



Survive and thrive with B2B ecommerce



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Introduction

It's clearer than ever that the changes to distribution and manufacturing brought about by the pandemic will not all be temporary. We're never going back to "business-as-usual."



The workforce has evolved both generationally and in expectations around the nature of work. Customers have seen the benefits of doing business online and will not go back to their old buying habits. Supply chains have been disrupted and are in the process of reforming themselves along new patterns.

In summary, the business landscape has changed permanently. And now, manufacturers and distributors across industries are being forced to rethink their strategies.

At the forefront of these new strategic considerations is ecommerce.



Over the last year, B2B ecommerce sales have drastically outpaced retail.

Forrester recently predicted that the U.S. B2B eCommerce market will reach \$1.8 trillion by the end of 2023, outpacing B2C's \$529.7 billion.¹

This ebook explores how ecommerce is paving a path towards success for B2B organizations, including helping them manage supply chain and inventory issues, adapting to an evolving workforce and meeting the needs of today's millennial buyers and tomorrow's Gen Z buyers. Read on to learn how you can apply the latest ecommerce technology to your business, and stay competitive in this new marketplace.

1. Forrester. *Mapping the \$9 Trillion US B2B Online Commerce Market*.
<https://www.forrester.com/report/Mapping-The-9-Trillion-US-B2B-Online-Commerce-Market/RES142735>





Supply chain volatility

The inventory advantage

When supply chains are unpredictable, distributors are exposed to one of their key disadvantages when competing with large online retailers: inventory.

You are not your customers' only supplier. When one of your customers is searching for a part that is not in your inventory, they will look for it elsewhere with a simple Google search. And larger online retailers often have a buying advantage when it comes to acquiring volatile inventory. For example, The Home Depot has recently reserved their own transatlantic container ship, a move that is not available to most small- and medium-sized distributors.

45%

of companies report that COVID-19 “significantly” disrupted their supply chain¹

83%

of companies report suffering reputational damage as a result of global supply chain disruption²

1. GEP. *The Business Costs of Supply Chain Disruption*. <https://www.gep.com/white-papers/the-business-costs-of-supply-chain-disruption>
2. Interos. *Interos Annual Global Supply Chain Report*. <https://www.interos.ai/resources/global-supply-chain-report>



Leveling the playing field

Supply chain disruption is difficult to control. New COVID variants and the effects of climate change will continue to contribute to supply chain uncertainty.

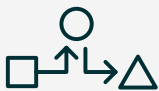
The path forward for distributors is providing the highest level of service to their customers. That includes:

- Being the primary resource for information and services so that buyers do not proactively search for a better online resource
- Providing accurate, real-time product and inventory information
- Allowing customers to **buy non-linearly**



“We sell to end-users and to distributors on our site. While we have been able to maintain inventory, our distributors had started to feel pressure with stock availability. Because we are able to provide accurate, real-time stock levels on our website, our distributors are able to be confident on calls with their customers regarding what they were able to deliver, without having to make them wait to get back to them. The online availability was a big win for us and our customers.”

— GREG DUNHAM, GREEN LINE HOSE & FITTINGS



Enabling non-linear buyer behavior

Some buying journeys begin with a phone call – some begin online. No matter where the journey starts or ends, it needs to be easy for your customers. You need a buying process that is flexible enough to them to “checkout” in multiple ways:

- Online bill pay
- Invoicing
- POS or sales rep
- PunchOut
- Email
- Mobile app



An evolving workforce

Millennials, Gen Z and retirements are transforming workforces

The oldest millennials are now pushing 40 and are deeply integrated into the workforce. The generation behind them, Gen Z, are now entering in a big way. And the pandemic has accelerated the retirements of older workers.

This workforce's relationship to digital processes is completely different than in years past.

For businesses to survive they need to be able to attract the right talent and stay innovative when it comes to their sales and marketing strategy. Intolerance of manual processes will only increase, and workflows that companies have relied on for generations are quickly becoming obsolete.



Attracting and retaining talent

The new workforce will require modern processes for them to feel as though they are able to have insights into their work and make an impact. Manual tasks need to be reduced as they lead to employee burnout and dissatisfaction. Automation gives modern workers a greater sense of control and fuels productivity levels that will keep them engaged with their jobs.

