



Ecommerce Migration

**Planning, Platform Selection, and
Maximizing ROI**

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As an ecommerce leader, you juggle a lot of different responsibilities: driving growth, maintaining platform stability, managing your team, and maximizing program performance. The last thing you need is an ecommerce platform that slows you down or actively causes barriers to success.

If you are experiencing platform-induced headaches, then replatforming may be the best bet for turning performance around. Before you do, you'll need to take the right steps to avoid common migration pitfalls and ensure that your eyes are wide open about the process, costs, and requirements of replatforming.

Despite the challenges associated with ecommerce migration, the benefits are real, and they often outweigh the costs. Lower total cost of ownership, increased conversion, greater agility and speed to market, ongoing innovation, and security and reliability at scale are all prizes at the end of the tunnel.

This guide gives you everything you need to navigate the process, including checklists, templates, and walkthroughs to help ensure a smooth migration process.

STEP 1:

Get buy-in from key stakeholders

Ecommerce migration requires input and assistance from a wide cross section of disciplines both inside and outside of your organization.

Stakeholders vary by business, but in general, your list should include representatives from:

- **Finance**, who will offer key inputs around payments, reporting, and integrations requirements.
- **IT**, who will offer key inputs around ecosystem integration, technology requirements, and technical processes like DNS migration and security for launch.
- **Marketing**, who will offer key inputs around performance reporting and tracking, SEO considerations, and general brand requirements.
- **Creative**, who will offer key inputs around design considerations, user experience requirements and front-end functionality.
- **Merchandising**, who will offer key inputs around inventory management, stock and sales reportings, and product uploads.
- **Operations and logistics**, who will offer key inputs around integrations and customer experience across channels

Some of these stakeholders may need to be included as permanent members of your migration team, while others can be brought in at key milestones to provide support and insights.

- In all cases, these stakeholders should be consulted when you're:
- Identifying pain points with your current ecommerce platform
- Building the business case for a new ecommerce platform
- Compiling your list of requirements for that new platform
- Evaluating platform options with third party vendors
- Making a final decision about an ecommerce platform
- Planning the migration project, process, and timeline

You should also be prepared to answer the following questions, as they often come up during the buy-in stage.

- What can't you do with your current platform?
- How much does it cost to maintain your current solution?
- What activities currently cost you the most time?
- What could be automated to save time and resources?
- What are the ongoing issues with the existing platform that cause lost revenue and/or resource wastage?
- What is the estimated extent of your monthly resource wastage because of the issues listed above?
- How much is it likely to cost in the future—both from wastage and lost opportunity—if there's no intervention?
- How are the above issues causing barriers to innovation, business growth, and positive customer experience?
- How can a different ecommerce platform alleviate all of the above?

When securing buy-in, be sure to draw objective inputs from as many key stakeholders as possible. This will help to ensure that you can quantifiably illustrate why a new ecommerce platform is necessary, and what the upside will be to the business.

STEP 2:

Build your requirements and evaluation criteria

Once you've secured buy-in for an ecommerce replatforming project, the next step is to create a list of requirements that you'll need from a new solutions provider and partner. You'll also want to create standardized evaluation criteria for grading potential solutions partners. This is a very detailed process, so it helps to think about your requirements as two sides to the same coin—existing issues you need to fix, and new functionality you'd like to add.

Identify where your existing issues lie

To start, deconstruct where, specifically, the issues lie within your current platform. By this stage, you should know that issues exist—now you need to know why they exist, and what will solve them.

To do that, start with a list of high level questions about your platform issues, and then dig into the “why” behind those issues.

For example:

- Has your platform security failed at critical moments? Why?
- How often do you hear or say “we can't do that?” Why?
- Are DIY patches and workarounds common? Why?
- Does your team spend too much time and energy maintaining your site? Why?
- Do you have the freedom to launch new products, projects, and experiments? If not, why?
- Are new features and apps regularly delayed due to in-house, agency, or platform constraints? If yes, why?
- Is your help desk, social media, or email communication full of questions about the platform or complaints about functionality? Why?

By going through this activity, you can start to create a targeted list of reasons why your current platform falls short, which can help inform the specific requirements your team will need from a new platform.

