

+ WUNDERMAN
THOMPSON



SITECORE®

PERSONALIZING THE B2B COMMERCE EXPERIENCE



INTRODUCTION

Everyone knows modern consumers want the Earth and more. With expectations shaped by the choice and convenience of the digital ecosystem, they demand super-slick, high-tech shopping experiences that put their needs front and center.

When planning consumer commerce strategies in the evolving digital-first landscape, personalization has become a baseline requirement.

This is also having a major influence on expectations in B2B. We have to remember that buyers and clients are consumers too. They make all sorts of purchases online outside work. They enjoy the seamless, convenient, personalized digital experiences the best brands offer. And they want the same when they buy with their professional hats on.

In Wunderman Thompson Commerce's Future Shopper B2B 2021 survey, 90% of B2B buyers said they now expect a B2C experience when making a business purchase online. But vendors are behind the curve. In general, B2B suppliers spend less time and attention on the customer experience period. In many businesses, sales strategies are often built around 'the way we've always done things', rather than listening to what customers actually want.

Out of necessity, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the switch to digital across many supply chains. We have clear evidence that a lot of buyers were less than impressed with what they saw. In the first 12 months of the pandemic, our survey found that an incredible 55% of US buyers switched ALL suppliers. Globally, 23% of buyers who looked elsewhere said they did so because of a bad online experience.

In the past, it was assumed that B2B clients were satisfied with purely transactional purchases. Now we know they are just as interested in the quality of the buyer experience.



55% of US buyers
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Customer satisfaction is the top KPI that buyers use to evaluate supplier relationships. So, how do vendors ensure buyer satisfaction?

In this guide, we will outline the rationale for adopting a customer-centric approach built around personalization. If you don't want customers voting with their feet, if you want to lock in loyalty throughout your client relationships, giving your customers what they want is a basic requirement. And your customers are a mixed, complex group who expect more personalized experiences.

Sure, given the complexities of B2B purchasing journeys, delivering high quality personalized buying experiences presents some challenges. But those businesses that can deliver stand to come out on top.

With the latest developments in composable platform technology, B2B vendors have more opportunities than ever to build agile, user-centric, omni-channel purchasing experiences that give every customer exactly what they want.

23% of buyers globally who switched suppliers did so because of a bad online experience



THE MAIN REASONS FOR SWITCHING SUPPLIERS

30%

PAYMENT OPTIONS

29%

BETTER BUNDLED DISCOUNTS

25%

BAD CHECKOUT

25%

BETTER CONTRACT TERMS / PRICING

25%

TOO DIFFICULT TO FIND THE PRODUCT(S)

23%

BAD ONLINE EXPERIENCE

23%

CHANGE IN PAYMENT TERMS

22%

DIDN'T RECOGNIZE ME AS A CUSTOMER

Notably, improved personalization could address most of the above pain points uncovered in The Future Shopper B2B survey.

WHY PERSONALIZATION?

So, why are we focusing specifically on personalization? Why do we believe that a personalized experience is so intimately tied in with buyer satisfaction?

We know that consumers place a high value on personalization. And, as we've already discussed, B2B buyers are consumers, too.

A 2020 Salesforce survey of 12,000 people revealed that 52% of customers expect offers to always be personalized. In another Salesforce survey, 84% said being treated like a person, not a number, is very important to them.

73% of consumers told us receiving personalized offers mattered to them

In the consumer edition of the Future Shopper 2021 survey, 73% of consumers globally said receiving personalized offers mattered to them. A similar proportion said retailers needed to get better at providing the products, services and experiences they wanted. Nearly two thirds said they wouldn't buy from brands that couldn't meet their expectations in the future.

We've noted how the overwhelming majority of buyers – 90% of them – openly admit they carry B2C expectations into the B2B sphere. But why? How exactly do the benefits of personalization transfer over from the personal to the professional?

Moreover, we should be careful of talking about demand for personalized service as something new in B2B. It's something buyers have valued for a long time, stretching back long before digital came along.



