



## B2B COMMERCE:

# Redefine sales by driving digital throughout the process.

Customer expectations for commerce are changing faster than ever. Technologies and methods of digital engagement that once seemed cutting edge have become commonplace across industries. The result? Today's *next big thing* is tomorrow's *no big deal*.

In this environment, your brand's commerce strategies, channels and capabilities can't just move at the speed of business. They need to move at the speed of *want*.

In a new series of articles Deloitte Digital explores six trends in digital commerce that are helping brands become more indispensable for customers—and more agile and resilient as businesses. B2B commerce is one of those trends.

## B2B commerce

The best B2B companies have always excelled at building and sustaining relationships. Sales reps earned their stripes by showing up—often literally—for their customers. Over time, as digital technologies entered the workplace, sales teams took advantage of websites, emails and other tools—but mostly as mechanisms to augment the relationship. Many B2B sellers viewed digital as a separate channel—and one they believed could cannibalize their representatives' sales numbers.

This old-guard mentality shifted as two forces converged: a generational turnover in the B2B workforce and the halt of face-to-face business interactions during Covid-19 lockdowns.

Millennials are now the largest generation in the US workforce,<sup>1</sup> bringing with them digital-native expectations. They want to check an

order status for themselves without making a phone call or logging into an archaic system. They want to learn about new products and pricing without sitting through a business lunch (especially since they may be working from home rather than from a corporate office). In our recent research 83% of surveyed buyers said they'd shifted their primary way of interacting with sellers to digital.<sup>2</sup> Put simply: B2B buyers expect easy digital touch points<sup>3</sup> with their vendors, whenever and wherever.

### Taking B2B commerce to the next level.

With buyer expectations continuing to rise, the question is no longer "Can digital be used to *support* B2B sales?" It's "How many ways can digital redefine B2B commerce to *drive* new sales and new efficiencies?" The answer will depend on your starting point.

- **Just starting your digital commerce journey?** A key first step is to deploy a commerce platform that makes it easy for buyers to place and check the status of orders. For B2B organizations that are undertaking broader digital transformation, it makes good sense to deploy a commerce platform in tandem with enterprise resource planning (ERP) modernization. Your pilot phase of a commerce rollout will likely include functionality for user registration, product information, cart, checkout and order management.

- **Have a basic commerce platform in place?** Now's the time to extend its capabilities by leveraging new digital capabilities or touch points that mean something to your customers. By integrating multichannel digital call centers with sales, for instance, customers can place orders directly

with call center staff, which helps convert mere inquiries into sales and also streamlines order processing. Another way B2B brands are extending their digital foundation is by stepping up personalization. This includes adding AI-fueled features that automatically sort and re-order products on the home page according to customers' unique interests, based on their usage data—or delivering highly targeted pop-up recommendations when they add products to their cart. These features help customers quickly find what they need and create opportunities for brands to upsell.

• **Are your commerce capabilities more advanced?** Look at ways to optimize the end-to-end customer journey to make it more relevant and cohesive. To do this well—and across multiple digital channels—be sure you're using the wealth of customer data available to you. Unlike B2C, there are multiple decision-makers and influencers within each B2B account, each bringing their own expectations and requirements. Your data tells you what those needs are, so be sure you're orchestrating personalized marketing campaigns that truly speak to each decision-maker. A procurement agent, for example, may need to research detailed specifications and assess supplier

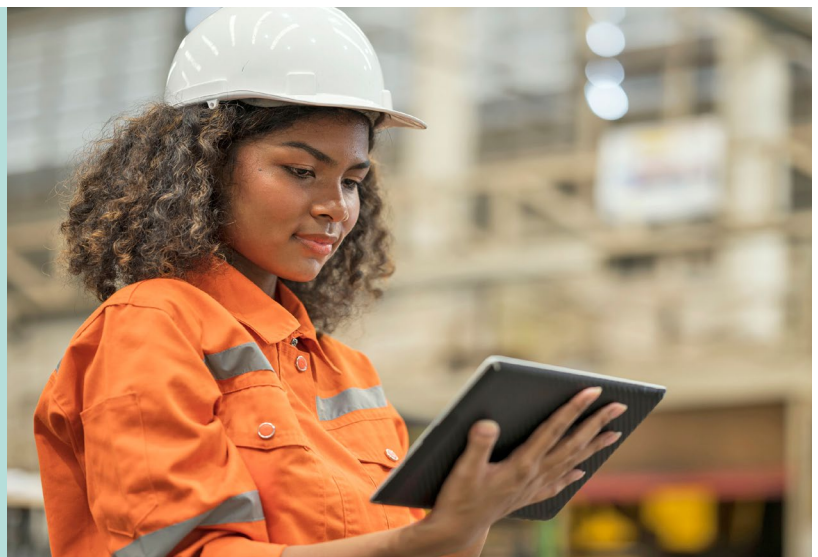
performance for contracts, whereas an administrator may be primarily interested in understanding product and freight costs.

### Redefine B2B sales.

B2B buyers have embraced digital commerce, and it's clear they aren't going back to fax machines and two-hour sales lunches. Agile B2B organizations and their sales teams are embracing this change. In doing so, they've discovered that digital commerce doesn't compete with or merely support other sales efforts—it redefines them, fueling stronger revenues and relationships while also creating new efficiencies.

## Tap the momentum in B2B commerce.

With annual growth for the next five years forecast at nearly 11%, digital commerce is expected to account for nearly one-quarter of all B2B sales in the United States.<sup>4</sup>



## Sources

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