

A man in a dark suit is seen from behind, standing in a high-rise office looking out at a city skyline at night. The scene is dimly lit, with the city lights providing a soft glow. The man's hands are in his pockets.

PERFICIENT/digital

TRANSFORMING THE **DIGITAL EXPERIENCE** **FOR B2B COMMERCE**

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B2B customers are changing the game of eCommerce. Some call it the “Amazon Effect,” but B2B buyers are more accustomed to a journey that includes digital experiences both well before and long after the sale. They expect seamless, omni-channel experiences, accurate and detailed product and inventory information, one-click purchasing, and 24/7 self-service access.

For B2B enterprises to succeed in this new landscape, they must adapt their strategies with a B2C focus, delivering digital experiences that provide buyers with the tools needed to research, educate, and efficiently transact with their suppliers.

**U.S. B2B eCOMMERCE SALES
PROJECTED TO REACH
\$1.13 TRILLION
BY 2020¹**

With this level of anticipated growth, B2B enterprises must up their game by transforming the entire purchase experience – from offline to online – so it delivers more value to customers.

In this guide, we will explore:

- / **The impact of digital on B2B sales channels**
- / **Why B2B companies need an omni-channel strategy**
- / **The importance of integrated content and commerce in B2B**
- / **The path to converging content and commerce**

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

B2B commerce transactions typically involve multiple decision makers and cover a complex range of applications that enable organizations to form both offline and online relationships with suppliers, customers, distributors, resellers, and other partners.

While traditional B2B selling channels continue to drive significant influence, the combination of abundant digital technologies and increasing buyer expectations have led to a rapid shift towards digital B2B commerce. B2B sellers are re-thinking their marketing and sales strategies and the corresponding core investments around customer engagement and commerce platforms.

If this accurately describes your current situation, then now is the time to digitally transform your business.





Digital transformation is a journey, not a destination. Success in the digital age calls for new technologies, new strategies, and a new psychology that embraces both. Consider this:

- / **Digital channels have evolved from static websites of the 1990s into sophisticated service and transaction systems that, on average, support more than 25% of our clients' business revenues.**
- / **By 2020, Forrester believes all companies will become either digital predators or digital prey.²**
- / **Using the stock market as an indicator, Watermark Consulting found that customer experience leaders in all markets had a 43% average value gain over six years, compared to laggards who lost 33.9% of their value in that same time.**
- / **Millennials generally lead digital lives and expect brands to provide a seamless experience across all channels of interaction (omni-channel).**

Big change intimidates even the most innovative companies, and digitally transforming your B2B commerce capability requires a significant, overarching commitment for it to succeed.

**MATURE BUSINESSES RESPOND
THROUGH THE CHANNELS
CUSTOMERS PREFER,
AT THE SPEED THEY EXPECT,
AND WITH LITTLE OR NO FRICTION
BETWEEN CHANNEL EXPERIENCES.**



THE NEED FOR A B2B OMNI-CHANNEL DIGITAL STRATEGY

Fragmented buying experiences are a big turn-off for today's digitally savvy customers. Whether buying in B2B or B2C, the path to purchase is no longer linear and offline, and there's an increasing expectation for a seamless experience across all channels and interactions.

Decreasing service costs is one of the primary motivations for migrating B2B customers online. However, there are additional benefits that you may not have realized, including higher engagement levels, increased spending, reduced retention costs, and increased customer loyalty.

As an experienced marketer or merchandiser, you know that delivering an effective omni-channel journey is both an art and a science. It requires a deft combination of data, technology, and common sense.

