

GUIDE

# Getting Rid of B2B E-Commerce Maintenance. Forever.

The Complete Guide





## The Madness of Mainstream B2B E-Commerce **Maintenance**

Your customer is navigating your B2B web store. They've finally added the last product of a large order into their shopping basket. They click the checkout button. Then... nothing. Blank screen. Maybe the connection timed out. Maybe the server couldn't handle the information request. Maybe it's a glitch in the matrix. The point is that you don't know yet. It's time to start troubleshooting. And your customer is even more in the dark than you are.

That customer might just take the budget they have for that large order and navigate away to your competitor's B2B web store. All that revenue slipping through your fingers and why?

### The M Word: **Maintenance.**

All your plans for the day. All the milestones you were looking to hit. All the sales you forecasted. All of them are at risk at this moment.

We get it, your B2B business is complicated. You need a lot from your e-commerce solution. Just some of these requirements include:



**It must keep track of your customer data and apply special pricing agreements for each customer to the web store.**



**It must be able to support order-to-quote functionality so that customers can size up how much their large orders will cost before they purchase.**



**It must be able to adjust pricing automatically for specific products as well as update delivery estimates in an instant.**

**These are all functionalities that most mainstream e-commerce solutions are not able to support. So, the threats of bugs, breakdowns and downtime are very real and consequential to you.**

But think of the cost of this... Not just the monetary cost. The cost of the labor to fix it. The cost of the stress when you can't rely on your web store. The cost of losing your customers to competitors who have B2B web stores with better functionality.

**Why should you be paying for an e-commerce solution that isn't a solution at all? Just another problem.**

It's time to look at this issue with mainstream B2B e-commerce in depth. This guide will lead you through the main causes of B2B e-commerce maintenance and how precisely it can affect your bottom line. Finally, this guide will offer alternatives and solutions that will help you eliminate the issue of maintenance... for good.





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# The Foundations of Dysfunction: Why Mainstream E-Commerce Fails B2B Suppliers

Contrary to how it might seem, maintenance issues don't just fall out of the sky. There are common reasons for why you spend so much time on maintenance, which can sometimes be overlooked. So, let's take a closer look at what is really behind why your mainstream e-commerce solution isn't working for your B2B use case.

## 1. Siloed systems that don't communicate with each other fast enough

First, a lack of real-time updates can lead to discrepancies between transactional critical data stored in different software. For example, if the actual inventory level doesn't match what is displayed in the web store, it can result in order errors and unhappy customers who will send an influx of tickets that need to be addressed immediately.

Providing real-time customer specific data such as pricing, stock, delivery dates, and product information is essential for B2B customers and commercial teams. When this data is not available or not accurate, it can lead to errors and dissatisfaction among customers. It can also be difficult for the commercial team to properly advise customers and make sales without access to up-to-date information.



### Let's contextualize this!

As an example, let's say you are selling bicycle tires to bike shops across the region. Due to the ever-changing nature of supply chains these days, your stock levels and prices on this stock change rapidly. Going in and making manual adjustments to this data every time it needs updating would be tedious and time consuming. With a web store that integrates with the ERP, this data can be updated in both systems in real-time as soon as a change is detected. This way, your stock and pricing data will always be accurate.



## 2. An e-commerce solution created for B2C, not B2B

Second, the platform may not have B2B-specific features that are standard for B2B sales, such as order-to-quote functionalities or customized pricing structures. This can lead to even more errors and maintenance issues. B2B sales often require more complex negotiations and agreements with customers, and a platform that is not equipped to handle these specific needs can cause problems.

Many B2B companies also rely on recommended product lines and cross-selling to increase sales. Without the necessary features in the e-commerce platform, it can be difficult to properly advise customers and make recommendations. This can lead to missed sales opportunities and lower overall customer satisfaction.



### Let's contextualize this!

If you are selling spare machinery parts, you can address your client's needs before they even ask. Most B2B product offerings are nuanced and complex, which is why the relationships with B2B customers are so personal. You can offer this same level of detail and personalization through B2B-first features such as 3D product imagery or a "lookbook" which allows your online customers to get up close and personal with the product they are considering purchasing. Additionally, history of transactions can be analyzed and used to provide more customer-specific recommendations so they feel your web store is tailored to them.



