**B2B** Frontrunners

# ADVANCED B2B COMMERCE: CATALYZED BY AI

## Define your ambition

I'm pleased to present the first Intershop Advanced B2B Commerce Action Paper, developed from our B2B Frontrunners sessions. In our Action Papers we explore how B2B e-commerce leaders can leverage AI to enhance performance, drive innovation, and achieve business success.

Each paper follows the five steps of the **Intelligent Customer Interaction (ICI) Method**, a framework designed to enhance B2B commerce through targeted strategies, offering strategic insights, real-world use cases, and practical inspiration. In this Action paper we cover the first two steps. The first step, **"Analyze",** focuses on assessing your internal performance, understanding market dynamics, and identifying opportunities that AI and technology enable. The second step, **"Imagine"**, guides you in crafting a forward-looking strategy that aligns with market trends and sets ambitious goals for growth using AI.
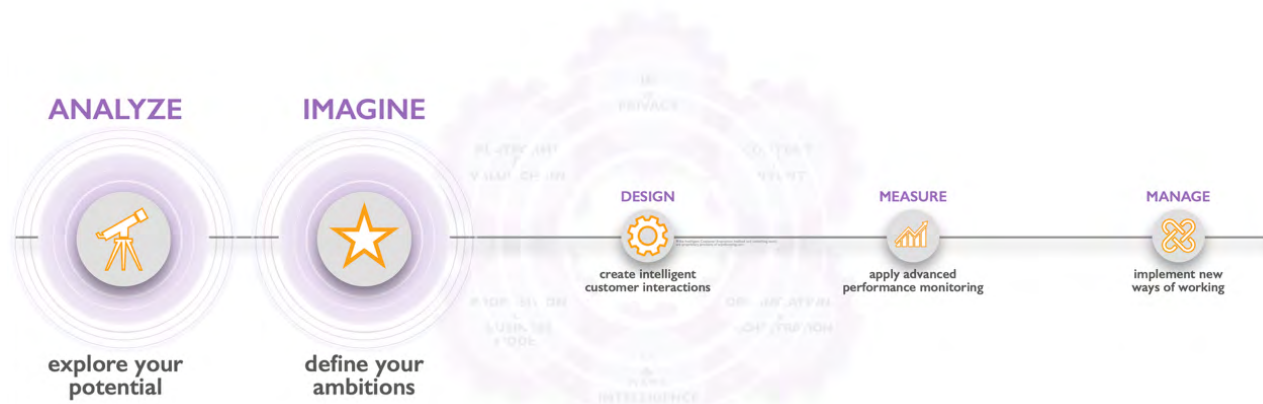
Authored by Arjen Bonsing, this Action Paper offers a roadmap to reimagine your business strategy and stay competitive in an AI-driven world. In future Action Papers, we will cover the remaining steps: **Design**, **Measure**, and **Manage**. Each step builds on the previous one, creating a comprehensive pathway to Advanced B2B Commerce.

I invite you to join the upcoming Intershop B2B Frontrunners sessions, watch the recordings of previous sessions and subscribe to the B2B Frontrunners community to stay updated with the latest insights and strategies..

Best regards,
**Gerrit Enthoven**
Executive Vice-President
Sales and Marketing

P.S. For more information and support, please feel free to reach out to Intershop.



ANALYZE — explore your potential

IMAGINE — define your ambitions

DESIGN — create intelligent customer interactions

MEASURE — apply advanced performance monitoring

MANAGE — implement new ways of working

## Step 1: Analyze

**Analysis is the starting point for Advanced B2B Commerce**

The journey toward Advanced B2B Commerce begins with a clear understanding of your current state. The Analyze step is foundational, setting the stage for all future actions. It involves assessing both your internal performance and the external market conditions in which you operate. Without thorough analysis, businesses can't make informed decisions, prioritize effectively, or identify the best growth opportunities. That's why the following five aspects of analysis are critical.

## The Analysis roadmap

The "Analysis" roadmap consists of five key aspects that create a strong foundation for your Advanced B2B commerce strategy:

**1 Understand the Customer Journey**

Map the entire customer journey, from initial contact to post-purchase, focusing on behaviors, preferences, and pain points for new, returning, and loyal customers. This insight allows for a shift from a generalized approach to a personalized, customer-specific engagement model.