Reflect on what new functionality will help you achieve your goals

Fixing issues is critical, but also table stakes. After identifying where your existing issues lie, it's time to compile what additional functionality would make it easier for you to achieve your goals.

Think about your organization's goals and what functionality your ecommerce platform needs to have in order for you to reach those goals.

- Some examples of goals to focus on include:
 - Increasing traffic and checkout volume
 - Improving the store's design and UX
 - Adding new sales channels
- Entering new markets or expanding into existing ones
- Reducing operating costs
- Creating omnichannel shopping experiences
- Launching new brands or stores

Thinking about your goals will ensure that you don't grow out of your new ecommerce platform too quickly as your company executes its strategic vision.

Fill out an RFP template to drive discovery with solutions providers

Once you've collected a list of all your internal requirements for a new ecommerce platform, the final step is to apply that to a structured request for proposal (RFP) template. With it, you can confidently approach a range of platform providers with a comprehensive list of requirements and questions.

It should include structured questions around the following macro categories related to core functionality on the new platforms:

- Omnichannel
- Headless
- Integrations
- Content management
- Merchandising, promotions and products
- Cart, checkout and tax
- Order management
- Shipping and fulfillment
- Analytics and reporting
- Service support and upgrade
- Privacy and security
- Implementation
- Platform pricing
- Payments

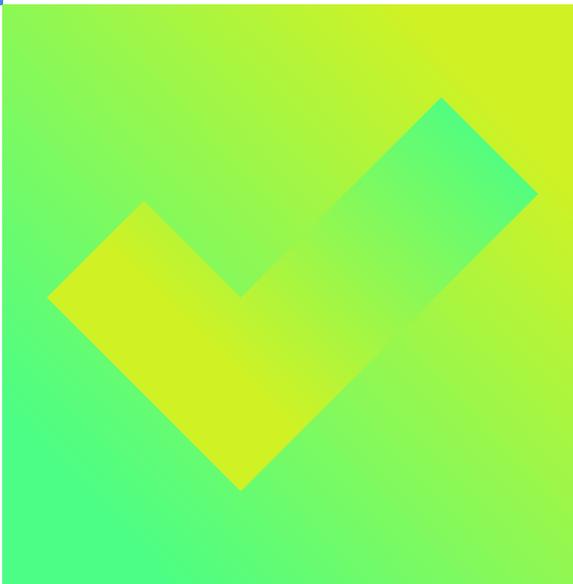
You should also list your requirements associated with migration support and ongoing success management.

- What role does the platform provider need to play during migration?
- What level of ongoing support and success management do you need?
- What quantity of data do you need to migrate over?
- Do you need the platform provider to manage data migration?
- Do you have third party agencies or specialists that you're consulting as well?
- What are the most complex areas of the migration project?
- What, specifically, are you looking to improve from your existing platform?

Together, this list of RFP questions will give you both a clear inventory of must-have and nice-to-have features, along with context about your unique migration project.

Need help getting started?

[Download our free RFP template to build your requirements list.](#)



STEP 3:

Evaluate your platform options

Armed with your completed RFP template, the next step in the process is to begin evaluating your platform options. This goes beyond weighing one solutions provider over another. Instead, you'll need to understand the nuances between different ecommerce architectures, and evaluate which one is the best solution for your brand.

Generally, there are three types of ecommerce architectures to consider:

- **On-premise.** These are built with the company's own resources, and hosted in an internal storage facility. On-staff or third-party development and engineering teams conduct all development and ongoing maintenance, meaning the company is responsible for the technical and security infrastructure.
- **Custom SaaS.** These are subscription-based solutions, built and maintained by a third-party provider. As a customer, you essentially rent the software from the service provider, without the need to develop your own infrastructure. Shopify Plus is an example of a SaaS ecommerce platform.
- **Open Source.** These are ecommerce platforms that provide users with full access to its original source code. This allows administrators to modify and customize the ecommerce platform to meet their needs, and offers control over the online store's design and functionality. Open source software is often free to download, but costs to actually set up and run a functioning store can pile up substantially.

SaaS-based solutions like Shopify Plus are the most popular choice for growing and established brands. Shopify, in particular, helps to reduce technical, operational, and maintenance complexity by shouldering that burden for our merchants. This ensures that businesses can focus their resources on brand development and creating unique end-to-end customer experiences, rather than expending time and money on laying the plumbing for a steady and scalable commerce platform.

