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eStar solutions consultant **Emma Rapadas** offers tips for selecting a solution.

Decisions, *decisions*



RETAILERS ARE INCREASINGLY aware of the growing proportion of revenue contributed by their digital store. However, many often miss the influence the digital store has on in-store sales. Your eCommerce platform is the foundation upon which you build your digital presence, it is the digital representation of your brand. The biggest impact on your customers – for awareness, consideration and buying – is your digital store.

With digital touchpoints providing more and more influence in the customer's buying journey - 40% of all in-store visits were influenced by digital touchpoints - investing in a (new) eCommerce solution is truly a strategic business decision, and should not only be about the technology that best addresses your requirements today, but one that supports your organisation's continuous growth into the future.

Tip #1: Choose a solution that will best support your digital and business Strategy

Discovery is the first step in the customer's purchase journey. 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 omni-channel retail: a seam-

less customer experience, and a 360-degree customer view, no matter the sales channel. Customers must be able to buy online and pick up in-store, use mobile in-store to research or make a purchase, or buy in-store and initiate a returns process online.

Tip #2: Choose a platform that will scale with your business.

Scalability goes beyond being able to seamlessly and reliably perform to handle your current peaks and seasonal requirements. It is the ability to support your eCommerce requirements as you grow and add complexity; it is the ability to support your requirements as you grow your existing markets, establish new brands, and expand into international markets.

Tip #3: Choose a platform that will help improve your business agility

84% of business leaders say that disparate legacy systems impact the speed of development of new digital experiences, and 25% find it difficult or very difficult for third-party partners or service providers to integrate with their existing systems. Many of these legacy systems are business-critical and cannot be replaced overnight, in fact most organisations are not looking to replace them. Your eCommerce platform must be flexible and adaptable enough to accommodate your business requirements. An open architecture, with a solution roadmap tailored to market requirements, ensures integrations and platform extensions are achievable with the

least complexity. A solution roadmap that is tailored to the market's requirements ensures you need not reinvent the wheel.

Tip #4: Choose a solution that simplifies your operations

eCommerce platforms should be an out-of-the-box, end-to-end solution that provides the right functionality to reduce complexity. In integrations (do you really need two separate modules for order management and fulfilment, and 10 feature extensions?); in daily operations (do your eCommerce teams really need to login to more than one application each day to perform their tasks?); and in maintenance (do your eCommerce and IT teams really need to spend hours upon hours on testing when hotfixes and security patches are applied to your eCommerce solution?).

Bonus Tip: Choose a partner who will work with you to achieve success

The eCommerce solution is but a tool to achieving your business goals. The online retail game has moved beyond mere platform feature-and-function completeness to focus on customer journeys, and the ability of the business to successfully meet customer expectations – especially in the ease, accuracy, and timeliness of order fulfilment. Beyond security, reliability, scalability, and flexibility, you need a partner that lives and breathes retail and eCommerce. You need a partner that understands your business, and will work with you to achieve your goals. ■