90% of B2B buyers surveyed said they now expect a B2C experience when making a purchase online



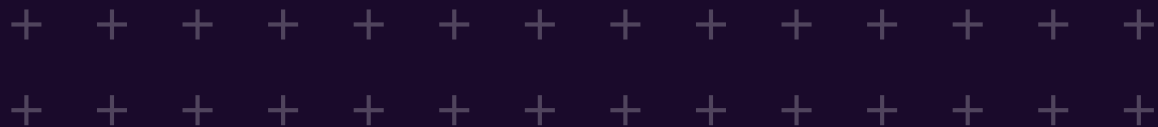
FROM IN-PERSON TO PERSONALIZED

The truth is that B2B buyers have always enjoyed the personal touch. Before the age of the internet, most buying was done face-to-face through visits to the warehouse or showroom. Buyers and sales reps built up close relationships. A key part of the sales rep's role has always been to offer clients a highly personalized level of service and support.

In this context, personalization through digital channels can be seen as a continuation of the in-person buying experience. Buyers have always appreciated sales reps who remember who they are, what company they work for, what products and services they need, and customize what they offer to suit their needs. Why wouldn't they want the same through digital?

It is striking that, when asked about their preferred method of buying online, 62% of respondents said they liked to either speak to a salesperson over the phone as they browsed online, or to an agent via web chat.

Digital might be breaking new ground in B2B commerce but it's clear that a personalized touch still matters. B2B purchasing decisions can be complex. Buyers value the support of people they see as trusted advisors. How to build that into digital journeys is a challenge for vendors.



B2B BUYERS WANT CUSTOMIZED PRODUCTS AND PRODUCT SELECTIONS

Aside from continued interaction with real people, our research has revealed a number of other ways B2B buyers would like to see increased personalization. High on the list is better access to products customized to their specifications, as well as curated product selections.

“More often than in B2C, standard off-the-shelf products do not meet the rich variety of needs that businesses have for them”

In the US, the most common factor B2B buyers consider when making purchasing decisions online is the ability to order customized products. 43% of B2B buyers surveyed said this was important to them as part of their buying decision.

More often than in B2C commerce, standard off-the-shelf products don't meet the rich variety of needs that businesses have for them. The ability to configure items to suit different purposes is critical. We see a good example of this in IT and digital services, where one-size-fits-all business applications are being superseded by more agile API-based platforms that can more readily be customized.

32% of B2B buyers said that difficulties finding products were the biggest pain point online

With regard to curated and targeted product selections, 32% of B2B buyers told us that difficulties finding products were the biggest pain point they faced online. An even higher 35% said they'd abandoned carts because of this.

There are various options available to B2B companies to smooth the path to product discovery with more personalized, targeted selections. For example, we've seen the number of B2B vendors adding merchandising functionality like cross-selling and upselling to their digital commerce platforms increase by 29% in the past five years.

These are functionalities pioneered in B2C and are proven to boost average order value (AOV). They draw on data from client order histories to make informed recommendations for additional purchases – much as buyers would expect a knowledgeable salesperson to do. In B2B commerce, data-driven personalized merchandising has the added advantage of making sometimes huge product catalogs more manageable for buyers.

“Various options exist for B2B companies to smooth the path to product discovery with more personalized, targeted selections”

