



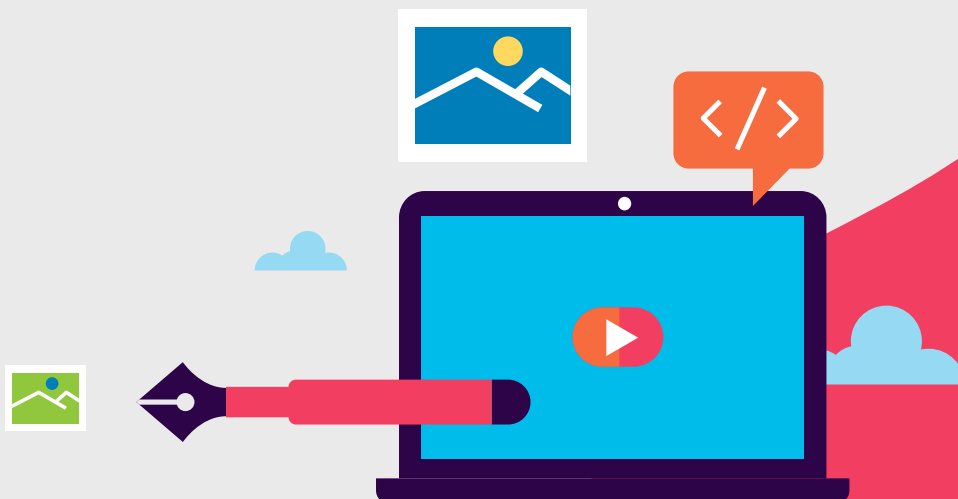
Eight Questions to Ask Before Migrating to a New Commerce Platform

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Introduction

The devil is in the details – especially when it concerns replatforming. It's a major project and a large investment – not only in terms of budget – but also when it comes to your team's valuable time.

Typically, goals for a successful replatforming project include a more engaging user experience, increased sales and revenue, more efficient customer service, and in some cases, an improved order management system (OMS). Forrester Research surveyed retail digital business decision makers earlier this year and 57% have made the decision to replatform their commerce system within the next 18 months.

Why? Customer expectations for a great shopping experience across all touchpoints keep rising. Every retailer put customer experience at the top of their list of reasons to replatform. In fact, 68% of global business and technology decision makers and influencers noted that improving the experience of customers was a high priority for their business over the next twelve months – the second-most cited high priority – behind only growing revenue, according to Forrester survey data.¹

Businesses need to meticulously think through each step before they embark on the replatforming journey, as it is not just a simple site redesign or software upgrade. Here are the eight most important questions to ask before you begin.

¹ *Best Practices For Commerce Platform Migration, March 8, 2018, Forrester Research*



Question #1

What type of experience do your customers expect?

Before choosing a platform, you need a clear picture of what your customers expect from your online store in terms of navigation, mobile-friendliness, and content.

What aspects of your site do your customers interact with the most? What pages and content lead to conversion? Will your new platform need to support rich media like videos and photography for category pages and products? What functionality do your competitors offer on their websites that results in a more engaging commerce experience? What back-end systems will you need to integrate with for ERP or Order Management? This knowledge is critical to making the right platform decisions.