Embracing technology and leaning into innovation are key to attract and retain talent that will ensure your business stays relevant and competitive.

83% of millennials say that how much an organization embraces this is a factor influencing where they work.¹

1. CompTIA. *Managing the Multi Generational Workforce*.
<https://www.comptia.org/content/research/managing-the-multigenerational-workforce-2018>



Productivity is not only beneficial to a business but also a worker's sense of well-being

MARKETING

Requires access to robust data platforms to analyze and track the effectiveness of their efforts.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Requires the ability to quickly access account information to get their work done effectively with minimal frustration. Unhappy customers lead to burned-out customer service representatives.

SALES

Requires the insights necessary to play an advisory role with their customers. When sales people practice consultative selling instead of just filling orders, they have the opportunity to make an impact on their business and compensation.



“Our internal teams [are free] to really be the experts now, answer project questions, consult on items for their orders and bring more value to those relationships.”

— MICHAEL CAMPBELL, LEE SUPPLY



The buyer experience

The customer experience meets B2B buying

Everyone is now an ecommerce customer. And the experience for consumers using ecommerce has never been better.

That means that even if your business isn't competing with Amazon for sales, you're still competing with Amazon in your customers' minds. Expectations for the ecommerce experience are high. And when expectations are high, frustration follows when they are not met.

The ecommerce experience is now a competitive advantage. If customers are frustrated with your online experience they may search elsewhere. Your competitors are just a click away.



The B2B buyer journey is not linear

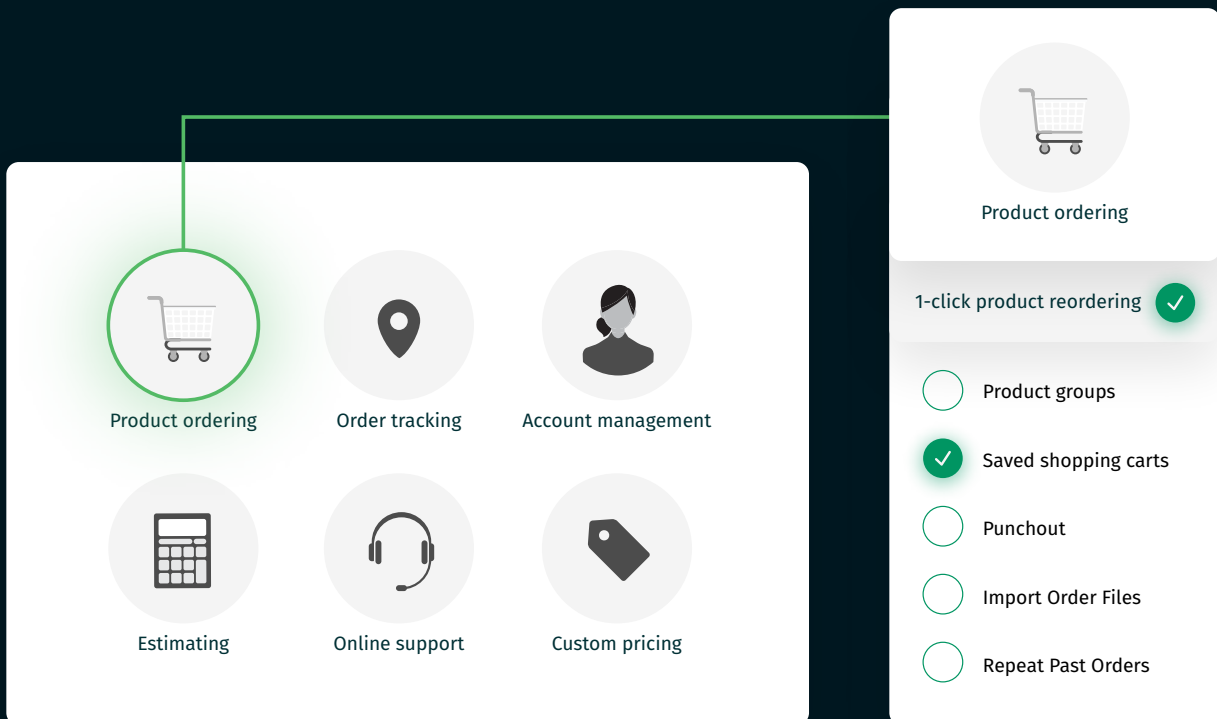
A sale may start with an online search, continue with a call to a sales rep, go quiet for a while and then end with an online purchase. An effective ecommerce solution is able to follow the buyer through each point of contact no matter where it originates.