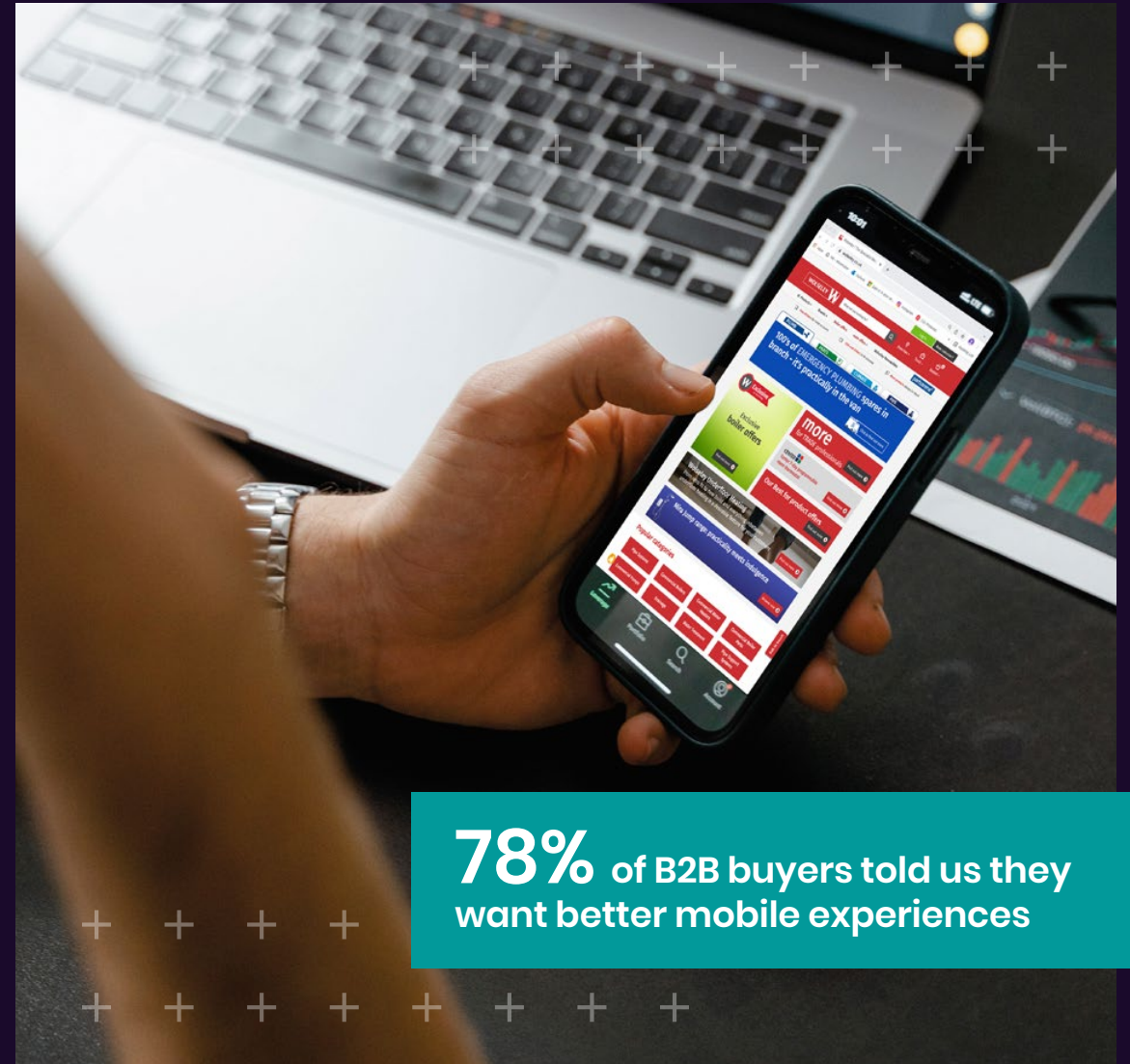
B2B BUYERS WANT VENDORS TO EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY TO DELIVER BETTER EXPERIENCES

From our research, we see that buyers also have a clear idea of how they want B2C-like experiences to be delivered in B2B settings. They want to see more of the technology they regularly use as consumers.


Top of this list is mobile apps. Asked how they want to see technology shape their future purchasing journeys, 62% said vendors should focus on smartphone apps. 78% told us they want better mobile experiences overall.

We're all used to performing a wide range of day-to-day tasks on our mobiles, including shopping. Mobile apps are designed to deliver high-quality user experiences. They streamline processes through intuitive UI and let people complete tasks quickly and efficiently. Think about how the best eCommerce apps shorten the pathway from product to basket to just two or three taps, and speed up checkout by remembering payment details etc. This serves to boost conversion, basket size and re-engagement.

B2B vendors are heading in the right direction on their mobile offer. Since we launched our annual [B2B Benchmarking report](#), we've seen a 94% increase in the use of dedicated mobile apps. As well as creating a more frictionless experience, apps are perfect for boosting personalization. With user accounts based on the device, they capture valuable data that can be used to tailor the experience. They also offer a direct and personal communication option via in-app messaging, and push notifications for sending targeted promotions.



78% of B2B buyers told us they want better mobile experiences



“Since we launched our annual B2B Benchmarking report, we’ve seen a 94% increase in the use of dedicated mobile apps”



Another powerful benefit mobile technology can bring to B2B commerce is bridging the gap between online and physical interactions. Again, there is clear evidence of this being something buyers want to see.

20% of respondents to our B2B survey said they’d like the option of using AR scanning tools and QR codes that allow them to bring up full product details on their mobiles when they are visiting the showroom or warehouse.