### 3. A product that is built on the past and not the future

Third, the platform may not be built for scalability, which can make it difficult to create new web stores based on data housed in the ERP. As your company grows and expands, the ability to easily create new web stores to serve new customers or markets can be crucial.

But just because you operate multiple web stores, it shouldn't mean you have multiple back-end systems. One ERP, multiple web stores. It lifts the burden of maintenance to the extent that it becomes easy to launch and upkeep a multitude of web stores. That is true scalability. Without it, this process can be slow and cumbersome, leading to delays and missed opportunities.



#### Let's contextualize this!

Let's say you are one of the largest suppliers of industrial cleaning products in your country. But you've got your sight set a bit higher. You want to expand into new markets across the continent, and maybe eventually, even further abroad. This will require localization in each of these new markets, which can be easily done if all your market critical data such as currency, language and taxation logic is hosted in the ERP. Setting up and maintaining multiple, localized web stores that cater to the needs of that market's clientele is easy when the web store integrates with the ERP.

## 4. A web store with no connection to business logic

Finally, a lack of continuous synchronization with the back-end systems can cause changes made in the ERP or OMS to not be immediately visible in the web store, leading to even more maintenance issues. When the web store is not connected to the core business logic of your company (your ERP), it can be difficult to accurately reflect changes or updates in the web store.

There are examples of data that is more easily adjusted within your ERP than within your web store. But it is still absolutely crucial that once this info is changed in the back end, it will auto-populate in the web store.



### Let's contextualize this!

Take, for example, price scaling options for loyal customers. You want to reward your most loyal customer base for their long-standing support of your business. Within the ERP, you can adjust pricing logic so that it recognizes the accounts of these customers. This logic will immediately be replicated in the web store. One change in one system with minimal effort. In this way, the labor burden for this type of maintenance is streamlined and contained. This feature can also be applied to the type of logic in your ERP that affects promotions or taxation.



## The Truth About the **Hidden Costs** of Mainstream B2B E-Commerce Maintenance

**The source of the maintenance may be just one thing, but more commonly, it's a storm of several causes.** The same holds true for the impact of maintenance on your B2B e-commerce solution. It could be a narrow or limited impact on your performance, or the time spent on maintenance. But more than likely, you will see a widespread underperformance and increased time spent on maintenance across different areas. In this section, we'll help you identify the leading indicators that your mainstream B2B e-commerce solution isn't pulling its weight.



Here are the **Key Performance Indicators** you need to keep an eye on:



Formula ↓

Helpful For ↓

**TCO** Total Cost of Ownership =

$$I + M + E - R$$

Initial investment      Maintenance costs over 5 years      Estimated downtime      Remaining value after 5 years of depreciation

Giving you a simple way of seeing how much value you are receiving from your software over time.

**Ticket Volume Increase MoM**

$$(\#) \text{ of more tickets MoM} = \frac{[\text{Sum of all } (\#) \text{ tickets in M2}] - [\text{Sum of all } (\#) \text{ tickets in M1}]$$

Keep track of this metric each month and cross-reference it with reported maintenance issues. Ideally, this metric should be a negative number.

**Net Promoter Score**

$$(\#) \text{ Net Promoter Score} = \frac{[(\#) \text{ promoters} - (\#) \text{ detractors}] \times 100}{(\#) \text{ total respondents}}$$

This is a survey-based metric that accurately measures the sentiment your customers have about your business. One of the best ways to determine how happy your customers are with your service.

**Web Store Adoption Rate**

$$\text{Adoption Rate} = \frac{[\text{Total } \# \text{ buyers placing regular orders online}]}{[\text{Total } \# \text{ buyers invited to your web store}]}$$

A holistic overview of how your marketing efforts and CX contribute to your online sales channel.

