



The Modern B2B Digital Commerce Experience

How to Build a Strategy That Drives ROI



Authors:

Natalija Pavic, Shannon Abel

Past, Present, and the Imperative of Now

The world of B2B commerce has undergone a profound transformation. What began with manual processes using pen, paper, and faxes has evolved into portals built on top of ERPs. Now it's time for B2B companies to enter their modern digital experience era.

The imperative for change is driven by evolving B2B buyers who increasingly expect a consumer-grade digital experience. According to Digital Commerce 360, a significant portion of these buyers are from new generations, with 73% of B2B buyers and 44% of final decision-makers being Millennials. Additionally, 71% of all B2B buyers are from the Millennial and Gen Z generations combined.

This modern buyer expects digital tools to be available to them, and providing an elevated digital experience can be a primary reason for them to switch vendors.

The famous quote, "All happy families are the same but every miserable family is unique," by Tolstoy, applies to the B2B world. Unlike B2C companies that often follow similar business models, each B2B organization operates uniquely, with processes that vary significantly even within the same industry. This complexity presents both a challenge and a key opportunity for differentiation.

How B2B Buyers are Evolving:



Pen and Paper: Outdated, manual sales processes impeded efficiency, tying up sellers in follow-ups rather than sales. Buyers lacked self-service, creating constant friction in the purchasing process.



ERP-Focused Portals: Early portals built on ERPs didn't solve core B2B challenges due to slow batch processes that prevented real-time inventory visibility. This fragmented system made order changes costly and directly impacted profit, hindering business agility.



Modern Commerce Experience: The modern approach is a single, adaptive platform. It combines rich commerce features—like account-specific catalogs, approval workflows, and complex pricing hierarchies—with intelligent order orchestration and demand planning. This enables "touchless orders". This frees sales teams to focus on high-value activities while providing buyers with the speed and flexibility they require.



B2B, having had an entire generation grow up buying and shopping through ecommerce, now expects to have that same experience for being able to go online.

Jayme Reynolds, Principal Director, Commerce and AI Partnerships

 Grid Dynamics



Stages of the Buying Journey

The B2B buying journey is traditionally complex, involving numerous people and touchpoints. Often, critical information resides solely with individual sellers, creating a significant risk of knowledge loss if that person leaves the company. Sellers frequently spend time on administrative tasks like account management and customer service, diverting them from their primary function of selling. The sheer number of people touching a single order—sometimes as many as 20—can be an inefficient process ripe for automation. What if technology could automate the entire order experience?

Launch the Perfect Commerce Experience

The first step is a world-class digital storefront that is fast, robust, and optimized for online transactions.

The Opportunity for Technology:

Modern solutions offer a host of tools to enhance the digital experience. For example, [KIBO's merchandiser agent](#) can automate product descriptions and SEO tags, boosting productivity. A comprehensive product catalog and AI search capabilities are essential for organizing and finding products efficiently. The platform should support localization for different regions and offer a flexible, composable architecture to create unique online experiences, accommodating specific needs for specialized industries.

Build a Good Foundation via Customer Onboarding

This is more than just creating a user account; it's about establishing the digital foundation for a business relationship.

The Opportunity for Technology:

A [modern B2B commerce platform](#), like KIBO, allows for multiple buyers from a single company to have individual logins and roles within one central B2B account. It can enforce complex approval processes with defined decision criteria, ensuring orders are reviewed and approved by the right people before being placed. The system can also apply unique pricing and custom product catalogs that match pre-negotiated contracts on an account-by-account basis.

Empower Buyers with Self-Service

Once onboarded, buyers expect tools that let them manage their own purchases efficiently.

The Opportunity for Technology:

A powerful self-service portal provides buyers with a unique login to see their negotiated pricing and custom product sets. Features like **auto-replenishment** allow them to effortlessly create a stream of repeat orders for frequently purchased items. A platform like KIBO's empowers buyers to place and manage their own orders, or for a seller to assist them. This is enhanced by a buyer agent that can answer complex questions about products or orders, alongside advanced search capabilities that help them find specific or complicated products. Essential features also include support for multiple payment options, such as purchase orders, and tools for user, payment, and address management.