Another channel that buyers are keen to see adopted by suppliers is voice commerce. 23% of larger US buying teams (three or more members) told us they’d like to see more voice ordering options, and 21% overall said they’d like to use Amazon Alexa to order B2B products.

AI-powered voice assistants can be embedded in mobile apps, but also on desktop and standalone devices. As a ‘hands-free’, zero interface solution, voice commerce promises ultimate flexibility – placing orders on the move wherever you are, whatever you are doing. It’s a great example of the kind of agile, omni-channel options modern B2B buyers are looking for, as traditional lines between channels blur and the focus shifts to being able to buy how they want, when they want, where they want.



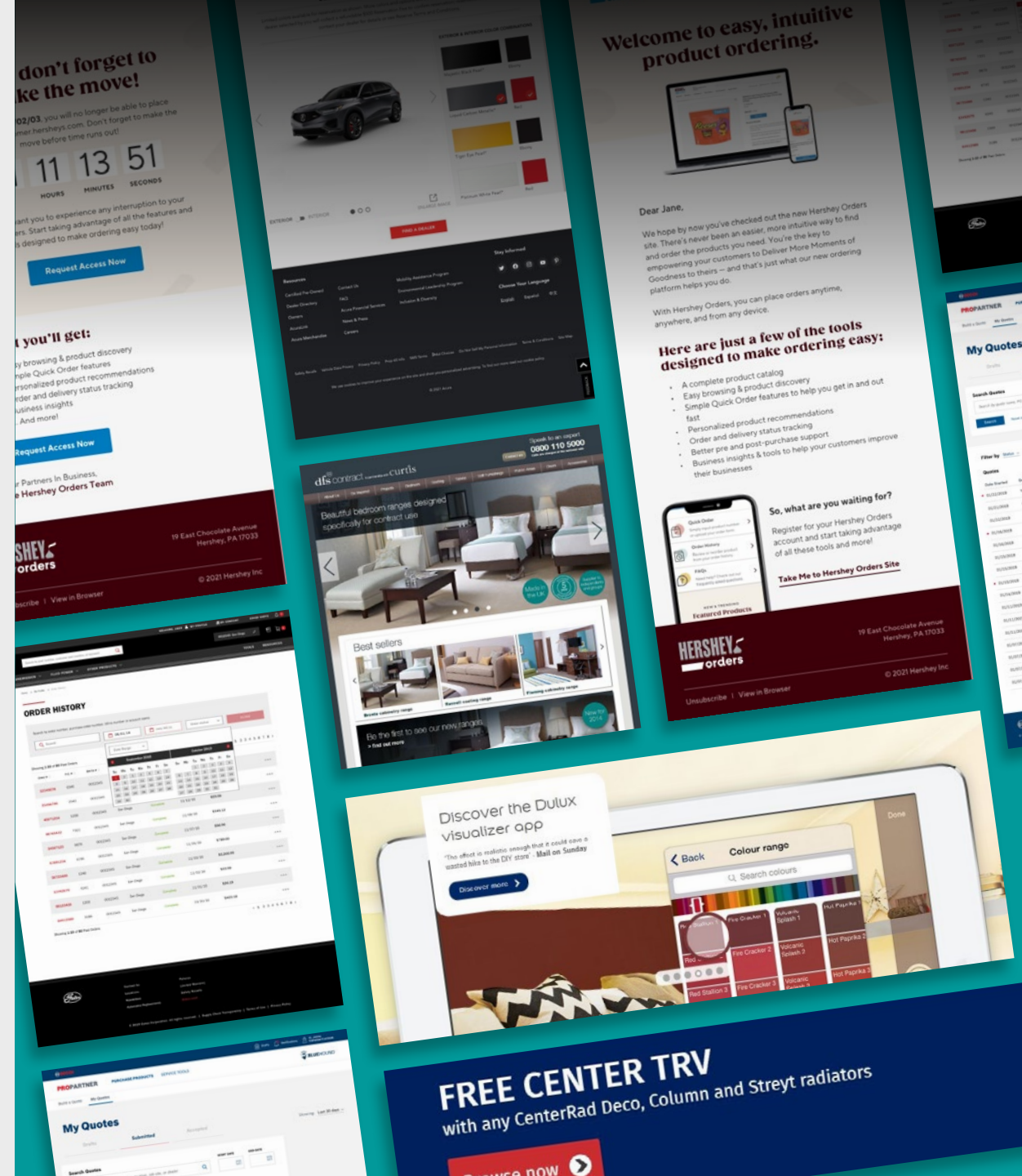
IN SUMMARY: PERSONALIZATION IS ABOUT GIVING BUYERS WHAT THEY WANT

It shouldn't matter whether you are operating in B2C or B2B channels. A customer is a customer. And the phrase "the customer is always right" is hardly new.