Shopify Plus vs. other platforms (cheatsheet)

Benefits of Shopify Plus

- Low cost: Licensing starts at \$2,000 per month
- Fast time to market: Migration takes 3 to 4 months
- Better long term value. Lower total cost of ownership than other ecommerce platforms
- Easy maintenance. No full-time technical staff required to maintain servers or security
- Extended support. Access to ongoing support and management
- Unparalleled scale and stability. Dedicated infrastructure that scales with your site across the globe
- Safety and security. Fully PCI DSS compliant out of the box
- Extendable and customizable. Access to extensive integrations, third-party apps and a dedicated agency ecosystem
- Continuous improvement. Automatic software and security updates
- Sell beyond the website. Headless and omnichannel customer experiences
- Flex where you need to. The stability of an ecommerce platform, with the ability to flex and expand where needed
- Unmatched pace of innovation. Regular new feature launches to drive growth at scale

Shopify Plus vs. other platforms (cheatsheet)

On-premise Pros

- Control over and direct access to website code and hardware
- Control over platform and network security
- The ability to make customized and granular optimizations to the site

On-premise Cons

- High cost of ownership ([averaging \\$200,000 per year](#) for mid-market retailers)
- Required physical space to house hardware, opening companies to cascading points of failure beyond just software
- Migration timelines can run from 12 to 18 months, depending on complexity
- Ongoing cumulative costs associated with infrastructure upkeep, employee salaries, and third-party assistance
- Need to create all website components, functionality, and template from scratch
- Usually requires a minimum of 3 months to get software up and operational
- Required on-staff or contracted teams dedicated to development and maintenance
- All extended functionality needs to be built by hand
- All operations and stability rest on the team's shoulders
- Difficulty pivoting and scaling operations to account for traffic spikes and new market opportunities

Shopify Plus vs. other platforms (cheatsheet)

Open Source Pros

- The underlying software is free to download
- Allow for customization, apps, and extensions to tailor functionality to the business' needs
- Provide almost limitless freedom in terms of design, functionality and layout for the store

Open Source Cons

- Scaling to a high-performing online store requires the addition of apps, extensions, hosting, and web development, all of which can add substantial costs
- Customization require significant technical knowledge in-house (or via a third party) to implement and maintain
- Web developers are required to perform any sort of design customization
- All security requirements must be handled by the business, including patches and software updates, PCI compliance, site security, and uptime

Custom SaaS Pros

- Faster store launches and migrations
- Security and scalability
- Ongoing customer support
- Ease of use
- Regular automatic updates to core functionality and infrastructure

Custom SaaS Cons

- Potential integration limitations with mission critical applications
- Potential limitations with app installations, limiting functionality expansion
- Variance is the user experience and stability across SaaS providers
- Monolith platform lockin with some platforms that hinders expansion and customization
- Potential limitations when building omnichannel and headless customer experiences

