VOLO

Adventures in ecommerce

BUYING MULTICHANNEL ECOMMERCE SOFTWARE

7 things for brands and merchants to think about

INTRODUCTION

When you decide to add a new online sales channel or marketplace to the one you already have, you become a multichannel seller. It might be the first of many channels you add, and each of them comes with its own rules and ways of working. You're going to need help managing your multichannel business, from supply through to demand, fulfilment, shipping and service. You're going to need a platform and services to connect all the moving parts, workflows, processes, systems and providers, so that the end solution is configured for your business and where you want to take it. Investing in this solution is probably the most important decision you'll make. You'll want to get it right. Maybe you've never bought this kind of thing before, and you're not sure how to go about it. This ebook covers 7 key things to think about before you buy.

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THING 1 - THE MECHANICS

At the highest level your buying process for important projects entails six simple words: awareness; requirements; alternatives; selection; purchase; implementation. Buying a multichannel ecommerce solution is no different. First you become aware of a problem or an opportunity. Then, upon further research or discussions, you define your requirements to address it. Next, you evaluate the alternatives for getting it done. After that you choose the best option. Then you commit to the purchase. Finally you execute the project.

Whether you work with one trusted provider, or you throw the project open to more than one to compete for it, you need to start with the basic mechanics of the process. Here are some things you need to think about:

- What information will you share with your provider(s?)
- What do you want them to do with the information you send them?
- When do you want them to respond to you?
- How should they respond to you?
- How should they treat the information you send them (for example, is it confidential, or can it be distributed)?
- What do you want to happen next?
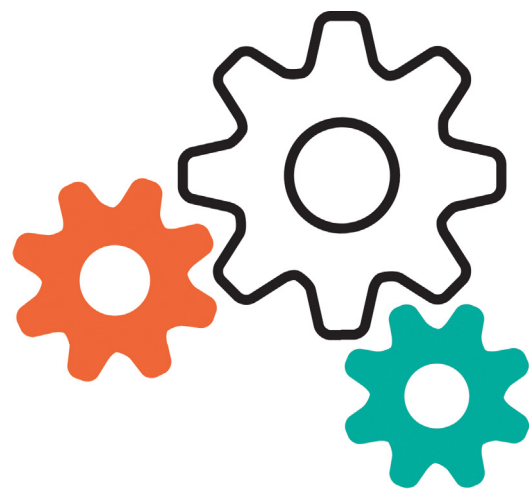
THING 2 - ABOUT YOU

You need to set the scene for your audience. Sure, they could find it out themselves, but it doesn't hurt to get them thinking about the important bits. Provide a background to your company. Touch on the history of your company and how long you've been around. Describe the industries you serve, the markets you're active in and the position you occupy in them. Cover the products and services you provide, what they do and how they benefit customers.

Sharing your overall company strategy gives your audience an idea of how you go about your business, as well as the culture and ethos in your company. What are your key corporate values? How are you structured as a business? How do you go to market? What's your business model and what's your core business? What type of customers do you target and how do they buy your products and services? Are you in an emerging, growth or mature business? What's the competition like?

Then you can get to the nub of the project. Outline your main objectives as a company. Describe the challenges that are preventing you from getting where you need to be. The reason why you're contemplating this project in the first place is to remove the barrier to you hitting your objectives, so this information is all very useful to potential suppliers. It gives them context and the detail to be able to propose appropriate courses of action.
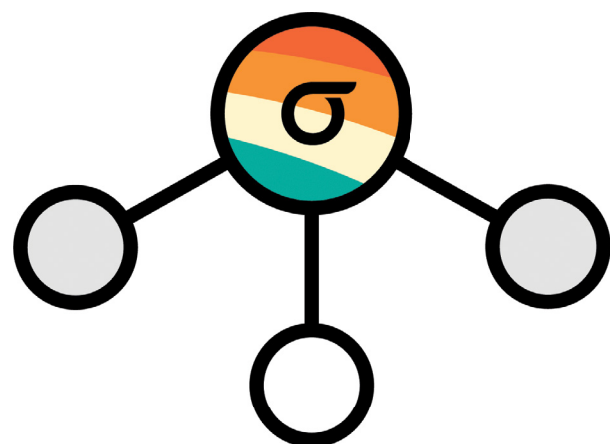
THING 3 - FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Now that you've set the scene for the project, you can start to lay out the specific requirements – the detail behind exactly what you're looking for from your provider. This is the nitty gritty of how you want the solution to work, what you want it to automate, when, where and possibly also why.