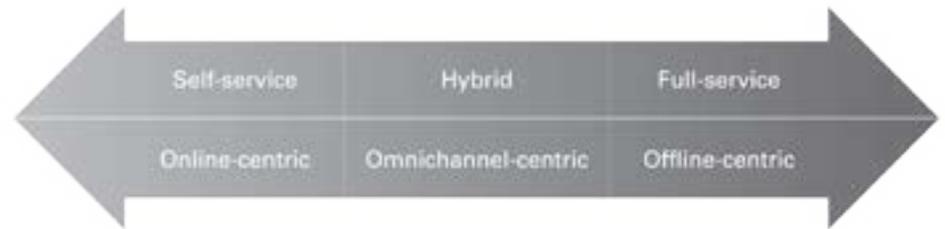
51%

**OF B2B DIGITAL PROFESSIONALS SAID
OMNI-CHANNEL CUSTOMERS
INCREASED SPENDING IN THE
PAST YEAR ³**

Today's B2B buyers are comfortable with self-serve and full-service buying channels both online and offline. According to Forrester, they are most comfortable in the middle ground between the two in a "hybrid," omni-channel centric buying world (Figure 1).

This hybrid option allows B2B buyers to obtain answers quickly from self-service processes, such as questions via chat bots, email, knowledge repositories (FAQ), and click-to-call.

FIGURE 1: B2B Customers Prefer A Spectrum of Buying Options



Resource: Forrester

**B2B CUSTOMERS ARE MORE THAN
TWICE AS LIKELY
TO CONSIDER A BRAND THAT SHOWS
PERSONAL VALUE OVER BUSINESS VALUE
BECAUSE BUYERS PERCEIVE LITTLE DIFFERENCE IN
THE BUSINESS VALUE OFFERED BY
DIFFERENT SUPPLIERS⁴**

And for purchases that require more consultation or custom configuration, they can contact a sales rep or CSR with access to configure price quote, quote-to-cash, and sales-enablement technologies that expedite full-service sales.

Bottom line: a fragmented and poorly integrated brand presence confuses your customers, is difficult to manage, and ultimately leaves revenue on the table. Your customers only see a single brand and expect a unified experience. When they don't get it, they are more likely to take their business elsewhere.

WHY INTEGRATING CONTENT + COMMERCE IS **CRUCIAL FOR B2B ENTERPRISES**

While providing an omni-channel experience for B2B buyers is increasingly important, content and commerce teams within B2B organizations have historically worked in silos instead of teaming up as partners to deliver engaging customer experiences. As a result, branded content on marketing sites may look stunning, yet offer few product details or purchase opportunities. Or, web stores may be highly efficient at processing transactions but fall short of delivering any “wow” factor.

Traditionally, commerce teams have been wary of any steps or interactions that might distract customers from making a purchase. These pre-conceived notions have led to the dreaded “two-site syndrome” where marketers and eCommerce teams manage entirely separate and disconnected digital points of presence.





B2B organizations are now focusing their attention to merging content and commerce solutions for several reasons:

- 1 More complex content required for B2B selling**
Buyers typically expect more information from B2B commerce sites, including specification sheets, compatible/replacement products, diagrams, schematics, regulatory information, and hazardous material information. Providing this additional content in a single, simplified view to help buyers make informed decisions is a tall order.
- 2 Growing brand awareness**
Businesses need content to build and enhance brand awareness, with the ability to apply this quickly and consistently across channels, including eCommerce. Buyers expect a seamless experience regardless of where they land on your site, and your business needs the agility to rapidly build and deliver these experiences.
- 3 Increased focus on converting leads to sales**
B2B sales cycles are notoriously long. By providing relevant and valuable information to buyers, you can shorten their journey from research to purchase.
- 4 Increasing expectations of B2B customers for a mobile and simplified buying experience**
B2B sellers traditionally haven't embraced mobile, but that trend is quickly changing due to demands from buyers. Because mobile is a viable platform for reaching, selling to, and servicing B2B customers, nearly one-half of B2B companies are actively investing in mobile infrastructure.¹

As mentioned, B2B buyers expect easy-to-navigate, intuitive interfaces because they know what the customer experience has the potential to be. Many B2B businesses have told us that their customers expect the “personal touch” and forcing them online might cause them to move their business elsewhere. Forrester research shows this has the opposite effect. In a recent survey, 60% of B2B executives said their customers spend more overall when they touch multiple channels.³

As you aspire to deliver the kinds of experiences that customers expect, technology vendors have increasingly teamed with partners who offer a unique blend of services and practices that combine digital agencies and marketing capabilities with eCommerce and systems integration. Together, these combined efforts – founded on analytical insights that drive the creation of engaging consumer experiences – can cross the divide created by the historic technology gap between commerce and content.