**2 Identify improvement and innovation areas**

Use customer journey insights, along with market, trend, and technology research, to identify areas for improvement and innovation. Leverage performance data to uncover inefficiencies and gaps, while identifying opportunities within your processes. Use broader market insights to identify opportunities that align with your business objectives and drive growth.

**3 Define holistic projects**

Develop cross-departmental projects that immediately address identified opportunities and contribute to long-term goals. Ensure these projects are well-integrated into your business strategy.

**4 Prioritize initiatives**

Use a structured method to rank and prioritize projects based on impact, cost, complexity, and strategic alignment. This ensures resources are directed to initiatives with the greatest ROI.

**5 Create momentum**

Begin with small, manageable projects that can quickly demonstrate value, then gradually scale based on insights gained. Use early wins to gain organizational support for larger initiatives and build a culture of continuous improvement.
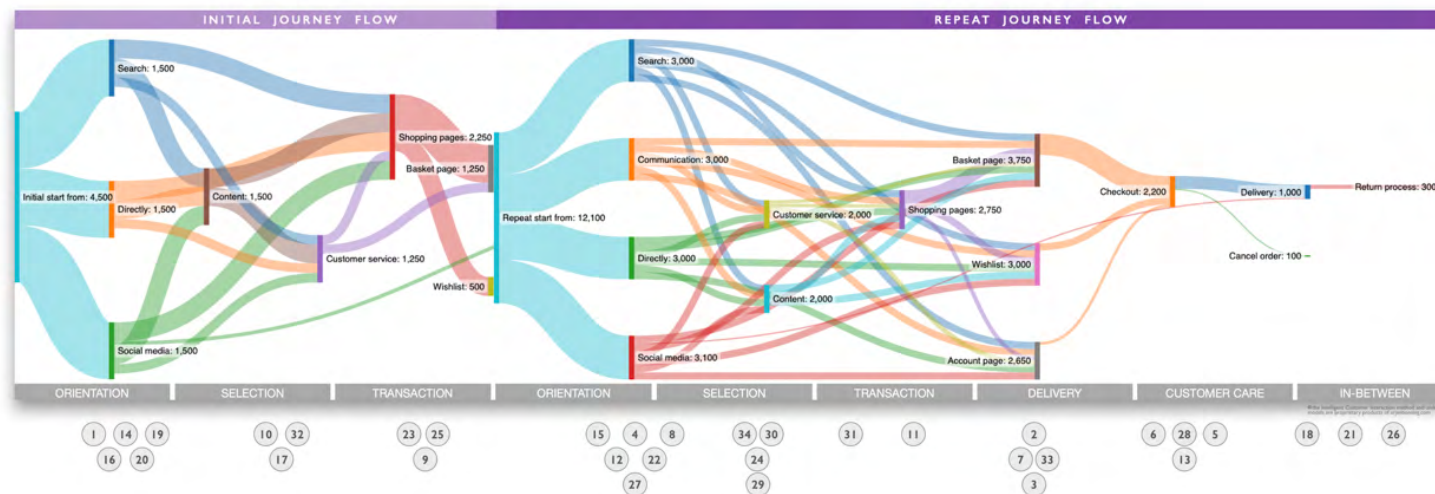


A Sankey diagram based on your defection data, together with the identified improvement options, provides a clear visual overview of the most relevant improvement projects.

### The strategic impact of AI

AI transforms the analysis stage by revealing hidden customer patterns, identifying strategic opportunities for innovation, and guiding data-driven project development. AI tools help prioritize initiatives dynamically, ensuring maximum impact. By accelerating quick wins, AI enhances efficiency and keeps businesses competitive in a rapidly evolving market. Companies that don't start building experience with AI risk missing out on these critical advantages and falling behind.

### The practical application of AI

To implement AI, begin with small, manageable projects that quickly demonstrate value. Experiment with accessible tools like ChatGPT, Claude, MidJourney, Synthesia, Firefly, for tasks such as analysis, translations, content creation, and automating simple processes. Choose tools that require minimal investment and integrate easily into existing processes. Define clear improvement goals and be prepared for both successes and learning opportunities. This approach builds momentum by showing immediate benefits, encouraging adoption, and fostering a culture of continuous learning.