The role of the sales person is still important to some buyers, but it is changing rapidly. 43% of buyers would prefer not to interact with a sales rep at all.¹

1. Gartner. "Gartner Keynote: B2B Sales Must Focus on Seller-Assisted Digital Experiences." <https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/b2b-sales-must-focus-on-seller-assisted-digital-experiences>



The Billtrust eCommerce solution



Solving for the main challenges

In the previous sections of this ebook, we outlined the main challenges facing distributors today: supply chain volatility, an evolving workforce and increased expectations for the buyer experience.

Billtrust eCommerce is explicitly designed to meet these headwinds and deliver powerful strategies to overcome them.

1

Real-time ERP integrations

Billtrust eCommerce offers deep integrations into leading ERP including Eclipse, Prophet 21, Acumatica and more.

2

Complex product catalog management

CloudLSI offers robust Product Information Management (PIM) and search capabilities. Utilize product data from multiple sources and accurate, robust content with the ability to finely tune and configure powerful search capabilities.



“After promoting our website functionality internally, the vast majority of our team across all of the branches have switched from attempting to find products in our ERP to just using our website because it was faster and more informative. The reasons they preferred the site was for product lookup, spec sheets and easily finding answers to questions for the customers they were interacting with. This shift was a huge improvement in how we operate — and a big win for improving the customer experience.”

— MICHAEL CAMPBELL, LEE SUPPLY



3

Powerful B2B functionality

B2B buying experiences involve many user types and needs. The Billtrust eCommerce solution ensures your customers have all the tools and information at their fingertips to get their job done faster and more efficiently with the ability to review order history, look up invoices, create product groups, utilize punch out functionality, barcode scan items to speed up inventory management, request bids and so much more.