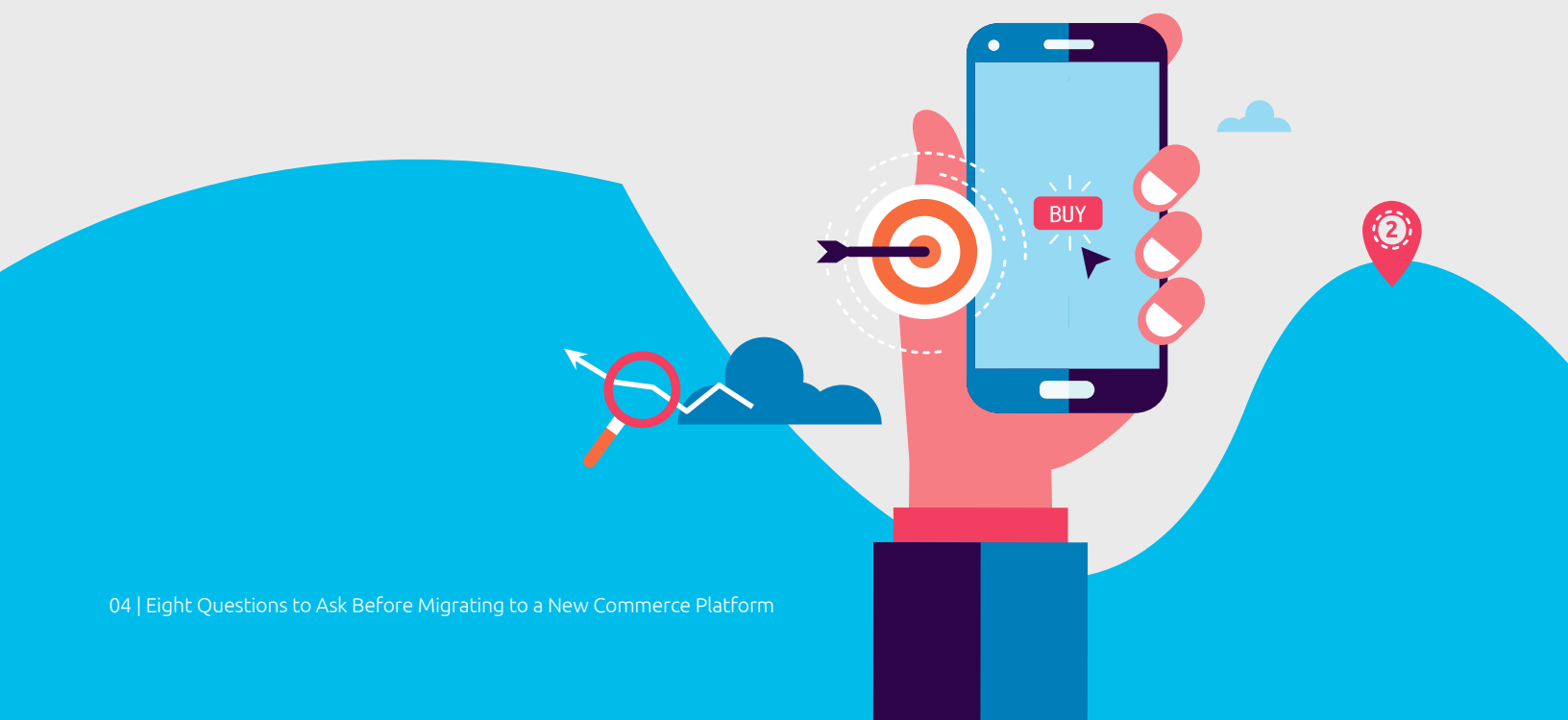
More than anything, today's consumers demand sophisticated shopping functionalities such as personalized product recommendations, configurable product options, and guided selling content. Adding or upgrading technology to enable features like configurators and guided selling tools is a common reason for replatforming, but adding elements without understanding how your customers will interact with them can result in missed opportunities.

If these elements do not deliver an experience that inspires, engages, and meets shoppers' expectations, they will not connect with your site and will end up moving on very quickly.

How do you keep this from happening? First, you need to understand how customers interact with your site in its current form and learn which pages or paths drive the highest conversions.

Second, you need to identify the gaps: What optimizations will remove friction, boost engagement, and enable you to achieve your digital goals?

The most important thing in any digital project is to have clear and detailed goals, and to use this information to guide requirements gathering for any potential new technology or platform.



Question #2

How clean is your catalog data?

Managing product catalog data is an ongoing challenge.

