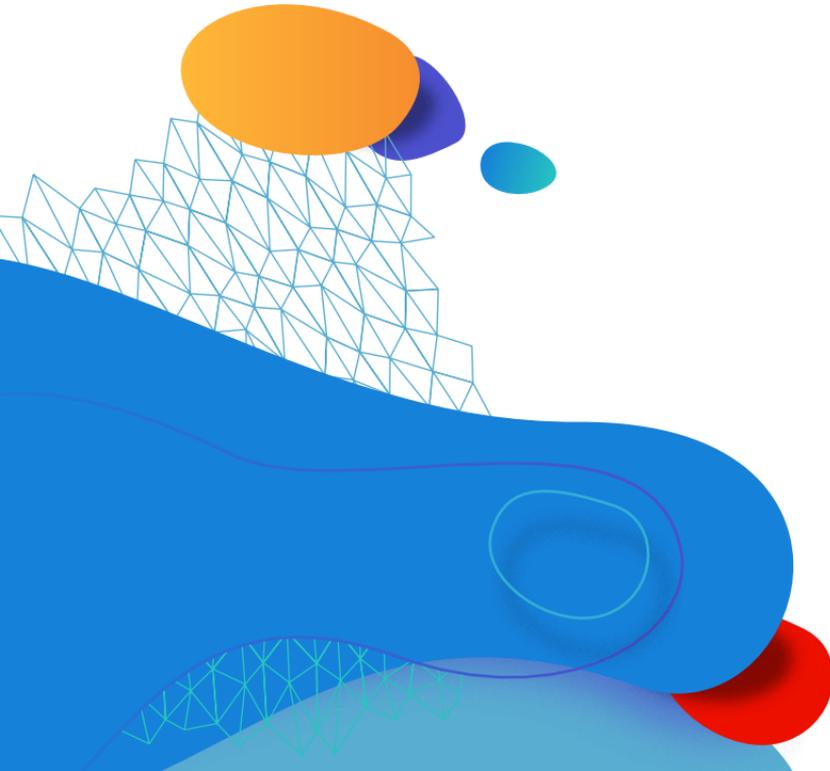


eCommerce + ERP: Integrate to Win

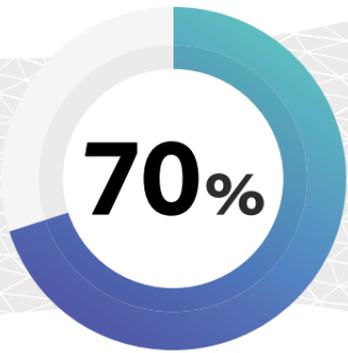
How to overcome the five biggest obstacles
to integrating eCommerce with enterprise
resource planning



When ERP and eCommerce work together, it's a win/win.

A growing number of consumer packaged goods (CPG) manufacturers are adopting a hybrid growth strategy. They are maintaining their relationships with wholesale buyers while launching direct-to-consumer (D2C) websites. This can be a tricky dance—any misstep can damage retail channel relationships—but it promises great rewards. For example, eCommerce will drive more than 70 percent of sales growth across food and beverage categories through 2022.¹

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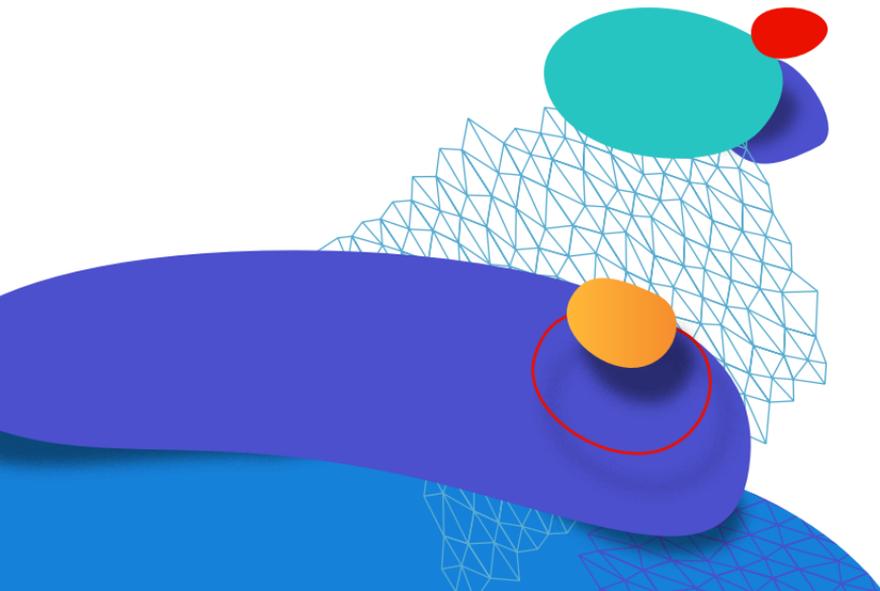


But to grow a hybrid business model that combines D2C and wholesale selling, you'll need to integrate your eCommerce platform with your ERP. This can help you gain visibility into



the status of all your customers' orders, even if you're omnichannel and sell through physical stores and warehouses as well as online. It can make sure your web store always displays accurate pricing and product availability information. And it can automate manual tasks like sending order status information by email.

