standards set by technological improvements.

This means servicing customers on the various channels they have access to.

Brand websites, email, Facebook, Twitter and even Instagram are all being used by customers to connect with brands.

Today’s ecommerce sites have touse these platforms to connect with customers, as well.

**Consumers like the convenience of faster delivery and lower prices.**

Convenience has been the number one driving force behind ecommerce sites’ success.

With the increasing demand for convenience, however, same-day delivery features are posing new challenges.

Online stores, for example, may encounter the need for higher price tags: Putting a driver behind a wheel for same-day delivery is far from cheap.

But technology help is on the way:

In the near future, solutions to the delivery obstacle, at least, will come in the form of automated vehicles and drones.

Ecommerce behemoths like Amazon are already looking to pave the way with such technology.

For now, sites aiming to gain a competitive edge are offering consumers faster deliveries with lower prices.

**Small businesses are taking over.**

Overall, thefuture for small businesses looks increasingly bright for those jumping into the ecommerce market.

Peer-to-peer ecommerce sites like Etsy and Shopify are putting small business head to head with big-box retailers like Walmart and Target.

Smartphones and social media are giving consumers a chance to discover brands they've never come across before.

The thrift store down the street can now set up shop online and offer global access to its products.

Longtime mom-and-pop stores aren’t the only ones raking in the benefits.

Startups are popping up across the country faster than ever before. Social media, mobile, and cloud technology are enhancing entrepreneurs' ability to get businesses off the ground faster.

What’s more, tech features are giving entrepreneurs the ability to startup businesses from home.

**eSalesTrack Blog The best CRM blog ever. We're not kidding.**

**Advantages and Disadvantages of Ecommerce**

The invention of faster internet connectivity and powerful online tools has resulted in a new commerce arena – Ecommerce. Ecommerce offered many advantages to companies and customers but it also caused many problems.

**Advantages of Ecommerce**

* Faster buying/selling procedure, as well as easy to find products.
* Buying/selling 24/7.
* More reach to customers, there is no theoretical geographic limitations.
* Low operational costs and better quality of services.
* No need of physical company set-ups.
* Easy to start and manage a business.
* Customers can easily select products from different providers without moving around physically.

**Disadvantages of Ecommerce**

* Any one, good or bad, can easily start a business. And there are many bad sites which eat up customers’ money.
* There is no guarantee of product quality.
* Mechanical failures can cause unpredictable effects on the total processes.
* As there is minimum chance of direct customer to company interactions, customer loyalty is always on a check.
* There are many hackers who look for opportunities, and thus an ecommerce site, service, payment gateways, all are always prone to attack.