When your issues with maintenance on your mainstream e-commerce solution seem to be overwhelming you, this is the type of negative impact on the above key metrics that you can expect to see:

## Higher total cost of ownership

When you pay for a product or service, you expect the price to be a fair exchange for a functional solution. If you pay for a B2B e-commerce solution that keeps breaking down and requires excessive maintenance, you are having to continually invest resources into making it functional.

**The formula above helps you calculate whether you are “in the black” when it comes to your investment in B2B e-commerce. The more disruptive maintenance you have in a certain period; the higher total cost of ownership becomes. This continues as labor and resources get redirected to make the web store work as promised.**

Beyond that, when the web store is malfunctioning, labor of commercial teams must be diverted to covering orders. That creates even more of a deficit between the cost of running the platform and the revenue it generates.





## Increase in support tickets for IT

The first thing a customer will likely do when they experience an issue with purchasing from your B2B web store is create a ticket about their poor experience. **Every moment your web store experiences malfunction or downtime is more time for tickets to start piling up for support.**

Perhaps your IT team is busy working on the implementation of new software or building an innovative roadmap for the coming years. Well, as soon as your web store breaks, that work grinds to a halt. Suddenly, you have IT teams diverted solely to maintenance when they could be working on something with more impact.



## Lower levels of customer satisfaction due to downtime and bugs

If you think the IT teams are upset, just think about how the customers must feel. Your customers have businesses to operate, and they need your goods to do it. **Every moment that your web store isn't working for them is a moment that puts their business in jeopardy. How likely is it that their trust will remain with you after several downtime instances?**

No matter how loyal a customer is, everybody has a breaking point. And when increased maintenance on your B2B web store starts to become a hurdle for your customer base, you can't blame them when they start looking for a more reliable supplier.

## Lower adoption rates of the web store

This is not just a cautionary tale about your external customers not adopting the web store. This includes everyone who interacts with your organization from employees to partners and prospects.

**It's logical that your B2B customer will be hesitant to adopt a web store that undergoes constant maintenance and downtime.**

If it isn't convenient for your customers, then it isn't convenient for your commercial teams.

**This is the domino effect of lack of reliability in the mainstream e-commerce solution:**



Errors and malfunctions happen in your web store.



Customers file support tickets when they can't place orders.



They call or email your organization's sales representative to complete their order.



Sales reps are distracted from more impactful tasks, such as upsell.



Sales reps have started directing customers away from the web store in order to ensure sales.



Your return on investment in the mainstream B2B e-commerce solution continues to plummet.



# QUIZ: How much of an impact does e-commerce maintenance make?

Use this quiz to see how you compare to peers on the issue of B2B e-commerce maintenance.

1. How many tickets regarding order errors do you typically receive in a month?

- a) <20
- b) 20-99
- c) 100+
- d) I don't know

2. How much downtime do you typically experience with your B2B web store in a month?

- a) <2 hours
- b) 2 hours – 15 hours
- c) 16 hours – 40 hours
- d) 40+ hours

3. How many customers do you have that haven't placed a repeat order via the web store?

- a) <10



[Continue the Quiz](#) →

# Introducing ERP-integrated E-Commerce: Your Silver Bullet

## What's ERP-integrated e-commerce exactly?

Your ERP contains all the information that keeps your business running smoothly: product specifications, pricing details, customer information... Everything your web store needs to deliver an irresistible online buying experience.

Of course, your ERP wasn't built or set up to sell your products online. And web store software can't beat your ERP at business logic and data management. ERP-integrated e-commerce lets both systems do what they do best.

In many ways, ERP integration is the exact opposite of mainstream B2B e-commerce. Although, there are many mainstream e-commerce solutions that would have you believe the opposite.

There are a variety of solutions on the market which tout their ability to integrate with your ERP or other systems such as OMS, PIM or CMS. But what they refer to as integration is usually just a form of interfacing.



**True integration alone can coordinate thousands of transactions via the web store and update that information in real-time within the ERP.**

Applications that interface or attach onto your tech stack cannot support that type of functionality. ERP-integrated e-commerce knows the solutions you need to effectively sell B2B products online, and it meets you exactly where you are.