STEP 4

Assess your TCO and ROI

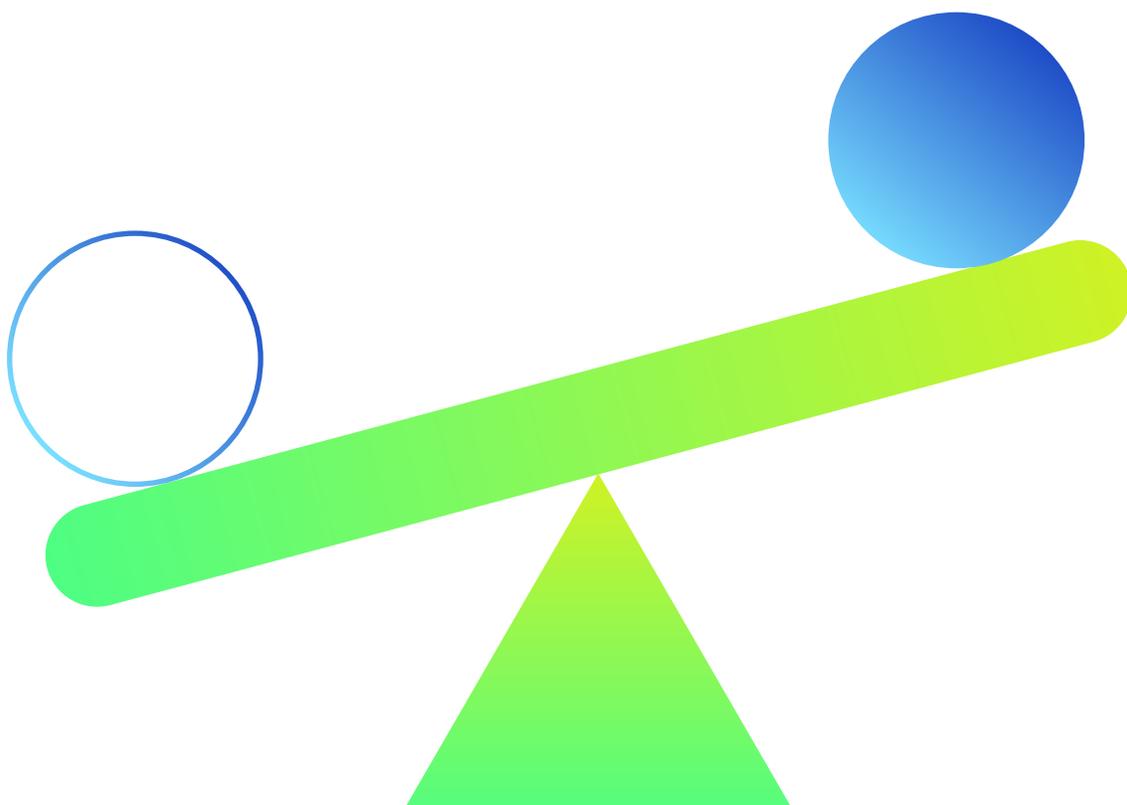
Once you've settled on the ideal ecommerce platform type for your brand, the next step is to weigh the total cost of ownership (TCO) and return on investment (ROI) for the solutions providers you're considering. Calculating TCO between different platforms is always tricky, as virtually all providers have different cost models and areas that require differing levels of investment.

Still, it's incredibly important to understand the upfront costs of migration, platform fees, maintenance, and ongoing cost requirements. Performing a TCO assessment can help provide clarity.

Generally, a TCO assessment includes three key cost centers:

- **Initial costs**
- **Ongoing costs**
- **Hidden costs**

Let's dig into each now.



Initial costs costs

A replatforming project usually requires a significant pool of upfront resources, including internal, agency, or specialist personnel.

Typically, this includes:

- Designer(s)
- Developers(s) with varying skills requirements
- Project manager or owner from each external team
- Overarching project lead, project manager(s), product owner(s), and/or program manager(s)
- Execution resources (usually internal) focused on areas like configuration and different levels of data importing
- Internal or external testing resources (or combined)
- SEO input (usually external)
- Analytics input (usually external)
- Solutions input (usually external but not always needed) to govern key technical areas and collaborate around approach to key aspects
- Business analyst (very rarely needed beyond agency or internal resource, but very useful)

This list, of course, will vary depending on the scope and complexity of your migration project.

In addition to these personnel resources, initial costs might also include:

- Front-end development
- Data migration
- Theme design and building
- Analytics setup
- Integrations setup

Each of the above resources and project requirements, of course, comes with their own costs. Some can be covered with internal staffing at the company, while others will require outsourcing to an agency or individual specialists. In all cases, it's important to account for personnel and project costs at the start of the migration planning process.

Ongoing costs

Each ecommerce platform you select will come with its own assortment of ongoing costs, which can vary significantly depending on the platform.

Typically, this includes:

- Software license fees
- Multi-brand licensing fees
- Consulting and management needs
- Integrations licensing
- Analytics licensing

You should also consider the timeline required to complete the migration in your TCO assessment, as this will have an impact on upfront cost and delayed revenue from the new platform. Shopify Plus, for example, takes three to four months on average to replatform, while others can take between 12 and 18 months.