We've seen over the course of the pandemic how readily buyers will switch suppliers if they are not getting what they want. Digital empowers buyers that way with greater choice and flexibility. Nor is there any great secret about what buyers are looking for when they switch.

As far as expectations around digital goes, our market research spells it out clearly:

- B2B buyers increasingly want and expect the same experiences online that they get as consumers.
- They want innovative technology, particularly around mobile, that gives them more options in terms of how and when they buy.
- They want personalized product selections and the ability to customize products to suit the needs of their business.
- And they want a digital experience that matches and even exceeds the attention to them as individuals that they are used to getting from skilled, experienced sales professionals.



HOW SITECORE AND WUNDERMAN THOMPSON CAN DELIVER MORE PERSONALIZED EXPERIENCES

Wunderman Thompson Commerce are global leaders at helping brands and retailers grow and succeed in an era of connected commerce. Their commerce offerings include global eCommerce consultancy that bring strategic clarity, tech know-how and creative inspiration to help organizations deliver winning commerce capabilities across digital channels.

Sitecore's platform solutions power the world's most recognized brands, and with [Sitecore Commerce](#) solutions, brands can deliver uniquely personalized shopping experiences by displaying the most relevant products based on each buyer's

purchase intent. With [Sitecore Personalize](#), brands can deliver hyper-relevant and personalized content in real time, optimizing every customer interaction and boosting their commerce success.

Together, Wunderman Thompson Commerce and Sitecore are enabling B2B brands to strategize for growth and create inspirational multichannel journeys for the customers they serve – increasing successful customer engagements, building relationships and loyalty, and winning lifelong customers.



ABOUT WUNDERMAN THOMPSON COMMERCE

At Wunderman Thompson Commerce we inspire people to transact.

Part creative agency, part consultancy and part technology company, we are unique in our ability to connect world-class strategic thinking and creative insight with deep executional capability across technology and operations to deliver winning commerce solutions across all major digital routes to market worldwide: marketplaces, online retailers, D2C, B2B and social commerce.

We are a diverse team of 1700+ commerce experts across more than 20 offices worldwide, who believe that growth through commerce begins with connected customer experiences that amplify the brand and drive business outcomes.

We excel at orchestrating commerce touchpoints through intelligent deployment and integration of world class technology via strategic partners, as well as driving sales from marketplaces (Amazon, Tmall and beyond) and retailers.

Our clients include Bayer, Bosch, DFS, Johnson & Johnson, MAC, Nestlé, Sainsbury's, Selfridges, SharkNinja, Shell, Specialized, Tempur and Tiffany & Co.

Wunderman Thompson Commerce is a WPP agency, recognized as a Leader in The Forrester Wave™: Commerce Services, Q1 2021. More details on the achievement can be found [here](#).

For more information on Wunderman Thompson Commerce, please visit us [here](#).

ABOUT SITECORE

Sitecore is the leading provider of end-to-end digital experience software. Unifying data, content, commerce, and experiences, our SaaS-enabled, composable platform empowers brands like L'Oréal, Microsoft, United Airlines, and PUMA to deliver unforgettable interactions across every touchpoint. Our solution provides the cutting-edge tools brands need to build stronger connections with customers, while creating content efficiencies to stand out as transformation and innovation leaders. Experience more at [sitecore.com](https://www.sitecore.com).

About Sitecore Commerce

Combine flexible commerce operations with individualized buying experiences that scale, delight, and convert.

Future-proof your business with a composable commerce platform that scales with you.

For more information on Sitecore's Composable Commerce Platform, please visit us [here](#).

Are you ready to take back control of your commerce roadmap? [Get in touch](#) to see how Sitecore can help you today.

GET IN TOUCH



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