### Inspiring examples

- RAJA Benelux uses ChatGPT for large-volume translations, enabling them to expand their website assortment and improving traffic with unique keywords, transforming their content creation process. This resulted in improved traffic and enhanced SEO performance.

- Würth employs advanced data analytics and AI to offer customers more relevant content and product recommendations. They measure the success of cross-selling and upselling efforts, resulting in strategic improvements.

### Technology framework

Intershop showcased how SPARQUE.AI's search and recommendation technology deliver immediate results through optimized search and personalized recommendations. In various use cases, their hands-on approach shows how simple AI applications can quickly yield positive business outcomes and highlight areas for AI implementation improvement. This strategy delivers immediate impact while shaping a long-term vision for data intelligence and e-commerce infrastructure. It enhances internal acceptance, refines processes, and fosters a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation to AI.

### Conclusion

Make the analysis stage the foundation of your AI journey, as it provides the essential insights needed for successful strategy implementation. By focusing on AI experiments and applying insights effectively, you can drive strategic growth and transformation across your organization. This is a practical, step-by-step approach to leverage AI's transformative power. Given the rapid pace of technological advancements, now is the optimal moment to implement AI strategies.

### Take action

To fully leverage AI's potential in your business, continue exploring and applying these concepts. Join the upcoming B2B Frontrunners sessions covering the steps —Imagine, Design, Measure, and Manage— to gain deeper strategic insights and explore inspiring use cases. Connect with fellow B2B experts to enhance your strategy and advance your journey towards Advanced B2B Commerce.

## Step 2: Imagine

**Reimagine your future**

Guided by insights from the Analyze step, the "Imagine" stage focuses on creating a long-term vision—your North Star—that will guide your ambitions in the era of intelligent customer interaction. It encourages you to move beyond the status quo, explore new opportunities, and align your strategy with business goals and market trends. By defining your ambitions and leveraging AI-powered technologies, you lay a strong foundation for growth and innovation. Your North Star will help navigate your business toward sustained competitiveness and continuous growth.

## The imagine roadmap

The "Imagine" roadmap focuses on five key aspects to structure ambitions, develop strategies and guide implementation.
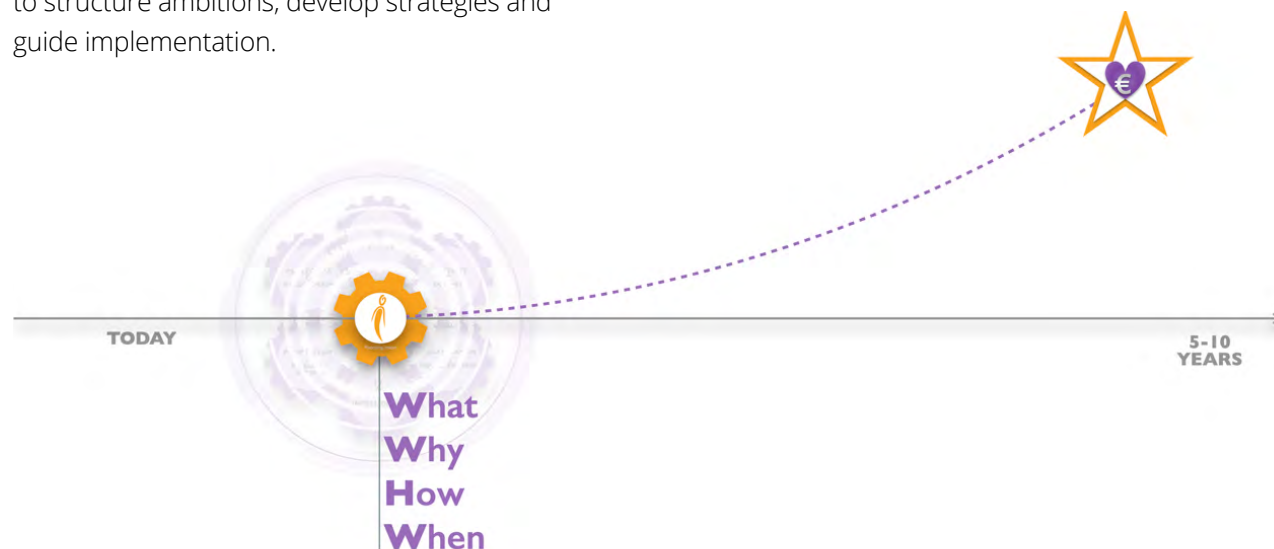
**1  Envision your North Star**

Develop a compelling vision for your future business model and customer engagement strategy, grounded in insights from the Analyze step. Align this vision with market trends, AI's potential, and technological advancements to drive competitiveness and sustainable growth.