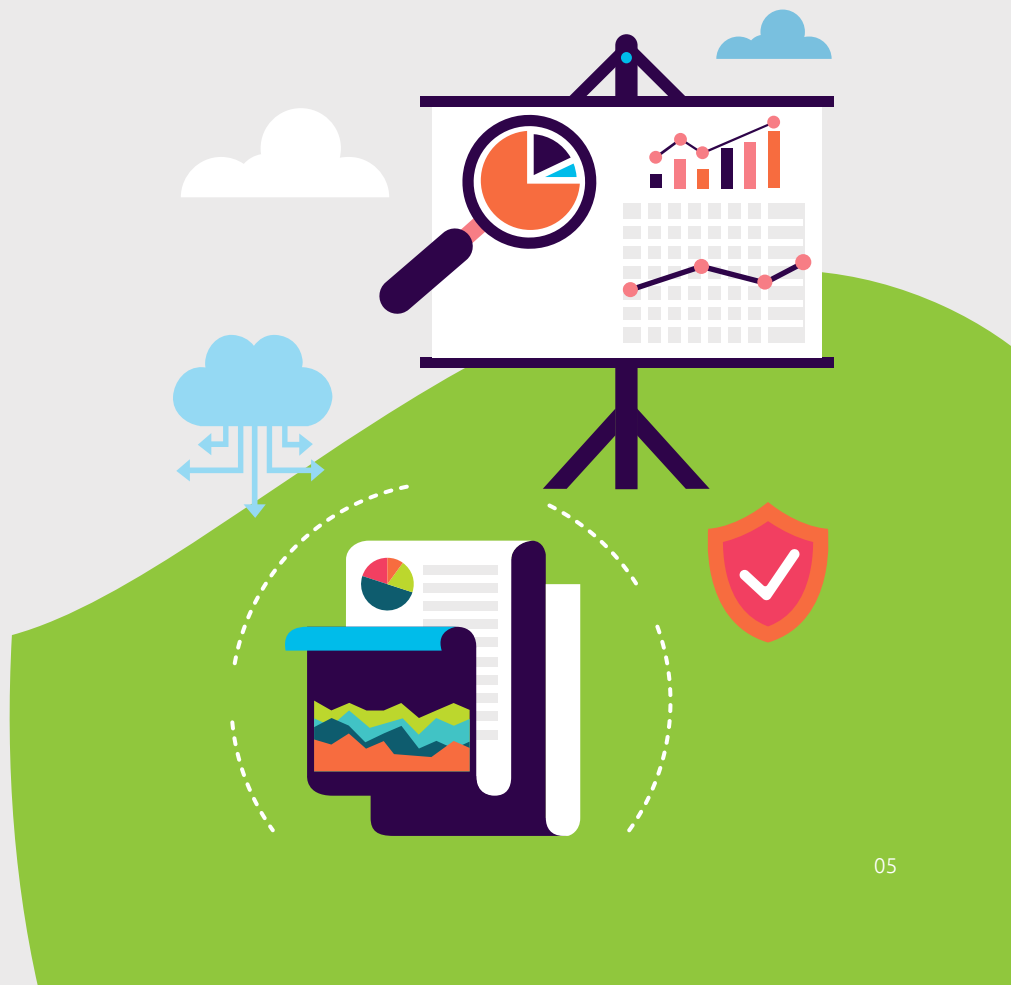
If there is ever a time to master this challenge, it is before you replatform. A clean, consistently-organized catalog will help you avoid costly delays. If you want to implement a product information management system (PIM) or reorganize your store categories and navigation, make sure you tackle the planning and requirements for these projects before turning to a new commerce solution.

An organized, clean catalog makes a huge difference during site development. Once your new site design is approved, your development team will need clean data to properly test category landing pages and product detail pages before taking the site live.

On the flipside, messy and disorganized data puts the onus on developers to create test data and guess what the catalog might look like – never an ideal situation. When the real catalog data is finally loaded, the development team will have to go back in and get all the pages to render correctly and uniformly, creating additional work. Issues with catalog data can affect user acceptance testing (UAT), because UAT is best executed with the full catalog to be effective.



Make sure to address catalog planning and requirements before turning to a new commerce solution.



Question #3

How will replatforming affect customer service and order management?

Moving to a new commerce platform will be based on more than just customer and technology requirements.

Customer service, ordering, and logistics teams are integral parts of any digital commerce ecosystem, and moving to a new platform will seriously affect these functions and processes.

Modern commerce platforms are primarily built to enable transactional shopping functionality. To address increasingly important customer experience needs, some platforms now come out-of-the-box (OOTB) with modest service, content, and OMS capabilities. To further simplify building a holistic commerce technology ecosystem, these platforms also incorporate easy-to-integrate "hooks" to connect with more specialized third-party applications.

As you evaluate your platform options, ask whether you will need sophisticated order management and/or customer service functionalities and consider whether it makes more sense to leverage limited OOTB capabilities or invest in more robust external solutions.

Take your time, as these decisions could affect not only your project budget and timeline, but also your organization as a whole.



Question #4

Is your ecosystem prepared?

When you sign a contract to replatform, the clock starts ticking.

How much of this time do you think will be spent finding and signing third-party services like address verification, sales tax calculations, personalization, and more? Surprisingly, quite a bit.

Contract-related delays can have an impact on the launch date. Without access to the right systems and resources, it is more difficult for developers to efficiently build the new experience. Chances are, moving to a new platform will incorporate a few third-party features, so these contracts should be signed before developers get involved in the project.



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Before you sign your replatforming contract, choose your third parties and finalize these contracts so that once you make a commerce platform decision, developers can get to work right away. If assistance is needed to define the required third-party ecosystem that will be required, a Solution Consulting engagement can be a good investment as a precursor to a replatforming project.