Other **benefits** of integrating your ERP with your B2B web store include:



All ERP data is also available in the web store – and real-time updates mean your data is always correct in both locations.



All ERP functionality is available in the web store – including business logic that dictates pricing, taxation and customer segmentation.



There is a single source of data shared between the ERP and the web store.



Changes only have to be made once, in one system, minimizing the risk of error.







## How ERP Integration Can Lead Your Business into the Low-Maintenance Future

You've heard about how mainstream e-commerce can lead to maintenance that results in higher total cost of ownership, as well as unhappy external and internal customers. But how would things be different if you had ERP integration in your corner? How could each of the main causes of mainstream e-commerce maintenance be eliminated?

### Solve data discrepancies with real-time updates between integrated systems

You need your web store and ERP to communicate with one another fast. As mentioned above, the consequences of having inventory or any other transactional critical business data that isn't synced can be dire.

But ERP integration offers an alternative to this in the form of real-time integration. What does real-time mean?

**Real-time integration targets certain types of variable business data stored in your ERP or e-commerce solution and updates said data in both systems as soon as it detects a change has been made.**



**Your data is guaranteed to be correct in both your B2B web store and your ERP. You do not have to waste hours aligning data and ensuring that inventories are correct. No matter where the sale takes place, your business-critical variable data will always be correct.**

## ERP integration is at the heart of a B2B-first approach

An integrated ERP e-commerce solution also centers the most important software that B2B businesses use on a daily basis: **The ERP.**

One of the biggest benefits of ERP integration is that it isn't trying to retrofit a B2C solution to work for a B2B use case. It starts with your ERP, which is the foundational software for most B2B businesses. No matter the complexity of the logic contained in your ERP software, an integrated web store can work in perfect unison with it.

This means you get all the B2B features both you and your customers expect, including pricing calculation based on specific customer agreements.

**Bottom line: integration uses the power of your ERP to make the web store more convenient, reliable and less susceptible to malfunction.**

## ERP integration means your web store grows alongside your business



As your business grows, you will have difficult choices to make about how to make the expansion happen without causing a disruption for your regular day-to-day customers.

Each market requires the addition of market-specific data and logic such as currency and tax information. That is no small task. The addition of different business logic for a different market of customers can put your web store at risk of breaking. Not to mention, how time consuming it is to have to duplicate processes.

**ERP integration solves this problem because scaling happens in the ERP and is automatically updated in the web store. This means that all the logic you need to expand to a new market will be placed in the ERP. That data can then be copied over in real-time to allow for the creation of a brand new, geographically localized web store in mere minutes.**

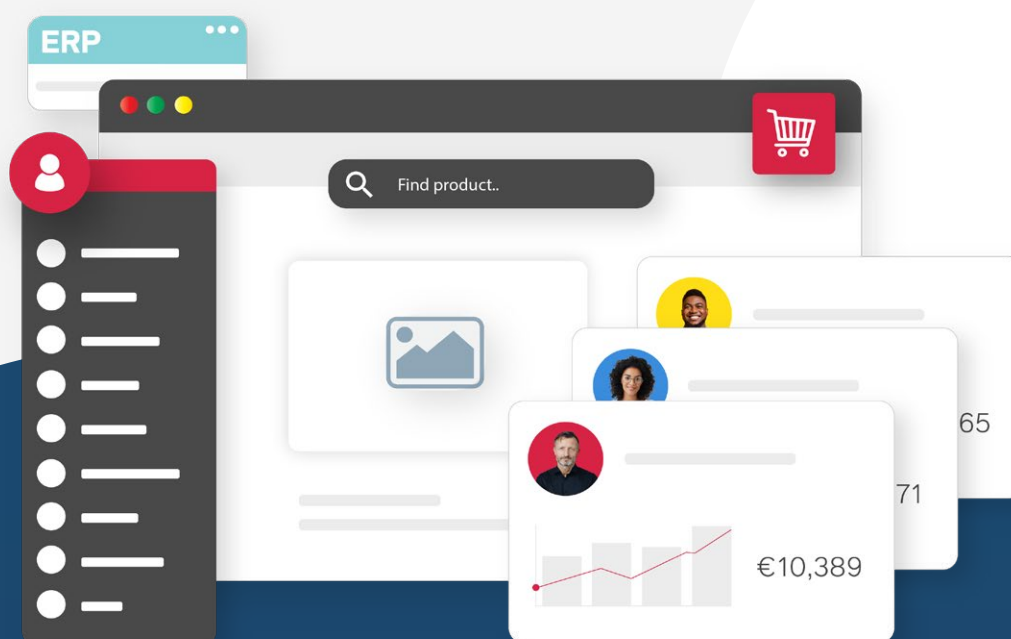
## Your business logic is in your ERP and your ERP is in your web store

