

# Outsourcing an eCommerce B2B Website

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Some organizations have such unique requirements that it may be impossible to outsource B2B (business to business) eCommerce websites. According to Sam Bayer, Founder and CEO of b2b2dot0, "Some control-oriented organizations have the illusion that if you do it yourself, you're more in control. Never entering into their decision making process is the reality that with added control comes additional responsibilities and costs. Like anything else in life there are trade-offs and every situation is unique."

## **Automation Considerations for Outsourcing an eCommerce website:**

**Time to value** – When customer service representatives (CSRs) handle phone calls, faxes, and emails for routine orders money and human capital are wasted. More importantly it prevents CSRs from performing critical customer-oriented activities such as up-selling, training, and troubleshooting. Bayer asserts, "If an SAP based manufacturer has a B2B website, but for whatever reason it isn't connected to the SAP system, it is costing time and money to keep the two synchronized, so that customers at least have the impression of a real time integrated system. Either way, most firms grow tired of these inefficiencies and concomitant inferior customer service, and inevitably conclude that outsourcing an eCommerce website is the best solution."

**Personnel** – Few companies are prepared to hire, train, and sustain the web developers and designers, network and system administrators, security analysts, ABAP (Advanced Business Application Programming) programmers, SD Functional Analysts, Business Analysts & Project Managers required to develop, integrate, and maintain a B2B website. Even fewer companies are prepared at the prospect of backfilling any one of these positions when personnel decide to take a job elsewhere. The reality of these internal personnel issues often makes outsourcing an eCommerce website quite appealing.

**Cost** – b2b2dot0's Bayer suggests, "Every day past two months that a high volume eCommerce manufacturers is not in production, money is being wasted." Beyond missing out on the value that could be provided to customers on a daily basis, cash is being allocated to buy hardware, software, and pay salaries that could be invested elsewhere in the business. Internal eCommerce websites often require firms to hire and retain at least one full-time web developer to maintain the website over time. The lowest total cost of ownership for many SAP users is to outsource the eCommerce website.

**Best of breed functionality** – The best outsourcing eCommerce website firms are responsible for volumes of B2B implementations and are able to observe and correct countless of mistakes, solve for interesting and challenging eCommerce requirements and develop great ideas which benefit all their customers. b2b2dot0, for example, translates a decade long learning into the best functionality possible. Bayer admits, "That's not to say that we've learned all there is to learn about the B2B business, however it makes no sense to reinvent the wheel, and we've found that most firms would prefer to stand on the shoulders of all those that have come before, realizing best of breed functionality."

**Lowest risk** - Any IT project involves risk. Risks vary, but include technologies and designs that should have worked that do not, dependable key people that leave the project, committed funding sources that dry up in a changing economy. Reaping the rewards of a B2B project must trump the risks and exposure of IT projects risks; outsourcing eCommerce websites creates the immediate rewards without the IT project risks.

**Project management** – B2B website projects can be quite challenging to manage. Multiple parts of the organization from Marketing, Customer Services, Sales, IT infrastructure, SAP Management, Operations (Fulfillment), Product Management must all be engage and involved in the process. Multiple technologies are utilized, each with their own language: SAP, networks and firewalls, application servers and web servers, web pages with html, css and javascript, databases and programming languages. Bayer noted, "They also leave the boundaries of an organization and directly impact customers. Past experiences of managing

these sorts of complicated projects often leaves SAP based firms less than excited about pushing an internal B2B eCommerce initiative forward....outsourcing and leveraging an Agile Implementation Methodology is best.”

**Focus** – B2B eCommerce projects are never the only project on the business plate and no one in a successful organization has the luxury of dropping what they are doing just to work on the B2B project. Distractions are pervasive and many of them legitimate. Bayer said, “b2b2dot0 has often observed that when the inevitable challenges surface on a B2B project, people seem to disappear to work on other priorities. Outsourcing eCommerce firms don't have that luxury and are extremely focused.”

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