**2  Outline your strategic roadmap**

Develop a 2-5-year action plan detailing **what** you aim to achieve, **why** it matters, **how** you will accomplish it, and **when** milestones should be met. This roadmap ensures clarity for short- and medium-term goals that align with your long-term vision.

**3  Embrace smart KPI's**

Define clear business goals and advanced KPIs tailored to measuring intelligent customer interaction performance at both individual and organizational levels. Move beyond traditional metrics to capture the impact of personalized experiences and algorithm-driven personalization.

**4  Unite innovation and improvement**

Merge innovation with continuous improvement to accelerate performance. Leverage tools like the Intelligent Customer Interaction gearwheel to involve all stakeholders in strategic innovation and practical improvements. This integrated approach enhances agility and ensures you keep pace with evolving technologies and customer expectations.

**5  Cultivate a customer-centric culture**

Define and communicate your vision for intelligent customer interaction, fostering a mindset focused on responsible data use and compliance. Empower your organization with tools and guardrails to combine human ingenuity with technology, delivering ethical and meaningful customer experiences.

TODAY

5-10 YEARS

**What**
**Why**
**How**
**When**

Envision a 5 to 10-year ambition: Define your North Star and a 2 to 5-year roadmap that outlines what, why, how, and when you aim to achieve your goals.

### The strategic impact of AI

In the "Imagine" phase AI accelerates the transformation of your vision into reality. AI provides deeper insights from the Analyze step into customer behavior, market trends, identifies growth opportunities, and defines long-term objectives. As a strategic partner, AI accelerates adaptation, helping you develop unique value propositions. This partnership sets the foundation for more autonomous decision-making and process optimization, paving the way for future innovations.

### The practical application of AI

Maximize AI's potential by building on learnings from the analysis stage. Use advanced tools to analyze customer data and extract actionable insights. Expand experiments in personalization and efficiency and create a vision for a data and technology architecture that supports AI-driven personalization. Gradually integrate AI throughout your operations to build confidence and expand capabilities, using AI as a sparring partner to refine your business objectives.

### Inspiring examples

- Bunzl is advancing its global e-commerce strategy by conducting AI-driven experiments enabling local brand adaptation while discovering efficiency and growth opportunities. These experiments refine their strategic vision and enhance B2B e-commerce capabilities.

- Musgrave leverages AI to accelerate its extended-range e-commerce strategy, testing new approaches for efficiency and personalization to drive growth and push its strategy forward.

### Technology framework

- **SPARQUE.AI** demonstrates how AI-driven conversion optimization unlocks efficiency and growth through practical experiments. Their approach helps organizations build expertise and align future data and IT requirements.
- **Intershop** explained its philosophy as the AI-powered core of B2B commerce, built on a robust framework of AI-powered data integration and system connectivity. Collaborating with partners, Intershop supports customers explore AI's possibilities through experiments and hackathons, refining data intelligence and IT infrastructure.

### Conclusion

The "Imagine" phase turns your vision into action through strategic planning and AI-driven innovation. Defining clear ambitions and setting a structured roadmap are vital for sustainable growth. AI refines your strategy, drives innovation, and creates new pathways for differentiation. Use insights from AI experiments to shape your data intelligence framework and define AI's role in your workforce and decision-making. Now is the time to turn your vision into tangible results.

### Take action

Continue exploring and applying these concepts to align your strategy and achieve sustainable growth. Join the next B2B Frontrunners sessions covering the steps —Design, Measure, and Manage—to gain deeper insights and practical applications. Engage with your leadership to discuss your journey toward Advanced B2B Commerce.

## We can help

Ready to accelerate your AI journey or eager to learn more? Intershop offers tailored inspiration sessions, advice, and hands-on hackathons designed to meet your specific challenges and opportunities. Contact Intershop today to start shaping the future of your B2B e-commerce strategy with the power of AI.
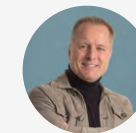
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