Question #5

How realistic is your timeline?

Moving to a new platform will take time. These are complex systems whose functionality is the foundation for every digital business.

With so many considerations, inputs, outputs, and options, it takes a significant amount of time to reliably launch a new commerce platform.

With that said, each project is unique. There is no one-size-fits-all timeline. But there is one recommendation that will turn out a reliable, realistic timeline: Take your best estimate and add three to four months. This will make sure your team has time to learn the new platform before the start of the project (if at all possible) and will address unexpected issues that could come up – especially with regard to working with ISVs and getting through contracts.

Wait. Three to four months?! Why so much additional time? Seasonality is a massive driver for commerce, and the last thing you want is unexpected delays to push the launch past a hard deadline, such as the lucrative holiday sales season. In addition, you do not want to rush to the launch with a half-finished site and fewer features just to hit a deadline. Even if your site is live on time, customers will not engage if it does not meet their ever-rising expectations.

In summary, more time is always better when it comes to moving to a new commerce, platform. Just make sure you build in an extra buffer to roll out the best experience possible.



There is no one-size-fits-all timeline. Take your best estimate and add three to four months.



Question #6

Which platform and post-launch support is the right fit?

After you answer questions one through five, you will have all the information from across your business and digital ecosystem to finally make a platform decision.

Different platforms will have different strengths and weaknesses, depending on the needs of your business and your customers. Make sure to prioritize your requirements to determine which features are most important.

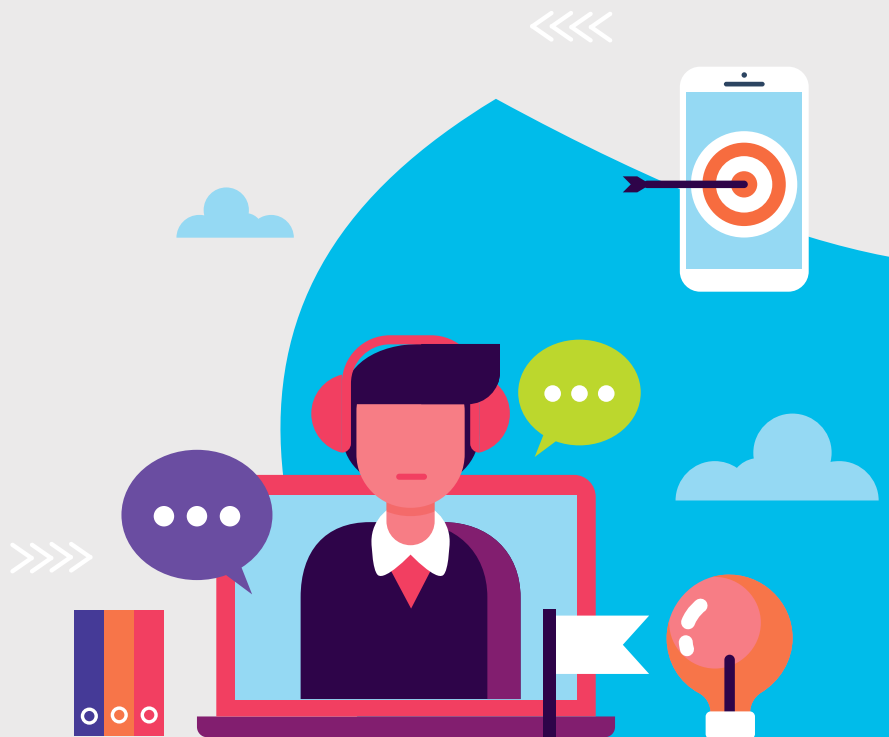
Plan to spend a lot of time evaluating the fit between your goals and the different platforms. A good match is a platform that meshes with your internal strategy to accomplish your digital goals, not just the one that has the fanciest functionality or saves you the most money in the short term.

What happens after the site launches?

Application support is probably the most overlooked value driver in digital commerce. Make sure your support partner is not merely taking tickets. While this may keep your site up and running, it isn't moving your business forward.

The digital world moves too fast for you to be content merely with the status quo. To stay in front of customer expectations, you need a support partner who is not only there for you 24/7/365, but who also consults with you and can build solutions that move the needle for your business. Make sure your commerce site and digital communications are being optimized to ultimately grow the business.

Remember that a commerce platform is a means to an end: Both technology and support enable your company's strategies and solutions to be deployed and be successful.



