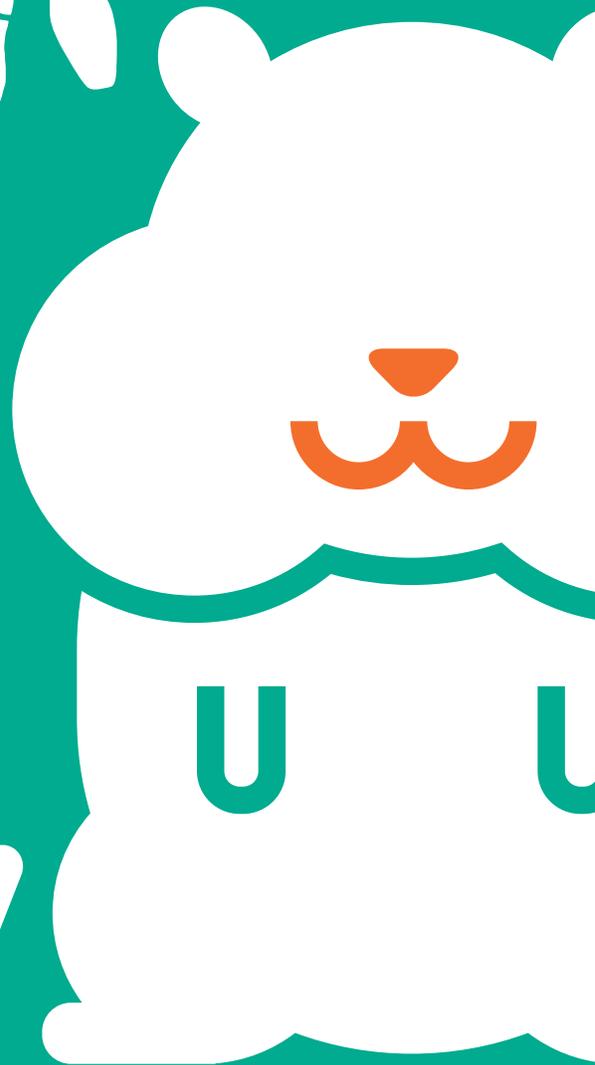# ShopVisible™
ecommerce platform

GETTING STARTED GUIDE FOR OMNICHANNEL ECOMMERCE REPLATFORMING

THINKING ABOUT IT?
HERE ARE 10 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF FIRST

READY TO RE-PLATFORM?

RFPs ARE HELPFUL,
## BUT YOU NEED TO DIG DEEPER.

There's a vast difference in eCommerce solutions. And in today's omnichannel world, this may be a central and strategic decision that will impact all areas of your business, and if done correctly, a long-term partner commitment. Taking a serious look at your own business before issuing an RFP, will give you much better insight into what you need.

> **Instead of focusing solely on specific features (typical RFP), ask yourself how you sell, how you fulfill, how your customers buy from you, and which technology fits your business needs. The answers will help you match up your business with the right eCommerce platform provider. We call this scenario-based planning.**

There is still a great amount of value in issuing a conventional RFP (we have provided ours at the end of this paper). They are a very strong tool for eliminating unqualified providers, illuminating some strengths and weaknesses, and even providing some good apples-to-apples comparisons on feature sets and service offerings. But this should also be augmented by some specific scenario-based questions that are focused on YOUR business, and not on their technology...

Here are a few example questions to consider:

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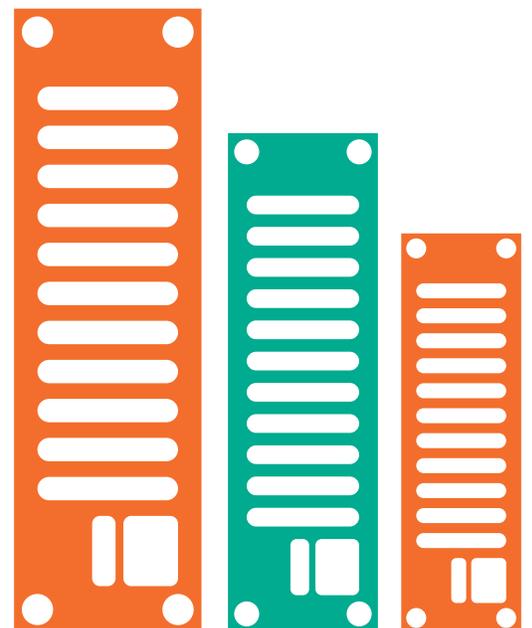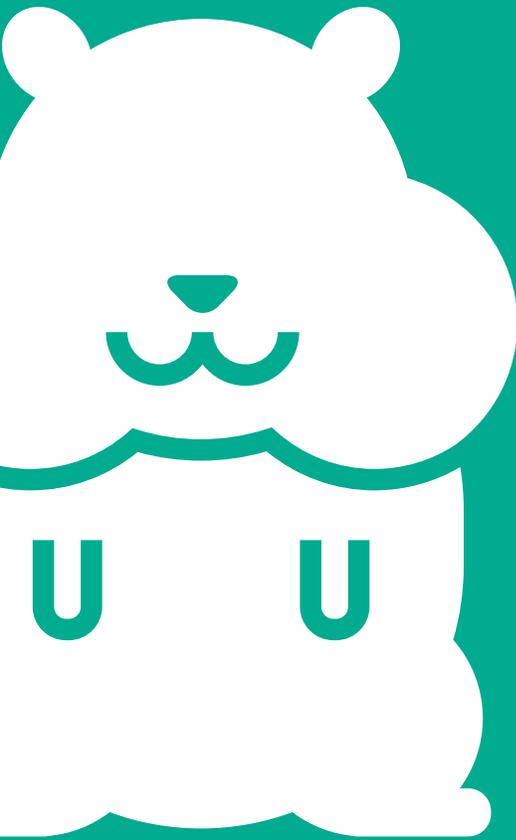
# #1 DOES THE SOLUTION PROVIDER HAVE EXPERTISE WITH YOUR SELLING MODEL?