But integrating eCommerce and ERP can be a challenge. This eBook examines five common obstacles that can stop an eCommerce and ERP integration project in its tracks—and describes how to avoid them.



Obstacle #1: poorly articulated goals

An integration project without clearly articulated goals will have trouble taking flight. You should go in to your project with the following key questions:

What business goals do we hope to achieve with this integration?

These can be high-level objectives like improving customer satisfaction or repeat purchases—or they can be more tactical goals, such as spending less time sending customer emails or reducing WISMO (where is my order?) calls.

Who is on the project team?

Consider your eCommerce manager, your IT team or ERP expert, and your chosen integration champion.

What are the main workflows we want to automate?

For example, you may want to automate updates to shipping, inventory, customer, and product information. Other good candidates for automation are order status and replenishment notifications. For each workflow, you'll need to map exactly where data should flow between your ERP and eCommerce platforms and down to the field.

An integration project will run into trouble if goals are not clearly defined at the outset

How will this integration achieve ROI?

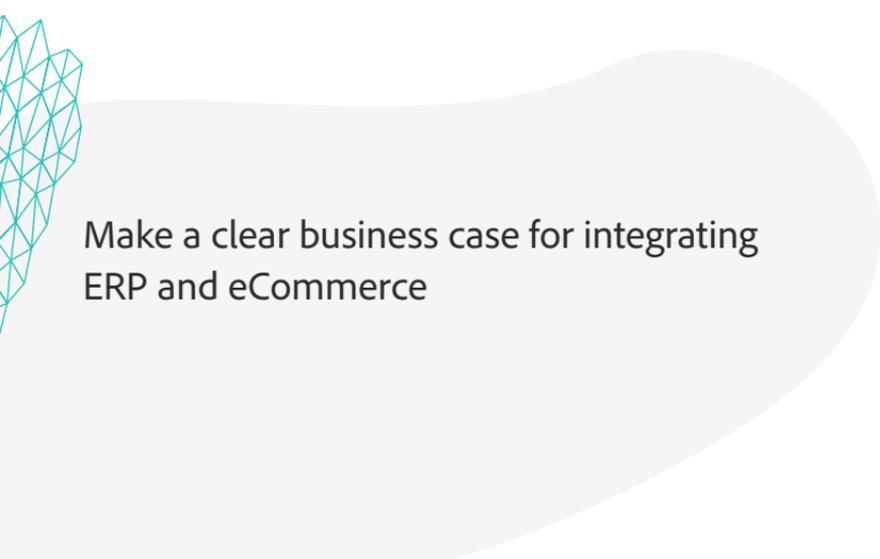
It's important to look at ROI from multiple angles. Here are some questions to ask when considering the ROI of your integration:

- What do you pay now to do this work manually (e.g., one full-time person)?
- What will it cost up front?
- How will it increase revenues?
- How will it help us manage risks?
- How will it improve efficiency/lower costs over time?

How will we measure success?

You will want to develop some metrics for your integration. Depending on your goals, you might measure by how many online orders went unfulfilled due to lack of inventory, how many customers visited their account pages, how many customer service calls were placed, etc.

After asking yourself these questions, you should have a clear business case for the integration.



**Make a clear business case for integrating
ERP and eCommerce**

How integration pays for itself

Entering orders into your ERP system can be a full-time job. It takes roughly five minutes to enter one order transaction, five minutes to update inventory levels across channels, and another five minutes to push tracking information or shipments back to the eCommerce platform. And daily batch uploads of the day's orders can be even slower and more cumbersome. Integrating eCommerce and ERP is often much less expensive than the cost of a data entry person's salary—or of delayed customer orders.

Want to learn more about the ROI of integration?

Visit: ebridgeconnections.com

Obstacle #2: no project champion

eCommerce and ERP systems are typically owned by different teams, though IT typically has a role in supporting and maintaining both systems. Like any systems integration project, integrating eCommerce and ERP is a collaborative effort involving multiple players from multiple departments such as marketing, sales, and customer service.