Hidden costs

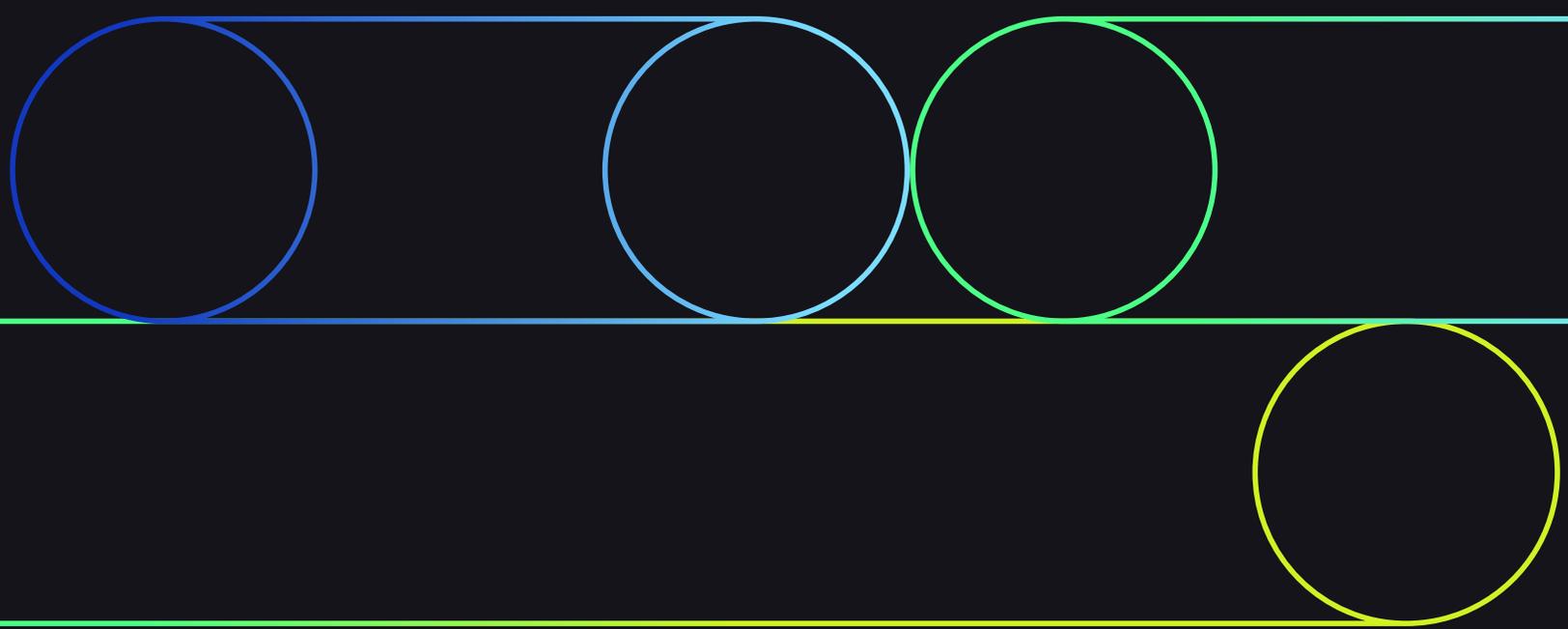
Once migration is completed, there are a range of—sometimes—hidden costs associated with maintaining an ecommerce website. These costs vary significantly depending on the platform that you chose.

Typically, hidden costs can include:

- Annual ecommerce platform licensing costs
- Additional and/or ongoing app licenses
- Maintenance and operational costs
- Support costs
- Backend enhancements
- Front end customizations
- Team operations
- Payment fees (often a percentage of sales)
- Infrastructure fees like hosting, domain, security, and version updates

A note about Shopify Plus

Shopify Plus removes entire cost structures from the lists above. Software for image hosting, web servers, and security: built in. Retainer-based consulting fees, internal architects, and developers: not needed. Hosting and infrastructure, security patches and upgrades, and performance and load testing: all included in the monthly fees, which are lower than the competition. And because Shopify Plus is a true software-as-a-service (SaaS) platform, you'll always be up to date with the latest features. There's zero maintenance. You get complete customization, from storefront to back office. You'll have the features you need, and nothing you don't. And best of all: Your ecommerce platform won't ever hold your online business back.



Additional TCO considerations

Of course, calculating the total cost (and benefit) of switching to a new ecommerce platform doesn't just involve tallying up expenses. There also needs to be a comparison between what you are currently spending, what you would spend and, most importantly, what the revenue upside would be from your new platform.