Different selling models require different functionality, expertise and experience. If you sell B2B, your eCommerce platform provider should be able to handle negotiated pricing, different buyer authorizations, channel partners and many other complexities. If you sell to consumers, your eCommerce platform provider should have a proven track record with customer experience, search, and conversion. If you serve both B2B and B2C customers, you will want to manage both from a single platform.

TIP: Don't be a guinea pig. Whatever your business, they should have real-world examples to show you. If they don't, it's a red flag.

#2 WHAT IS YOUR IDEAL LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT?

There are pros and cons to SaaS versus the installed approach to hosting your solution, with many arguments for each. When it comes to costs, a recent Forrester Report "Understanding TCO When Evaluating eCommerce Solutions," found that many online retailers did not follow a rigorous process when performing Total Cost of Ownership calculations, often ignoring such critical factors as agility, innovation, and time-to-market.

TIP: Research the pros and cons of SaaS versus installed platforms beforehand
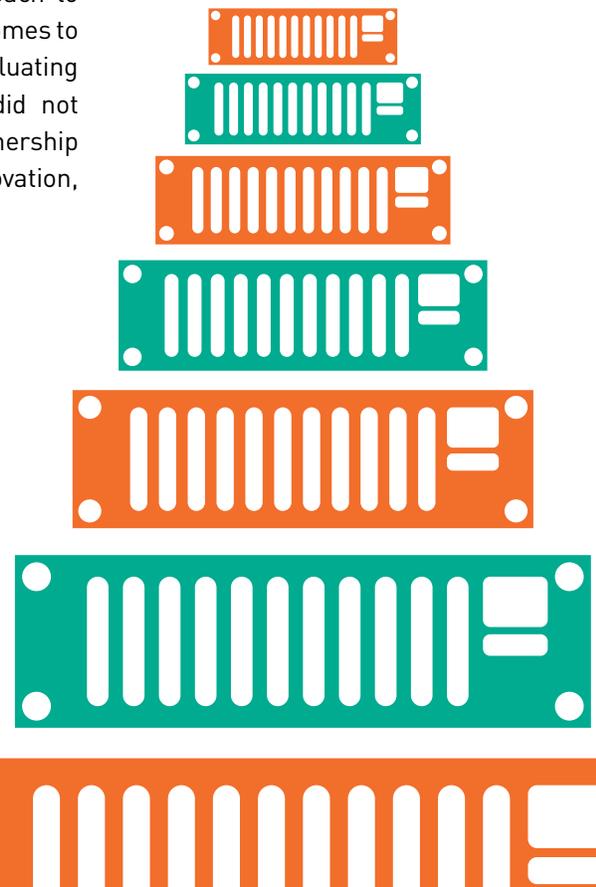
#3 WHAT SKILLS DO YOU HAVE IN-HOUSE?

Regardless of whether you choose SaaS or an installed approach, your staff will need to provide some level of support for your eCommerce platform. Different providers have platforms and technologies that are well suited for marketing teams, others enable people with technical skills to do lots of customization. Some allow for both! Decide what you can—and want—to do, and let that shape the questions you ask of a provider.

TIP: **Think about a "day in the life" of your employees, and frame questions around that. Also consider your business objectives and team skill set over the next several years to determine the best fit.**

#4 IS THIS YOUR FIRST DANCE?

You'll need to learn the right steps. If you are an online novice, you will require lots of coaching and training. Ask your eCommerce plaform solution provider if they have experience taking a company online for the first time, and have a developed model for coaching and training.

If you are re-platforming from an existing solution, you may be asked to change the way you do your pricing, customer engagement, fulfillment, and customer support. Is the new system flexible and configurable enough to conform to your specific business requirements? Things like how to do (and how much) data migration can become a big issue if it is not agreed upon early on.