However, someone needs to take the lead. Project teams must be assembled and given guidance. Budgets and approvals must be obtained. And conflicts must be resolved. For example, marketing and customer service may have very different ideas of how much information from the ERP should be made available to customers via eCommerce.

Without a leader, your integration project will stall. If integrating eCommerce and ERP is important to your team, you may need to lead the effort, or find someone—possibly an outside expert—who will.

Obstacle #3: no clear project blueprint

Both eCommerce and ERP processes can be complex, especially for manufacturers. Integrating eCommerce and ERP can be fairly straightforward if you have an existing API or connector, but some customization is almost always necessary. You'll need to determine which information needs to be synchronized at what intervals and to exactly what field, as well as what eCommerce events lead to ERP actions (and vice versa).

Without a written project blueprint, it's almost impossible to get your integration right. Once you have a project leader, their first job should be to build an integration blueprint and project plan.

Without a leader and a written project blueprint, your integration project will face significant challenges

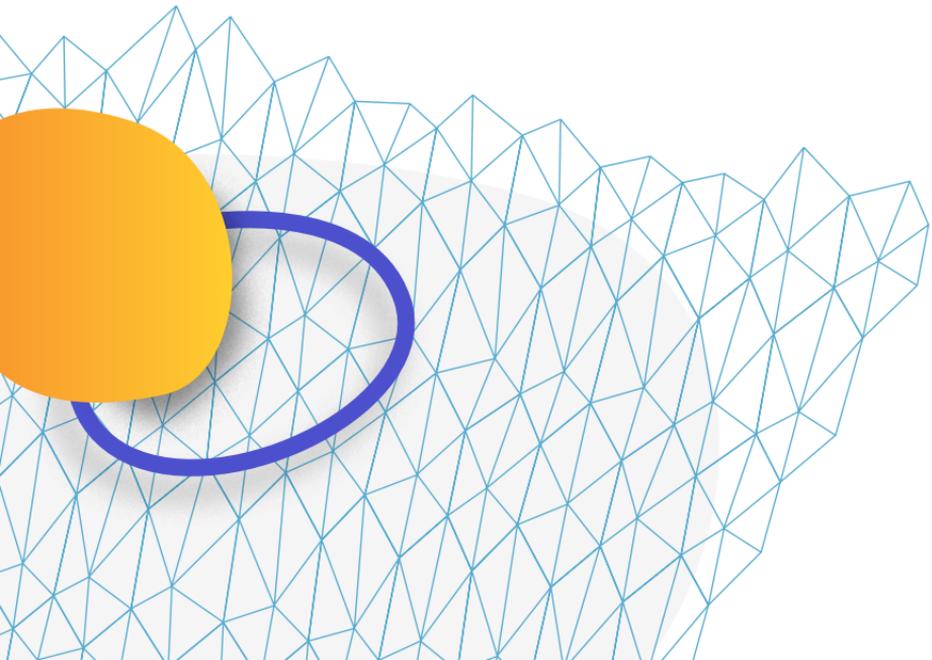


Obstacle #4: no one responsible for support

Your integration isn't over even after it goes live. When problems and questions come up or your ERP needs to be updated to the latest version, someone will need to help. Your integration blueprint should include a support plan that does all of the following:

- Designates one or more contacts for integration-related support
- Sets standards for response and resolution times
- Maps out processes for escalation in case of particularly troublesome issues
- Includes auditing and alerts to make sure expected processes are working

The bottom line? Responsive support after your integration can make the difference between success and failure.



Obstacle #5: in-house integration not working

With today's proliferation of APIs, including many open source options, it can be tempting to do it yourself. After all, the main goal of the integration—moving data around between your eCommerce and ERP systems—is straightforward.

But unless your team has specific experience with building APIs for ERP, this work can be extremely time-consuming and complex. For example, massaging the data from a sales order to fit into your ERP fields requires data translations, and all of these must be updated whenever your ERP or eCommerce platform is upgraded.

In most cases, it's actually less costly—as well as more effective—to choose a solution provider to design your integration and keep it up to date.

Responsive support and a solution provider to design and maintain your integration will help it succeed

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Sources

¹ BCG 2020: <https://www.bcg.com/en-us/publications/2020/cpg-companies-face-increased-e-commerce>

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ADOBE COMMERCE CLOUD

Adobe Commerce Cloud combines Magento Commerce with Adobe Experience Cloud, providing an end-to-end platform to manage, personalize, and optimize the commerce experience across every touch point.

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