Here are some additional TCO considerations to help:

- Cost comparisons over three years—new vs. existing tech stack
- Time savings and monetary saving for the wider business
- Any potential security or compliance benefits (i.e. avoiding fines)
- Any of forms of de-risking the business
- Any net benefits like better integration, customer experience improvements, internationalization, conversion and sales improvements, and so on

In some cases, the surface level TCO of a new platform may be higher than your existing tech stack. But, when you tally up the drag that your existing platform places on your business, and the potential upside of a new platform, you may find that the investment is a no-brainer.

On the other hand, some ecommerce providers may be willing to provide extreme price reductions and bring down their total cost of ownership in an attempt to win new business. While this may look appealing on the surface, it often comes at the expense of performance. In many cases, providers that are willing to charge less to win new business are actually selling low-value, high margin products that require price compromises to remain competitive. Naturally, this isn't an ideal fit for companies looking for a scalable, stable, and extendable ecommerce platform that can grow with their business.

Understanding the ROI impact of a new platform can be complicated, owing to the variety of variables at play. To help, here is a list of key data inputs to help guide your thinking about ROI and the potential impact of a new platform.

Conversion inputs

- Monthly average sessions
- % of mobile sessions
- % of desktop sessions
- Conversion rate (mobile)
- Conversion rate (desktop)
- % increase in conversion rate from the new platform (mobile)
- % increase in conversion rate from the new platform (desktop)
- Gross margin

Average order value inputs

- # of current customers
- % of repeat customers
- Annual order value
- Average order value
- % increase in average order value probable from a new platform

Business user productivity inputs

- # of business users
- Average salary
- % of time spent on manual work
- % reduction in manual work from a new platform

IT productivity inputs

- # of IT users
- Average salary
- % of time on manual work
- % reduction in manual work from a new platform

Investment inputs

- Annual GMV
- Annual GMV growth rate
- Platform fees
- One-time implementation fee
- Estimated implementation timeline
- Estimated ongoing partner costs
- Weighted average cost of capital (WACC)

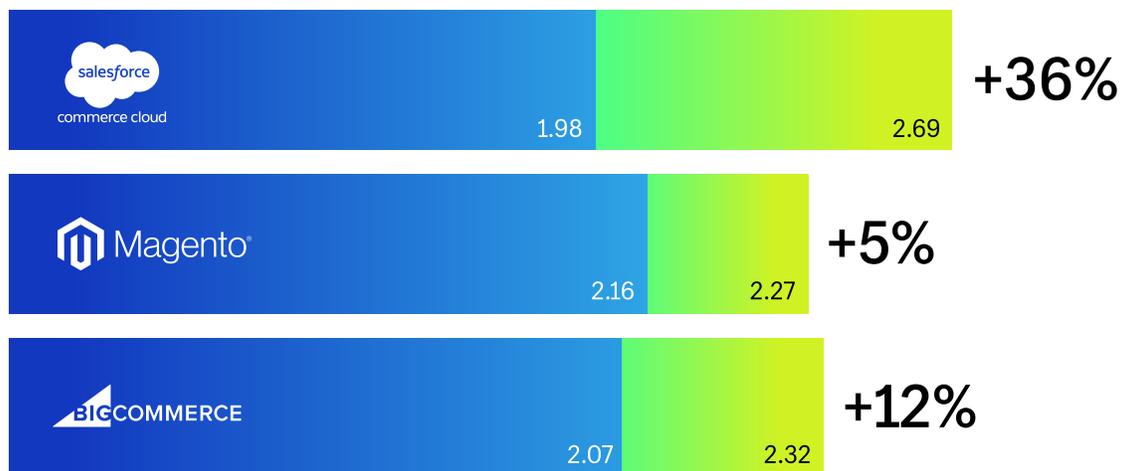
Accounting for each of the data inputs above in your ROI calculation will help you to form an objective picture of potential uptick (or downside) from a new ecommerce platform. Combined with TCO, this calculation will create a complete picture of potential investment versus potential impact.

Need help determining the potential TCO and ROI of a migration to Shopify Plus?

[Contact us to learn more about potential savings.](#)

A note about Shopify Checkout

Shopify Plus boasts the highest converting checkout on the internet, outpacing the competition by up to 36% and by an average of 15%. This is thanks to a combination of Shopify's massive identity network, our unmatched scale, consumer trust, and our velocity of innovation.