Deliver on Promises with Flexible Fulfillment

This stage is critical for ensuring you can deliver on your promises efficiently and profitably.

The Opportunity for Technology:

A robust platform gives you the tools to safeguard inventory for high-priority accounts through account prioritization and B2B purchase limits. It provides accurate estimated delivery dates (EDD) and **intelligently routes orders** to optimize for cost, speed, and **inventory availability**. KIBO offers features like safety stock prevent unnecessary depletion of inventory at local branches or warehouses. For active orders, buyers should have access to order tracking and the ability to modify, delete, or update in-flight orders without the hassle of a full cancellation and re-order process. The automation of these tasks is often handled by specialized order routing agents and other intelligent systems.

Frequent Frictions for B2B Companies

Best Roofers Inc. knows their largest client is planning a big project. In anticipation of winning the bid **they place a large order** with Roofing Supply Manufacturing (RSM).

Unfortunately their client selects an alternative provider. Best Roofers now has to try to return the inventory but Roofing Supply Manufacturing has already shipped the items. The **return process is slow** and creates inventory bottlenecks for RSM.

Without inventory prioritization or purchase stop orders, RSM is left with little shingle inventory to handle more urgent orders. Unhappy **customers cancel their orders** to find alternative suppliers. Causing a decrease in profit margins due to operational inefficiencies.

This illustration shows common friction points experienced by B2B organizations. The example highlights a transaction between a seller, Roofing Supply Manufacturer, and a buyer, Best Roofers. These names are not specific companies but are composite examples based on many customer stories.

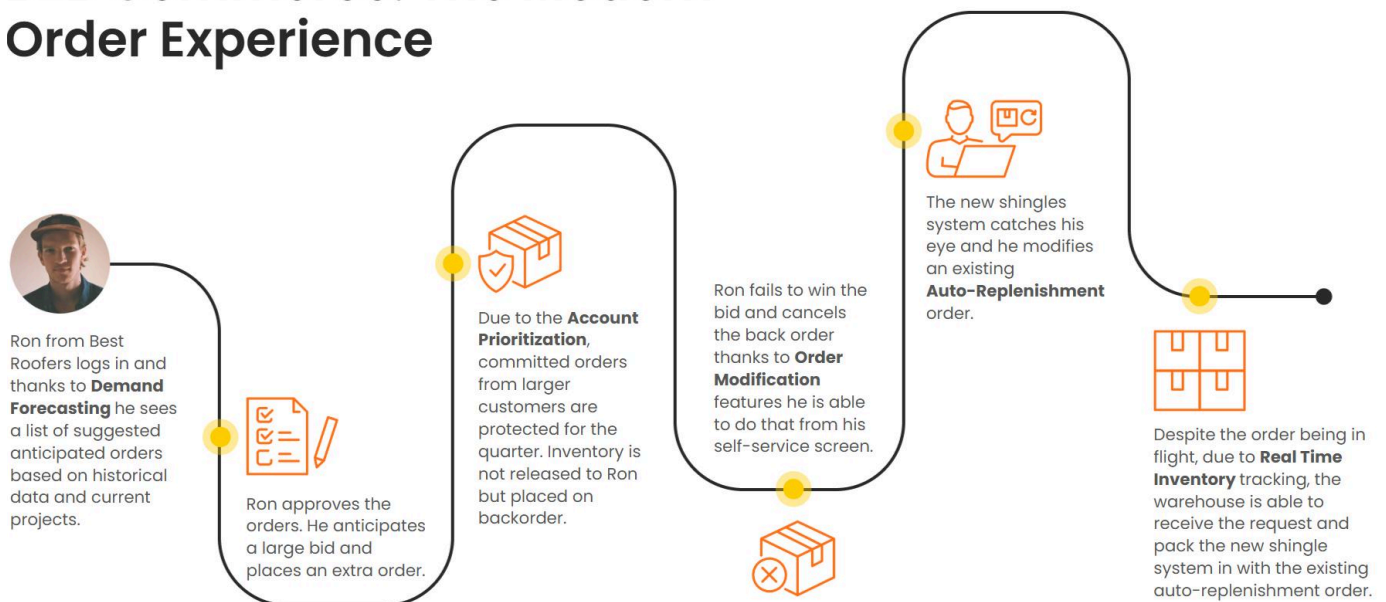
Build Lasting Loyalty Post-Purchase

Post-purchase is about creating a seamless aftercare experience that builds long-term loyalty and trust.