You probably want the solution to encompass all your processes and work-flows, so as you might imagine there's a pretty long laundry list of things to consider. Here are the main areas, to which you need to add detail for your own requirements.

- Purchasing management
- Warehouse management
- Listing/information management
- Inventory and stock management
- Marketplaces management
- Multichannel management
- eCommerce management
- Promotions management
- Cross-border management
- Sales order management
- Back office/accounts/finance management
- Fulfilment management
- Dispatch management
- Customer service management
- Marketing management
- Reporting and analytics

THING 4 - SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

So we've outlined the functional requirements of the ideal platform. You're not finished yet, though. Consider the fact that 70% of all transformational projects – and this is definitely such a project – fail according to McKinsey & Co.

It's not just about platform. You need to demand services to wrap around the technology and ensure a smooth transition to the new system, comprehensive adoption of the platform and successive year-on-year growth. Here are some of the service areas you need to consider from your providers.

- Consulting
- Professional services
- Account management and growth
- 'In life' programs and communications
- Creative design services
- Web marketing/SEO

Because of the consultative, service-led approach that Volo takes, our typical customer grows their revenues more than 50% by the end of the first year, and 100% by the end of the second year, with no extra costs.

THING 5 - TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

We've already covered what you want the multichannel ecommerce platform to do for you functionally. Now it's time to think about how you want your technology delivered, and what controls and mechanisms you want in place to preserve the integrity and security of your system and the data held within it. Here are some areas to be aware of. It's also worth consulting with your IT staff to get a sense of your ideal set of requirements.

- Technical (hosted solution, installed etc)
- Usability
- User management
- Performance
- Connections (third party feeds, API etc)
- Support (resolutions, releases, maintenance etc)
- Security
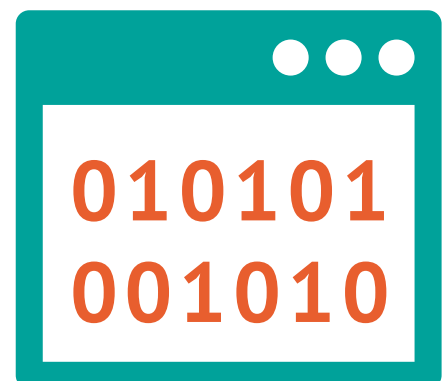
THING 6 - TENDER PROCESS REQUIREMENTS

If you've decided to run a formal tender process, then you need to set expectations around what you're looking for in a response, outside of the requirements areas we've already covered. Even if you're not going out to tender, you need to think about how you want your buying process to work. Here are some suggestions for areas to ask for clarification.

- Timescales
- Process steps
- Project management
- Costings
- TCO/ROI analysis

THING 7 - OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

What you've just read covers all the main aspects of a multichannel ecommerce solution for your business. It's not the complete picture though; it's not the full buying process. There are some other steps for you to consider:

- What questions should I be asking potential providers in this project?
- How can I evaluate whether their solution will satisfy my unique requirements?
- How do I sell this to my people?
- What are the key commercial and legal areas I need to get clarity on?
- How will I get early adoption of the new systems and processes so that we hit the ground running?
- How will we build from there?
- What's my recourse if something goes wrong?

WHAT TO DO NEXT

Phew! It's a lot to digest, isn't it? This isn't a surprise, though, given the importance of the project to your future. Fortunately, the business development folks at Volo take a consultative approach to working with companies. We'll listen to what you're looking to do, maybe challenge you on a few of your assumptions, and, if you and we decide the fit is right, help you through the buying process. That way you're best set up for long term success. You can get us by sending an email to **enquiries@volocommerce.com**.

Thanks for reading, and good selling!

ABOUT VOLO

At Volo, we've set ourselves one core mission: to get merchants and brands flying high in the world of ecommerce. We want to take the operational headaches away from trading online, and get you focused on what you do best - spotting and embracing new opportunities for growth.

That's why we've built the world's most useful and easy-to-use ecommerce service. A complete combination of technology and people that brings together your entire online sales process, and helps simplify and automate core tasks from inventory management and listing through to payment and shipping.

With Volo, you can scale your business up whenever the time is right, and make the most of sales opportunities across multiple channels such as Amazon and eBay. Our platform processes tens of millions of sales orders annually and our customers on average double their revenues within 24 months.

Are you ready to see your business fly?

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