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# Grow up

eStar CEO **Andrew Buxton** discusses why eCommerce scalability is key to growth.

**EVERY RETAILER IS** unique in its own way, but as you grow so should the ability to scale your operations. This includes your online endeavours.

Your business strategy may mean you choose to be a multi-channel retailer, maybe even grow globally, but you can't let your eCommerce platform hold you back. Retailers need a scalable platform that enables them to expand and grow; choosing the wrong eCommerce platform and partner can heavily influence both in-store and online sales.

Research from Deloitte Consulting shows that more than 50% of in-store sales are influenced by the digital store and this share is projected to grow to nearly two-thirds of all sales at the physical store. The Digital Flagship store is the most visited store in a retailer's network and the one store with the biggest impact on brand, sales, and success.

Scalability goes beyond being able to seamlessly and reliably perform to handle your current peaks and seasonal require-

ments. It is the ability to support your business requirements as you scale and add complexity, grow your existing markets, establish new brands, and expand.

## What you need in an eCommerce provider:

A partner who understands your business, your customers and who can build the right customer journeys.

They must act as a partner to continually optimise your results – online traffic, online conversions, online sales. Keeping up with mobile web design standards and providing advanced SEO solutions.

Your eCommerce solution must be able to natively support all your SEO requirements to leverage free traffic into your website in order to maximise discoverability of your brand digitally. It must natively support device-responsive and device-adaptive designs to ensure the optimal brand experience and customer journey across all devices. Beyond a mobile first approach, the eCommerce solution must support omnichannel retail: a seamless customer experience, and a 360-degree customer view, no matter the sales channel.

A successful digital store is one that has all elements working correctly from the ground up, and one which focuses on continual optimisation.

eCommerce success is not a set and forget proposition. An example of this is click & collect.

The main reason customers use click & collect is because it is an easy collection point. Although customers are wanting to click & collect, Australian retailers are still lagging behind. The May 2017 ComBank 'Retail Insights Report' found click & collect is being offered by only 42% of retailers. Click & collect can also be a massive upsell opportunity and engagement tool for store teams; we have seen retailers upsell on over 25% of orders collected in-store.

You also need extra support services to enable scale, such as digital consulting / design and ongoing support.

Creating amazing online experiences is not a one-off process but includes: data mining, insight gathering and hypothesis creation. Over time, with the right foundation in place, data-driven decision-making becomes the norm. Many of the decisions require development and technology enhancements. The right scalable technology is the enabler of everything.

## The most critical elements in delivering success are:

Integrate with other systems and ownership of the platform. Typically, online sales are growing year on year; if sales on your site follow this trend, you'll need to integrate other systems at some point in the future. A provider that has the team available and can build the integrations and streamline the complexity is essential.

Innovation is constant. The provider must be flexible, have solutions that are configurable and have speed to market. They must have deep experience in retail, digital, and eCommerce technology, and have a partnership approach whereby you work together.

One of the most important points to live by in eCommerce is to focus on the customer first, by making the customer journey simpler and more effective in-store and online. Virtually every customer journey now involves a digital element so retailers must focus on this when thinking about what's next in scaling their retail operations. ■