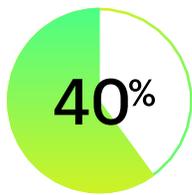
Assess your TCO and ROI

Cumulatively, conversion rate boosts of this magnitude can have a significant impact on your company's annual revenue. Let's say your site brings in 125,000 visitors per month, your average order value is \$100, and your conversion rate is 0.92%. Increasing your conversion rate by a mere 0.5% would add an extra \$62,500 in revenue every month, for \$690,000 per year. Scale this up—both in terms of revenue and conversion rate—and you see a major positive impact on your GMV.

Brands that have lowered their TCO with Shopify Plus

MZ Wallace

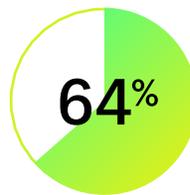
Moving to Shopify Plus freed up time and resources for MZ Wallace to move fast and proactively focus on attracting, converting, and retaining customers, rather than navigating developmental hurdles and budget constraints. As a result, they have seen a 40% lift on overall ecommerce conversion rates and a 22% increase in revenue, all while reducing their total cost of ownership by 64%.



▲ lift in overall ecommerce conversion rates



▲ increase in revenue



▼ reduction in total cost of ownership

[→ Read more](#)

Staples

After Staples replatformed with Shopify Plus, for example, their commerce costs dropped by half. Staples also found the increased flexibility helped them grow: The company set all-time sales records during Black Friday and Cyber Monday, and during COVID-19, it successfully handled “Black Friday-like” sales volumes for 30 days straight, with no performance issues.

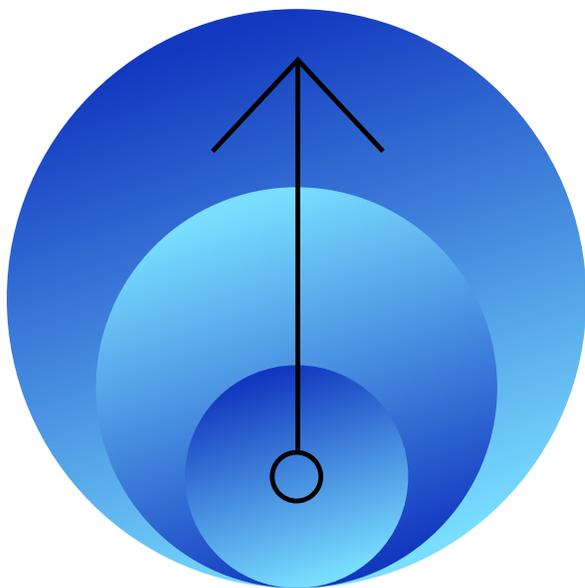


During COVID-19, it successfully handled “Black Friday-like” sales volumes of 30 days straight, with no performance issues.

[→ Read more](#)

Bombas

Similarly, sock maker Bombas saved \$108,000 in platform costs with Shopify Plus. Even with data migration and replatforming costs, Bombas saw positive investment return almost immediately. Since migrating, growth has surged. The result is more innovative offerings for their customers, \$17.2 million in sales its first full year after replatforming, and 300% year-over-year growth.



300%
year-over-year
growth

[→ Read more](#)

STEP 5

Build the case for Shopify Plus

If you've gone through the platform evaluation and TCO assessment process and landed on Shopify Plus as your provider of choice, then the final step is to build a business case to get a CAPEX spend signed off.

To help with this process, here are some key selling points associated with Shopify Plus.

Faster time to launch

Not long ago, in the era of on-premise ecommerce platforms, it often took a year to get a site up and running, accompanied by staggering costs. Even with newer, more cost-effective solutions, you might still be looking at six months (or more) to get online.

Shopify's Plus accelerated onboarding gets you up and running in half the time (or less). It's a high-value solution that allows for rapid integration with the rest of your tech stack and tools.

"We can do a full Shopify migration, for a \$100 million+ brand, in 8 weeks flat," says Paul Rogers, ecommerce consultant and co-founder at [Vervaunt](#).



Heinz, established in 1869, launched its first ever DTC initiative in seven days. And Lindt, a Swiss chocolate company since 1845, launched in just five. A lot goes into streamlining the migration process. When evaluating your options, look for a platform that offers ease of use, robust APIs, and the flexibility to customize your site from day one.