The Opportunity for Technology:

Technology transforms the post-purchase experience into a strategic advantage. A **streamlined returns process** is managed by an integrated returns and reverse logistics system. For example, KIBO's customer service agents can leverage new tools to resolve client issues faster and more efficiently. Features like real-time order tracking, self-service returns, and re-ordering from past purchases give buyers real-time status updates and the autonomy they require, reducing the need for them to contact their seller for every inquiry. KIBO's advanced demand forecasting and inventory planning tools predict future orders based on historical data, ensuring you have the right stock on hand to avoid costly stockouts. Auto-replenishment capabilities help streamline recurring orders, making it easier for repeat customers to buy more products.

B2B Commerce: The Modern Order Experience



Roofing Supply Manufacturing and Best Roofers replay the same scenario but with modern digital experience technologies like KIBO Commerce.



Touchless orders means you can easily get an order configured and quoted, priced, and then just execute on it without a human having to step in as an exception.

Zach Zalowitz, Principal Order Management Practice

PERFICIENT



Revenue Generating Sources for Consideration

By leveraging modern B2B platforms, you can unlock new opportunities to generate income. Consider exploring models like [dropshipping](#) to offer a wider range of products without the burden of inventory, or launching into adjacent markets by creating or joining [B2B marketplaces](#). These approaches can help you reach new customers and diversify your business.



Dropshipping:

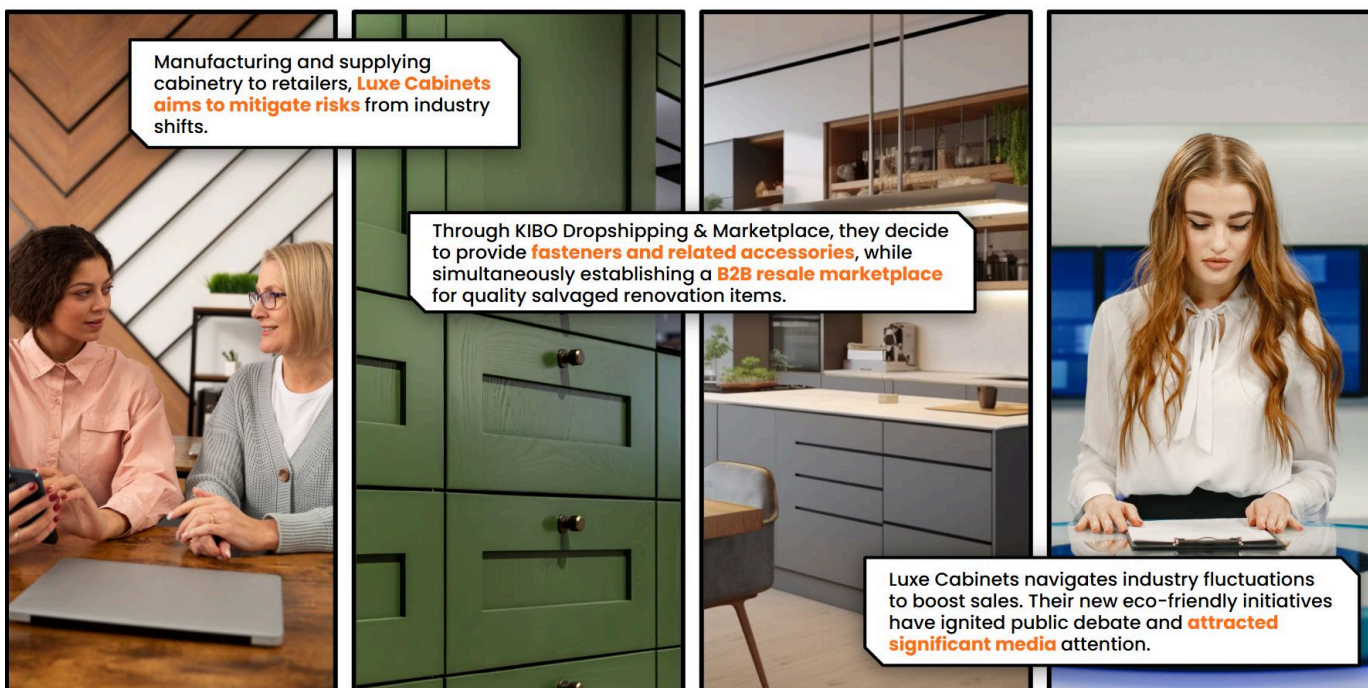
Seamlessly integrate dropshipping to expand your 3PL network quickly and easily without holding physical inventory.