You now have access to validated digital strategies, proven architectural approaches, best practices, and project accelerators that deliver an integrated environment to benefit all parties involved.

52%
**OF B2B BUYERS
RESEARCH PURCHASES
FROM THEIR
SMARTPHONES⁵**

**IF YOU MAKE IT
EASIER FOR BUYERS
TO DO BUSINESS WITH YOU,
THEY WILL CONDUCT MORE
BUSINESS WITH YOU.**

Pat Garcia, Director of Commerce Solution Sales, Perficient Digital

BENEFITS OF INTEGRATING CONTENT + COMMERCE

1 Satisfy (or exceed) customer expectations

Well-educated B2B buyers are the norm – 67% of the buyer's journey is complete before contacting a sales rep.⁶

93%

**OF B2B BUYERS
PREFER TO BUY ONLINE
WHEN THEY HAVE
DECIDED WHAT TO BUY⁷**

2 Reduce costs and increase efficiencies

B2B companies reported cutting their service costs by as much as 90% by moving customers into a self-serve environment.¹

52%

**OF B2B ECOMMERCE EXECUTIVES
SAID MIGRATING OFFLINE-ONLY CUSTOMERS ONLINE
REDUCED CUSTOMER
SUPPORT COSTS³**

3 Support traditional field sales

Configure price quote (CPQ), quote-to-cash (QTC), and other sales enablement technologies empower B2B salespeople, allowing them to spend more time building relationships with accounts and expediting full-service sales.³

4 Support relationships and consultative selling

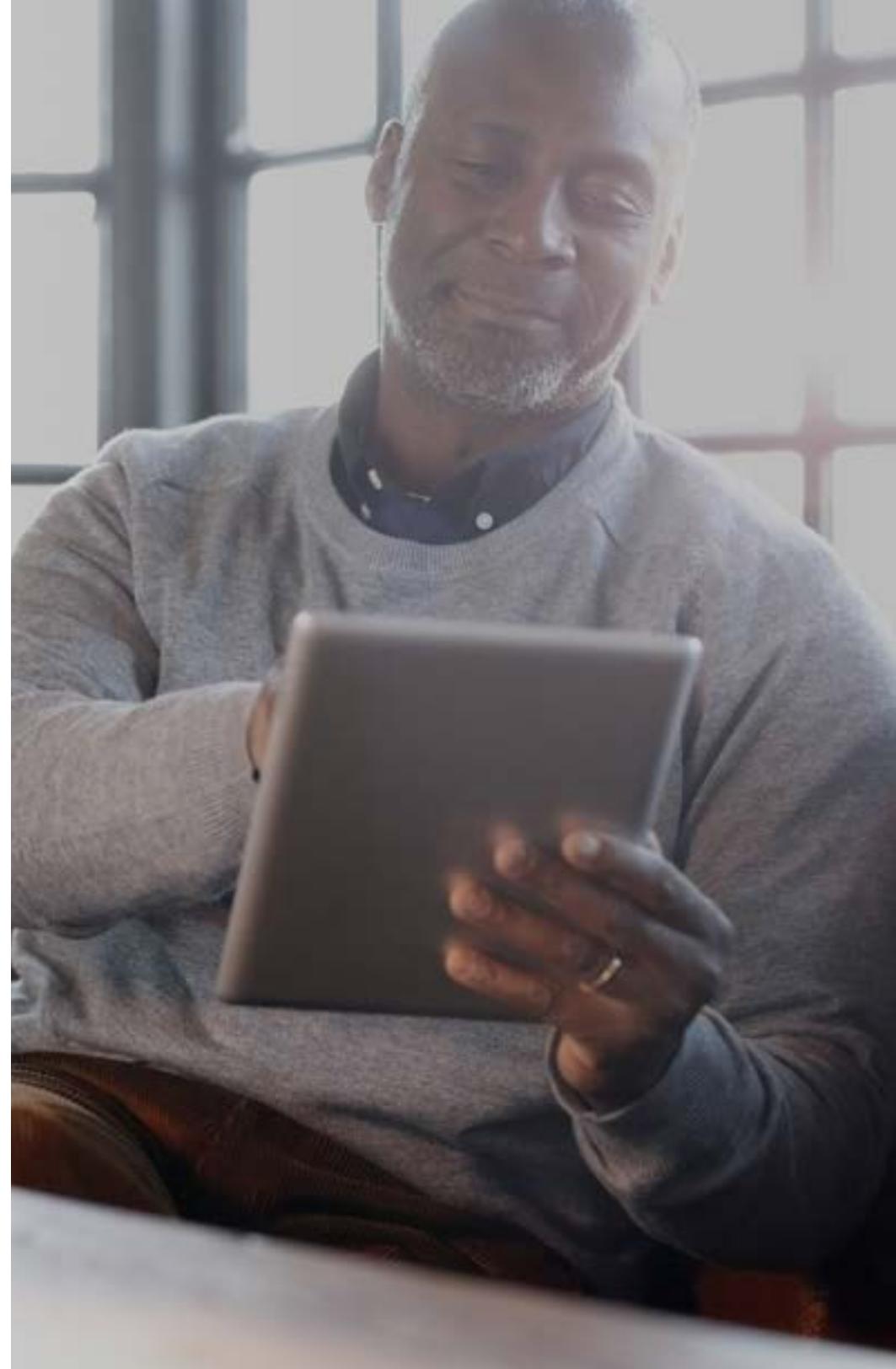
There will be a 10% growth in B2B consultative sellers by 2020 because they understand how to leverage commerce technologies to understand customers' problems.⁷