If there is any system that understands the complexity of your business, it is your ERP. It knows you have to be able to provide order quoting functionalities to be successful in B2B. It knows you may prefer to reward loyal customers for their continued business in ways that make calculation online complicated. It knows you often have massive product lines with nuanced distinctions between SKUs.

When you choose ERP-integrated e-commerce, your web store also knows all this information from day one.

**It can perform extensive calculations in milliseconds on pricing logic and taxation logic. So, the price the customer sees is always correct within your web store.**

Integration like the type that Sana Commerce Cloud supports takes it a step further. It also integrates with commonly used PIM and OMS systems, so your web store always has a holistic view of your B2B business.





# E-Commerce Maintenance is a Relic of the Past

In boardrooms across the globe, the same debates are had about the merits of this solution or that solution. The same myopic conversations about short-term results and cost-benefit analysis. But it doesn't have to be that complicated.

This is your choice: continue banging your head against the wall and racing against the clock every time there's unexpected maintenance on your mainstream e-commerce solution OR spend that newfound free time doing literally anything else when you have an ERP-integrated e-commerce solution.

## The benefits of switching from a mainstream B2B e-commerce platform to an ERP-integrated solution:

### ↓ Mainstream B2B e-commerce

Time needed for manual order entry in both the web store and ERP

Downtime of the web store causes the e-commerce solution to lose its interfaced connection with the ERP

Lack of B2B-first features makes the web store more vulnerable to bugs and breakdowns

Order errors caused by data discrepancies between the ERP and web store

IT teams and commercial teams diverted from impactful tasks to cover for the malfunctioning web store

### ↑ ERP-integrated e-commerce

All systems are automatically updated in real-time

Limited downtime and the integration between ERP and web store is never disrupted

B2B-first features ensure that the e-commerce solution has the capacity to handle the complexity of B2B sales

The web store is integrated with the ERP; therefore, all data is aligned and accurate

IT teams and commercial teams have more time to focus on high-impact, roadmap projects because of eliminated maintenance time

## So why stick with a mainstream B2B e-commerce platform that requires constant maintenance and causes headaches for your IT team and customers?

Make the switch to an integrated ERP solution like **Sana Commerce Cloud** and see the benefits for yourself. With a reliable and efficient e-commerce solution, you can focus on what really matters — growing your business and serving your customers.



## About Sana Commerce

Sana Commerce is an e-commerce platform designed to help manufacturers, distributors and wholesalers succeed by fostering lasting relationships with customers who depend on them.

How? By making your SAP or Microsoft Dynamics ERP and e-commerce work as one. This eliminates system silos, as well as unnecessary complexities and compromises caused by mainstream e-commerce solutions. Instead, our approach unlocks 3 key benefits that enable you to build lasting relationships with your customers:



### **Total customer convenience:**

Empower your customers with personalized self-service and complete transparency.



### **Reliability without compromise:**

Eliminate errors and delays for an experience your customers can always rely on.



### **Constant evolution:**

Quickly and easily adapt your business to meet and exceed your customers' evolving expectations.

Sana Commerce is a certified SAP and Microsoft Gold partner, backed by a strong global partner network and recognized by leading industry experts.

**Want to learn more?** [Get in touch!](#)

**Prioritize relationships, not just transactions.**  
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