Robust network of apps and partners

Working with a robust community of platform partners and dedicated support agencies can help accelerate your success and extend your capabilities. It also helps brands innovate within their budgets and remain agile around new features.

The [Shopify App Store](#), [Plus Partner Program](#), and the [Global ERP Program](#) are also key differentiators from the competition, giving access to a vast network of extendable apps, partners, and support networks. With so many feature-rich and constantly improving technology partners, Shopify Plus makes it far quicker and easier to achieve new functionality. The apps and technology partners are also typically open for further customisation (via APIs and integrations with other third parties). And the SaaS infrastructure also means they're always improving.

Additionally, Shopify Plus customers gain access to the [Plus Partner Program](#), the [Global ERP Program](#).

This approach allows brands to achieve a high percentage of their requirements at a low monthly cost, rather than investing time and budget into building something bespoke that then won't be progressive.

Reduced need for development

Technology is a means for retailers to achieve their commerce goals—they shouldn't need to become platform and product companies to succeed. Shopify is the partner for enterprise retailers looking to establish profitable business models. We are firmly committed to building more functionality into the out-of-the-box platform configuration, reducing the need for development beyond the front-end and particularly complex functionalities.

Rather than implementing a piecemeal approach to solve for individual business functionalities, Shopify takes a broader view of the commerce journey. Retailers have access to all the services and integrations needed from the first customer touchpoint all the way to post-purchase—but they don't need to take them all at once. Or ever.

Areas such as payments, adding additional currencies, and checkout options are managed via admin configuration, saving a lot of money and time and allowing teams to be more agile with testing things like international features. Retailers can take this functionality out of the box, extend them, or customize them. The choice is theirs.

Access to APIs and documentation

The reduced need for back-end developed and technical inputs, restricted access to the platform via APIs, and unrivaled documentation in Shopify Plus makes new feature development far more efficient in terms of time and cost. This results in a cleaner experience for Shopify Plus merchants, and results in fewer bugs and reduced scope for issues.

Greater scalability

Scalability and stability are two critical components of any ecommerce platform, especially for brands poised for rapid growth or international expansion. Shopify Plus is proven to scale in a number of different ways, such as with short-term and long-term increases in demand, concurrent users, and transactions. This scalability is also evident as more complexity is introduced into the business and as the remit of the business is broadened (e.g. new markets or channels). Other platforms can also scale, but with a lot more inputs and investment, as well as internal capacity.

Shopify's scalability speaks for itself:

\$314^{B+}

total sales so far from
Shopify businesses

1.0^{M+}

SKUs from our
biggest customers

\$2.0^{B+}

in annual online revenue made
by our largest brands

10,978

peak checkouts per
second across Shopify

175

countries and 21
languages to sell in

300^M

global shoppers in
Shopify stores

Build the case for Shopify Plus

Reduced operational costs

The overall operational expenses (OPEX) costs are generally much lower than the closest competitors on the market, thanks to the bundling of core functionality and infrastructure under a SaaS licensing model. The percentage of development budget focused on new features and areas designed to drive incremental revenue is much higher, with very low spend on maintenance and support elements.

Continuous platform improvement

Shopify Plus is continuously launching new features and functionalities to incrementally improve the scale, stability, performance, and customer experience of the platform for merchants. With an army of 4500+ engineers and \$1.3 billion in dedicated R&D spend in 2022, the speed at which new, high-quality features can be introduced to the platform is unmatched.

In 2023, Shopify rolled out several new features and functionalities for Plus exclusively, including:

- B2B
- Marketplace Pro
- Drag and drop checkout editor
- Shop Cash campaigns
- Granular store permissions
- Event webhooks
- ShopifyQL Notebooks

[Check out Shopify Editions](#) for a full list of updates across the platform.

Ease of use

Lastly, Shopify Plus' ease of use is a frequently cited strength compared to the closest competitors. Merchants regularly comment on the intuitiveness of the admin UI, which makes day-to-day usage more efficient for internal teams. The Shopify team is constantly testing improvements to the usability and positioning of features and functionality to make the UI incrementally better over time.

Still have questions about migrating to a new ecommerce platform? Talk to a Shopify Plus migration expert about your business requirements.

Let's Talk