STEPS TOWARD AN INTEGRATED CONTENT + COMMERCE MODEL

Creating a true, experiential commerce solution is typically an evolution. You start by moving from traditional, offline B2B sales channels to the transactional online store. These experiences are built around the product catalog and are designed to compete primarily on price. Customer experiences are almost entirely transactional and process-driven.

As B2B enterprises mature in delivering enhanced digital experiences, they move beyond purely transactional processes to meet the demands of more experiential buyers. The best way to accomplish this initially is to introduce content that's inspirational, entertaining, and informative into digital touchpoints in the form of "fragments" or content "widgets." This content can include internal brand context, external trending and social content, rich media, and more. The business user has total control and can decide what kind of content works on different pages and site sections. The business user can also introduce flexible templates and design elements that will visually enhance the more structured store layout.

Implementation specifics and phases of adopting content and commerce will vary by organization, but are typically an incremental evolution. The final stage is a fully integrated platform for creating, managing, previewing, and delivering blended content and commerce experiences to buyers on any site, channel or device, in any language. At this point, you have entered the era of true, frictionless commerce.



PHASE 1

IMPLEMENT CONTENT-ENHANCED COMMERCE

- Establish initial CMS and commerce platform infrastructure
- Identify select pages to augment (home, landing, category)
- Develop new site publishing business process
- Train marketing and eCommerce business teams
- Deploy phase 1

CONTENT-ENHANCED EXPERIENCE

PHASE 2

EXTEND CMS CONTENT ENHANCED TO ALL CONTENT PAGES

- Standardize on CMS for all content landing pages and microsites
- Continue adoption on category pages
- Extend content enhanced pages to PDP and select shopping pages
- Develop rapid publishing process for business users
- Deploy phase 2

DEEPER CONTENT-ENHANCED EXPERIENCE

PHASE 3

IMPLEMENT HYBRID EXPERIENCE-DRIVEN COMMERCE

- Drive site navigation using CM system
- Leverage CMS and WCM to deliver an experience suited for the strengths of each
- Rapidly create and deploy new product launches, landing pages, microsites, articles and content-rich pages using CMS
- Deploy phase 3

HYBRID EXPERIENCE

PHASE 4

FULL CONTENT-DRIVEN COMMERCE

- Drive the entire commerce experience using CMS

CONTENT-LED EXPERIENCE

ADOPTED FROM COREMEDIA

This approach provides the flexibility needed to support a variety of requirements and business models. Let's take a look at a few.