Marketplaces:

Grow into adjacent markets by launching or participating in B2B marketplaces, extending your reach to new customer segments.

B2B Manufacturer Luxe Cabinets Stabilizes Business



Here is an illustrative example of a sample composite corporation Luxe Cabinets that represents similar renovation brands with the same challenges.

Looking Ahead: The Future of B2B Commerce

The future of B2B commerce is a convergence of advanced AI, automation, and seamless integration. Here's what's in store:

- **Autonomous Operations:** Intelligent agents will handle the heavy lifting, from answering routine customer inquiries to dynamically optimizing fulfillment. Imagine a Buyer Agent that, with a simple command, can initiate an entire order, check stock, and process a purchase order, all while a Forecasting Agent ensures you have the inventory to meet that demand.
- **Unified Data Models:** The distinction between a commerce platform and a fulfillment platform will disappear. All systems—from the storefront to the warehouse—will operate on a single data model, eliminating silos and enabling real-time, touchless operations.
- **Customization at Scale:** AI will enable unprecedented levels of customization, allowing you to offer unique products, pricing, and services to every single B2B account, mirroring the complexity of your business. This is the path to truly winning the market.

The future is not just about building a digital storefront; it's about building an intelligent, adaptive ecosystem that can anticipate needs and create value at every stage of the customer journey.



Every AI project starts off as a data project.

Ranjith Maniyedath, Managing Partner



About KIBO

KIBO is a composable commerce platform for retailers, manufacturers, distributors, and wholesalers who want to simplify complexity and deliver modern customer experiences. KIBO is the only modular commerce platform supporting unified experiences across Order Management, eCommerce, and Subscriptions. Companies like Zwilling, Ace Hardware, Boscov's, Nivel, and REEDS Jewelers trust KIBO to bring sophistication and simplicity to their commerce operations. Learn more at <https://kibocommerce.com>.

About KIBO B2B Commerce

KIBO's B2B Commerce Platform provides a unified, modular foundation for manufacturers, wholesalers, and distributors seeking digital growth. Our solution merges B2B commerce, intelligent order orchestration, and agentic AI capabilities into a single data model, eliminating system sprawl and enabling real-time operations. Designed to simplify complex B2B needs, KIBO offers features like dynamic pricing, customizable catalogs, and sophisticated quoting and approval workflows. KIBO also addresses the lack of real-time visibility in many legacy systems by providing a single view of inventory and order status across multiple locations and fulfillment partners. Learn more about [KIBO's B2B Commerce solution](#).

About the Authors:



Natalija Pavić

Senior Director of Product Marketing at KIBO

Natalija Pavić is the Product Marketing Leader at KIBO Commerce where her team handles product market messaging including content, social, public relations, and analyst relations. She is an ecommerce expert and a thought leader on the topic of the future of ecommerce and has been featured on numerous podcasts including Martalks, OmniTalk, Ecommerce Coffee Break, Retail Checks and Balances, Digital Shelf Institute, and AI with Sacha. She is also an AI expert and inventor with a patent on generative promotions and is patent pending on two more AI innovations.



Shannon Abel

Sr. Corporate Marketing Manager

For over seven years, Shannon has worked in the commerce technology industry—first with Blue Acorn iCi, then joined KIBO in 2022. As the corporate marketing manager, she manages KIBO's content, PR, and brand strategies. Shannon graduated from Clemson University in 2014 and enjoys spending her free time with her husband, two dogs, and horse in Charleston, SC.