



# How to scale *your* global e-commerce business

# It's time to go global (and act local)!

The future looks and sounds digital—globally and regionally. As the data from our recent survey report “The state of international e-commerce in manufacturing” has shown us, maintaining a competitive edge on an international level requires intensive focus on developing a solid, global e-commerce strategy that serves different customer needs in every region you operate in.

Apart from that, business growth and increased online sales will greatly depend on your commerce platform, which should complement your e-commerce strategy. We have gathered seven best practices that will help you successfully internationalize your online business. So, get inspired and reach out to us if you have questions. We would be happy to advise you!

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7 tips for international e-commerce success

# Keep an eye on your ROI.

Keeping the costs down is obviously a very effective way to improve the ROI of your global e-commerce initiative. Operating different e-commerce solutions in different countries, however, takes a lot of effort, money, time, and expertise. Leading manufacturers opt for a centralized approach which enables them to balance corporate strategy and regional needs. Look for a robust and scalable, standardized platform which is optimized for international B2B processes and offers a rich set of ready-to-use functions. It should enable you to develop personalized buying experiences and flexibly integrate logistic partners and systems in every region.

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# Set up your platform centrally, optimize locally.

There are three key B2B commerce internationalization strategies:

- 1. The global centralized strategy:** Companies emphasize global efficiency but sacrifice responsiveness to local requirements.
- 2. The multi-domestic strategy:** Companies emphasize responsiveness to local requirements but sacrifice global efficiency.
- 3. The transnational strategy:** Companies maintain a balance between global efficiency and the need to adjust to local preferences within different countries.

If you aim for efficiency AND local effectiveness, develop a transnational strategy! Standardized processes and country-specific customer experiences are usually the best way to go.

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## Understand and adapt to local market dynamics.

Some markets are more volatile than others, so understanding the local dynamics is very important. Survey each market to understand the local culture, market conditions, relevant business models, your market position, customer base, business partners, supply chain, competition, and more. Demand for your products and services may differ in each market. This is partly due to the level of awareness of your brand, and partly to the size and maturity of your partner network and country sales organization. So, before you launch in a new country, create a localized marketing plan and determine which strategies will work best to support future growth.

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## Use the potential of different business models.

When developing your global commerce strategy, it's important to understand the country-specific business models and supply chains. We recommend to choose a commerce platform that is flexible enough to support all business models, such as direct sales, direct-to-consumer, online sales, indirect sales via wholesalers and business partners, marketplaces, etc. Marketplaces are a good option to quickly increase market reach and sell, e.g., consumables or spare parts. Highly complex products, however, sell better via an own B2B online shop. A customer portal that combines personalization, digital services and a user journey designed for the long term can take your customer relationship to the next level!

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# Optimize the customer experience for local audiences.

Every country and region has its own culture and idiosyncrasies, thus making international e-commerce expansion tricky. For example, a website, online shop, or digital customer portal design that works in France might be difficult for Japan. To be successful, you should optimize the design to work specifically within the Japanese market. Therefore, your commerce solution should enable you to flexibly respond to local conditions by leveraging specifically designed responsive storefronts for countries where that is relevant. It is also important to have access to features that support multiple languages, currency configurations, taxes, and more.

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# Maximize customer lifetime revenue.

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By making the daily work of buyers and customer-facing employees easier, you will turn individual transactions into lasting customer relationships and, thus, maximize customer lifetime revenue. Digitalize sales and after-sales processes, and make them accessible via digital customer portals. Buyers will have 24/7 access to customer-specific data, products, and service agreements. In combination with business intelligence (BI) applications, CRM systems, and artificial intelligence—customer portals will enable you to offer highly personalized experiences. As a result, your customers will fall in love with your organization!



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# Ensure seamless integration of regional 3rd-party applications.

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In order for digital commerce to succeed on an international level, your central e-commerce platform must be seamlessly integrated into the multitude of country-specific IT environments. Country-specific companies often have very different ERP, CRM, PIM, and logistics systems in use. All relevant tools have to be connected quickly and easily. The same applies to the systems of regional partners, distributors, logistic partners, or payment providers. A lean platform architecture with an extensive selection of APIs ensures a fast, low-risk connection of all important systems—with minimal effort and without expensive development costs. This streamlines your processes and cuts down on extra work.

## CHECKLIST

### Intershop talks commerce

Find out everything you need to know for a successful B2B e-commerce business in the Intershop Commerce Talks - from ROI analysis to a practical checklist for your replatforming project. Together with customers and partners, we discuss best practices and provide exclusive insights into growth strategies. Controversial panels, informative webinars and crisp interviews will get you quickly to the next level when it comes to current trends, innovations and technologies.

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