COMMERCE-LED WITH AUGMENTATION

Companies with large, complex product catalogs and basic marketing requirements seeking to augment an existing web store.

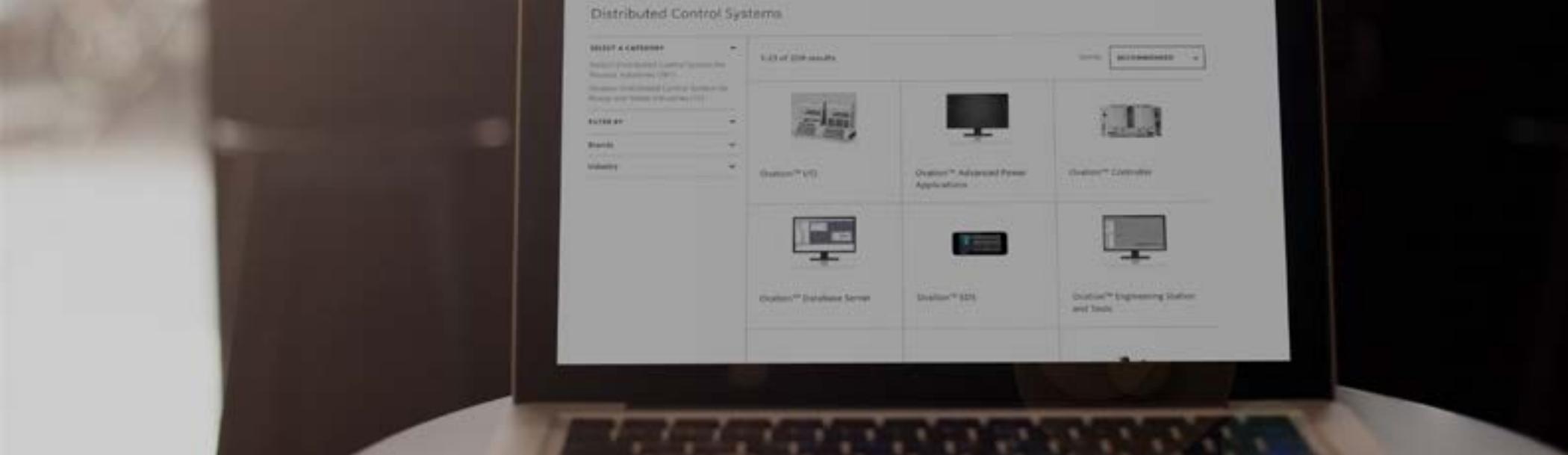
CONTENT-DRIVEN

Companies with a strong brand and a global, multi-touchpoint marketing presence look to blend experiences and dedicated eCommerce functionality (shopping cart, check out, product catalog, etc.) into their marketing sites and apps.

“BLENDED” HYBRID MODEL

This brings the best of the commerce-led and content-driven approaches together by ensuring each system manages and delivers the most appropriate portion of the online experience. A typical approach involves giving the content management system (CMS) responsibility for delivering the experience up to the checkout process, at which point the eCommerce system takes over. You can choose to serve all campaign pages and commerce-enabled brand sites directly out of the CMS, while serving product detail pages from the eCommerce system.

Companies that wish to leverage CMS capabilities and commerce software toolsets typically take a phased approach. The benefit of this approach is that you optimize toolsets for the short term while improving the upgrade path for future releases. Additionally, it allows your organization to move at a pace that's best suited to your business strategy and market.



/ CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION WITH A NEW GLOBAL CMS

A diversified global manufacturing company that provides innovative technology and engineering solutions to customers in the industrial, commercial, and consumer markets underwent a major reorganization. The five global businesses under this brand spanned multiple industries, and over time, each one had developed a distinct online presence, which created a fragmented customer experience.

Recognizing the need to consolidate five businesses into two, our client sought to provide a seamless, omni-channel experience to its customers with a new, modern site design. To support this initiative, our client set out to find the right technology solutions that would bring this omni-channel experience to life.

To effectively integrate content and commerce systems, the client needed a robust and agile CMS that would support hundreds of content authors, allowing it to build a new, branded experience in multiple languages for customers around the world. This new CMS also needed to integrate with its standard eCommerce platform, IBM Watson Commerce, to continue providing a dependable online B2B experience.

Upon educating key stakeholders on a variety of CMS options, the overwhelming choice was CoreMedia. We implemented a rebranded, global, and responsive site that impeccably blended content and commerce. We also provided infrastructure, development, and deployment services as well as training to support the worldwide marketing team to deliver a state-of-the-art B2B experience.

Our expertise in both IBM Commerce and CoreMedia provided the right blend of dynamic customer experience and transactional commerce to help our client drastically improve its organizational efficiencies.

/ CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

PRODUCT PERSONALIZATION FOR B2B CLIENTS

Herman Miller, a major American manufacturer of office furniture, equipment, and home furnishings, needed to reinvent its B2B eCommerce site to serve its larger accounts, distributors, and retail partners more efficiently.

Our team of user experience, commerce, and order management experts designed a strategic platform within IBM Commerce on Cloud with Configure, Price, Quote that can scale to meet the company's growing business and omni-channel objectives.

The new site has an improved customer experience and offers product personalization, allowing clients to design furniture and chairs to meet their unique preferences and styles.



Integrated content and commerce is happening today. Digitally transforming your B2B sales channels is no easy task. To be successful, you need a digital strategy that aligns with your future (or desired) business strategy that:

- / **Places the buyer at the center of all related business processes**
- / **Disrupts the current processes to drive cost and service efficiencies**
- / **Frees sales reps to become account managers and drive more business from existing accounts**

The seamless blending of brand, content, community, and eCommerce results in increased visitor traffic and engagement, greater brand awareness, improved SEO, higher sales, and improved customer loyalty.

We help you make the right technology choices to build a strong foundation that transforms your commerce business. Let us help you create an exceptional B2B commerce experience.