Question #7

When should you design and launch the new site?

Site design should wait until you select your new platform.

Going into replatforming with a design-first approach prior to selecting a platform can significantly affect project budgets and timelines.

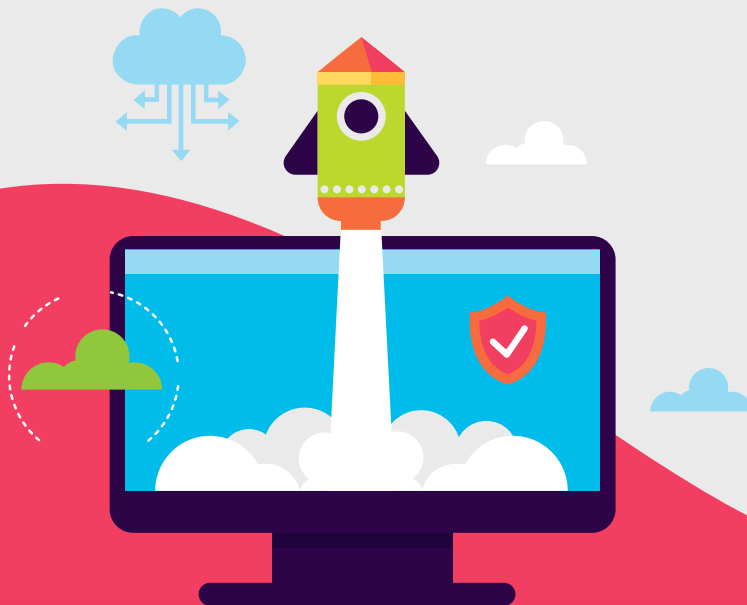
Ideally, your new design should take the platform you have selected into consideration as a starting point in order to avoid unnecessary development costs and delays. Otherwise, you may have to choose between spending extra time and money trying to make the design work with a mismatched platform or paying for a new, platform-specific design.

By allocating enough time to evaluate not only your needs but your customer's, then defining your goals, organizing your catalog data, setting up your third-party relationships, and drafting a reasonable timeline, you can replatform in a way that minimizes delays and unplanned expenses.

Perhaps more importantly, setting a realistic replatforming schedule gives enough time to get the new customer experience and back-end functionality you want with fewer compromises along the way.



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Question #8

Is your organization ready to take on these changes?

As your organization prepares to replatform and embrace the breadth of omnichannel opportunities that are on the horizon, there are often a handful of important questions to consider.

First of all, it's important to understand why the existing platform is failing and not meeting your current business needs. Is the platform unable to scale and support your company's growth? Do you need a platform with more robust technical capabilities? Are you planning to roll out multiple sites and need a new master architecture? Is your site not able to keep pace with your customers? Are you planning to expand internationally?

No matter the reason, your workforce needs to be agile and ready to handle and manage the new platform technology.

The organization you have today may not necessarily align with the upcoming changes that tomorrow may bring, and this may be a good time to outline your future organization's structure. For example, will the new changes bring in seasonal work? Will additional resources be needed? Will these be in-house or contractors? Will you be launching a Mobile App, or Buy Online Pick Up in Store functionality? These changes impact the organization and you will need to ask yourself if you are resourced appropriately.

Vet your business users' skill set and prepare them for the impending shift and breakdown of long-existing silos. Teams will have to be self-sufficient and take initiative when it comes time for deployment updates.

Proper change management is key to a successful replatforming project. This will ensure your teams are getting the most out of your new platform investment.

As your business users are being prepped and trained, it is important that they are fully aware of the goals of the project and the changing business structure. Reaching out to a digital agency or experienced technology partner can help address these common challenges by lifting the burden of resource restraints and any unanticipated organizational shifts.





About Cappgemini

A global leader in consulting, technology services and digital transformation, Cappgemini is at the forefront of innovation to address the entire breadth of clients' opportunities in the evolving world of cloud, digital and platforms.

Its Digital Customer Experience (DCX) practice specializes in creating differentiating experiences that foster relationships through Commerce, Marketing, Sales and Service solutions. By combining proven methodologies, deep technical expertise, design and strategy, its talented teams build digital customer experiences that engage and convert, enabling brands to realize their CX vision. Cappgemini is a strategic partner of Adobe, Pega, Salesforce and SAP C/4HANA.

Cappgemini's DCX Practice helps B2B and B2C clients craft successful digital customer experience strategies, put them into practice, and continually optimize them for long-term success.

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