TIP: **Some eCommerce solution providers are more flexible than others. How flexible are you about conforming to their processes?**

#5 WHAT'S IN YOUR BASKET?

Are you looking for an all-in-one solution, or a combination of integrated solutions? If you are looking to replace one piece of core functionality—cart, OMS or storefront—some eCommerce platform providers offer an "all or nothing" approach, with no modular solutions. Others who do sell individual components, may claim "best of breed" status in one specialty or another. Find out what they consider to be their real strength.

TIP: **Determine whether you want an all-in-one solution or a combination of integrated solutions. Then determine the solution provider's core strength and what the assembly of solutions might cost.**

#6 DOES YOUR BUDGET FIT?

While there are many pricing model variations, many are essentially based on a consumption model, typically dollars or order volume. Know how many orders or dollars your online business expects to transact, and you will be in a position to intelligently discuss budget.

TIP: **When talking capacity, make sure the eCommerce platform can comfortably handle your maximum volume, so you will be able to scale up in the future.**

#7 THIRD PARTY INTEGRATIONS: WHO'S GOING TO DO THEM?

Typically you will need your ERP, WMS, CRM, and Credit Card Processors systems connected to your eCommerce platform. Partly because integrations can be challenging to scope, they often get ignored during the vetting process, but it is important to determine who is going to do the work.

You may want the eCommerce solution provider to supply their APIs to your staff, or you may want to outsource the system integration to them or another partner. Or maybe you will balance the workload between your two staffs.

TIP: The earlier you define "who does what" in terms of integrations, the better.

#8 WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO SELL?

Marketplaces, Comparison Shopping Engines, Mobile, Tablets...is your platform ready?

Being omnichannel is almost table stakes for today's eCommerce. It can be challenging to integrate digital commerce initiatives with commerce systems of channel partners and dealer networks, but it must be done. Marketplace functionality is pre-built into some eCommerce platforms, simplifying the task.

TIP: Ask yourself what your marketplaces and channels are.

#9 WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR YOUR OMS?

You can't separate the selling machine from the inventory management machine, so you will need back-end integration flexibility to connect to operational systems such as order management and third-party fulfillment systems. Do you need real time inventory visibility from stores and distribution centers? Shipping via multiple warehouses? How about drop shippers? For more on why you should think of your OMS as the coach of a very efficient football team, download our OMS Playbook at www.shopvisible.com/resources/oms-playbook.asp

TIP: The complexity of your shipping requirements will determine the complexity of your OMS (order management system).
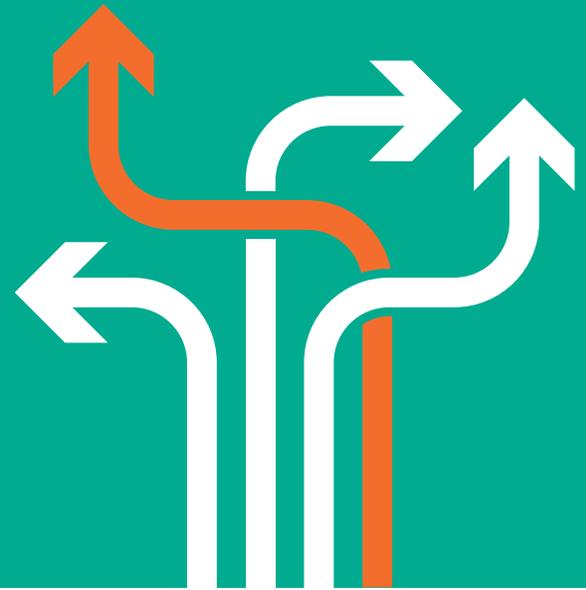
#10 HOW GOOD ARE YOU AT DRIVING TRAFFIC?

Are you good at driving customers for conversions from SEO, affiliate tagging and pay per click advertising? What is your expectation for the eCommerce platform's role in building traffic? Most popular eCommerce platforms claim to be SEO-friendly. However, there is no objective definition for the terms "SEO friendly." There are dozens of different features that contribute to search engine optimization. A good place to start your evaluation is to talk to the customer support team you will be dealing with.

TIP: Make sure you are comfortable with the technical team's ability to set up your online store, make customizations, and resolve other search-related issues. (And, by the way, check out some client examples and see how they fare.)

CHOOSE YOUR PARTNER WISELY.

eCommerce is increasingly central to an omnichannel strategy and you need to select a vendor you are comfortable with—now and in the future. Choose wisely, almost like you would a long term personal relationship. Think about what level of engagement you want. Some solution providers ask you questions (like in this paper) and tell you what they can provide within those parameters. Others will tell you it must be done their way. Some will deliver the solution and never talk to you again. What's your ideal relationship?

Ready to get started? **Download our RFP at www.shopvisible.com/rfp** and then personalize it to create a specific scenario-based assessment based on your business needs.

To learn more about ShopVisible, please visit us at **www.shopvisible.com**.

ShopVisible is an end-to-end SaaS eCommerce solution for B2B and B2C sellers.

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