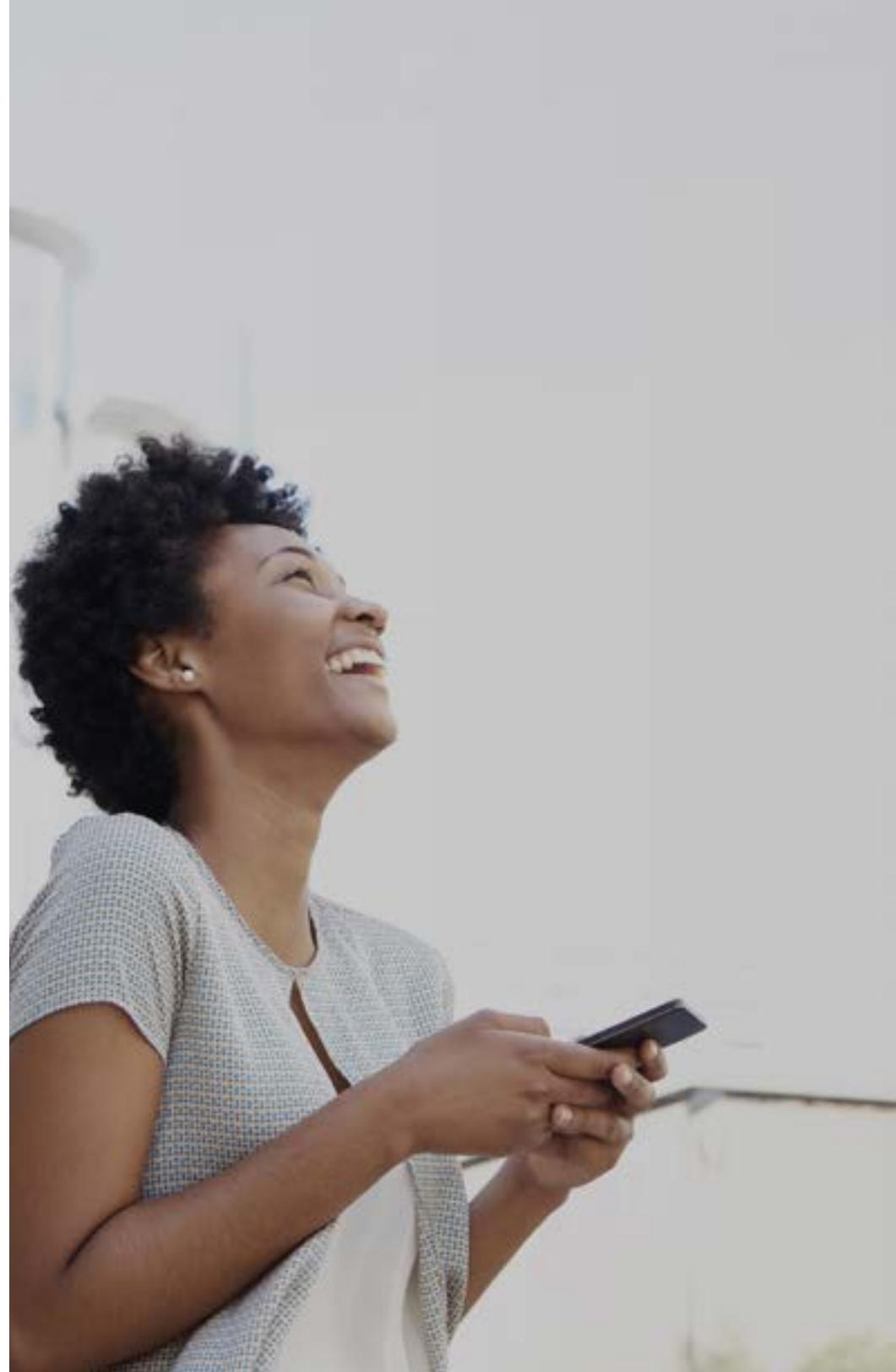
Meet the Contributor

Pat Garcia, Director of Commerce Solution Sales, Perficient Digital

Pat brings more than 25 years of experience building tailored B2B and B2C eCommerce solutions for enterprise customers in various industries. With his unique insights and technical aptitude, he works with existing and potential clients to understand their challenges and business needs to design solutions that will enhance and promote business growth.

SOURCES:

- 1 "B2B eCommerce: A Trillion Dollars for the Taking," Forrester
- 2 "State of Digital Business 2016 to 2020," Forrester
- 3 "The Case for Omni-channel B2B," Forrester
- 4 "B2B Branding: Where is the Love," Marketing Week
- 5 Forrester
- 6 "Three Myths of the 67 Percent Statistic," SiriusDecisions
- 7 "Death of a (B2B) Salesman," Forrester



PERFICIENT DIGITAL + COMMERCE

Perficient Digital blends the strategic imagination of an agency with the deep technical acumen of Perficient's established consultancy background to deliver exceptional customer experiences for the world's biggest brands.

Driven by customer insights, we gather and analyze the data to determine the best approach for your omni-channel strategy. Our customer experience experts craft a journey that tells a story, enabling you to connect with consumers emotionally while providing utility that makes its way into their everyday lives. And with a deep understanding of business needs and extensive technical capabilities, our commerce solutions encompass multiple channels, providing a seamless and efficient experience across your entire enterprise.

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