4

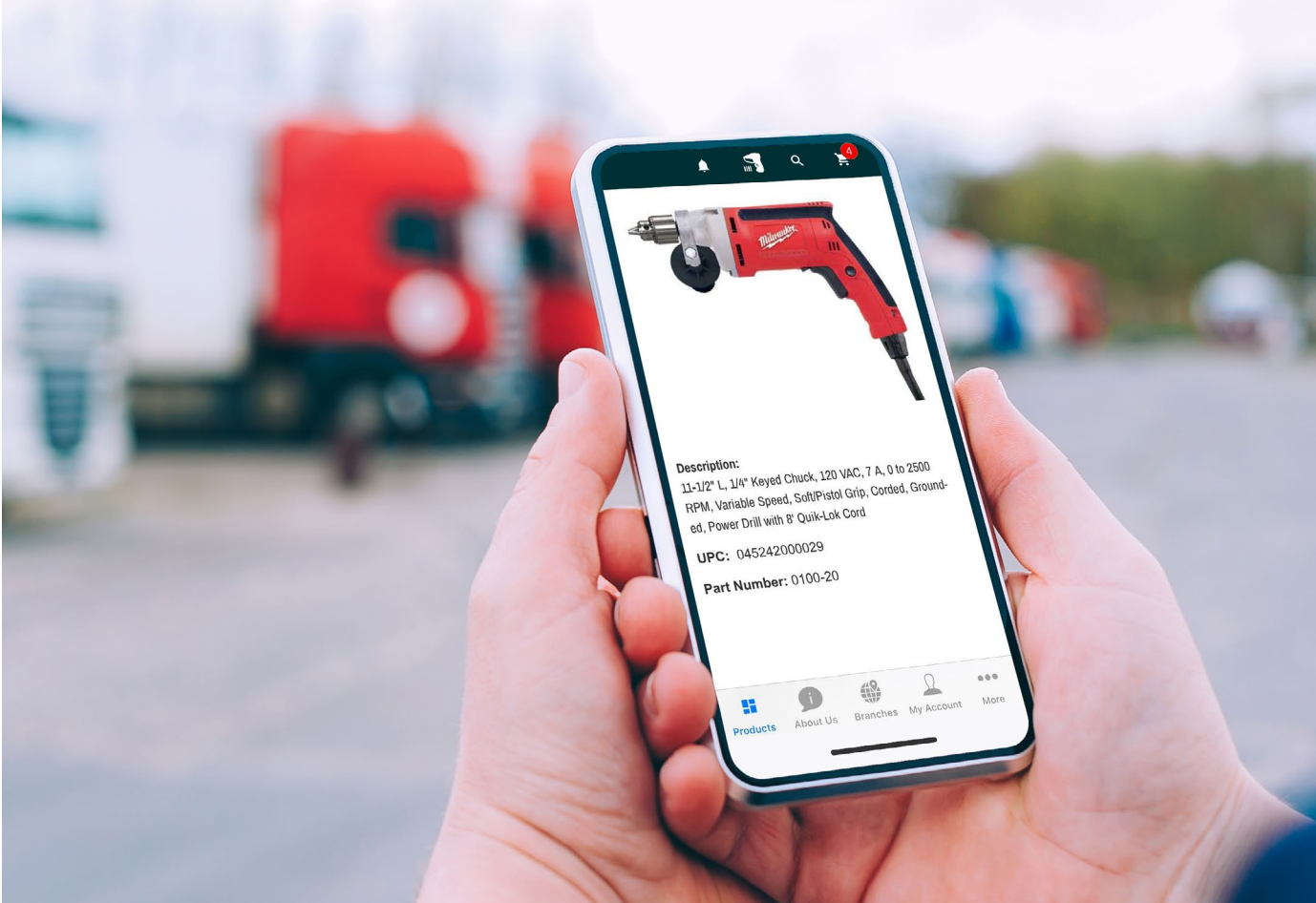
Enhanced customer experience

Simplify the buying process with AI-powered product recommendations and highly configurable search functionality. Providing your clients with the most relevant results and products optimizes their experience while increasing average order sizes. Personalization with multiple storefronts allows you to maximize the visibility to the products, services and promotions that matter most to your valuable customer segments.



"The barcode scanner has been very effective in saving our customers' time. What used to take them maybe three hours to stock their shelves—we have cut that time down to a third or less."

— MICHAEL CAMPBELL, LEE SUPPLY



5

Data Asset Management

Maximize site load speed, boost SEO, and easily enhance and quality control images and files with ease with Data Asset Management (DAM).

6

Mobile app

An integrated mobile app with all of the same functionality of your web store allows your customers to have a streamlined, omnichannel experience where they can place and review their orders from anywhere.



“The mobile app has taken the online experience to another level. We have customers who are in the field and at construction sites, and they want to be able to stay onsite and find information.”

— GREG DUNHAM, GREEN LINE HOSE & FITTINGS



The future of distribution

We're not going "back to normal," that's obvious by now.

And the "new normal" that everyone is
talking about still contains some mysteries.

Changing customers expectations, an unclear pandemic outlook, increased global competition and the ongoing effects of climate change have injected a frightening amount of uncertainty into all of our futures.

We can meet these challenges, but it will take effort, investment and flexibility. Billtrust can't solve it all for our customers (we wish we could), but we can help you become more competitive and resilient through our powerful eCommerce solution.

**Contact us and let us know what challenges your
business is facing now and what you think about
the future. We'll lend an ear and our expertise.**



"When Greenline came into the online world with Billtrust eCommerce, we were way behind in our industry. The work that they did... has surpassed that of our competitors. All of our AdWords competitors have dropped off, and our website is much easier to navigate. It has just been a fantastic tool for us."

— GREG DUNHAM, GREEN LINE HOSE & FITTINGS



To learn more about how Billtrust can help you survive and thrive with ecommerce, email sales@billtrust.com.



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