Plytix

The Complete Guide to SaaS Ecommerce Technology in 2020

Everything you need to know about SaaS ecommerce technology and how to build a custom digital retail platform that can handle anything the market throws at your business

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Why You Need This Guide to SaaS Ecommerce Technology

There are so many ecommerce solutions out there. Many have unrecognizable acronyms or overlapping functionalities that make it hard to keep track of them — and even harder to make a decision on which ones are relevant to your business.

We made this guide to help ecommerce businesses understand their options when it comes to building their tech stack. We believe it is fundamentally important to find what works for you now and will continue to work for you in the future.
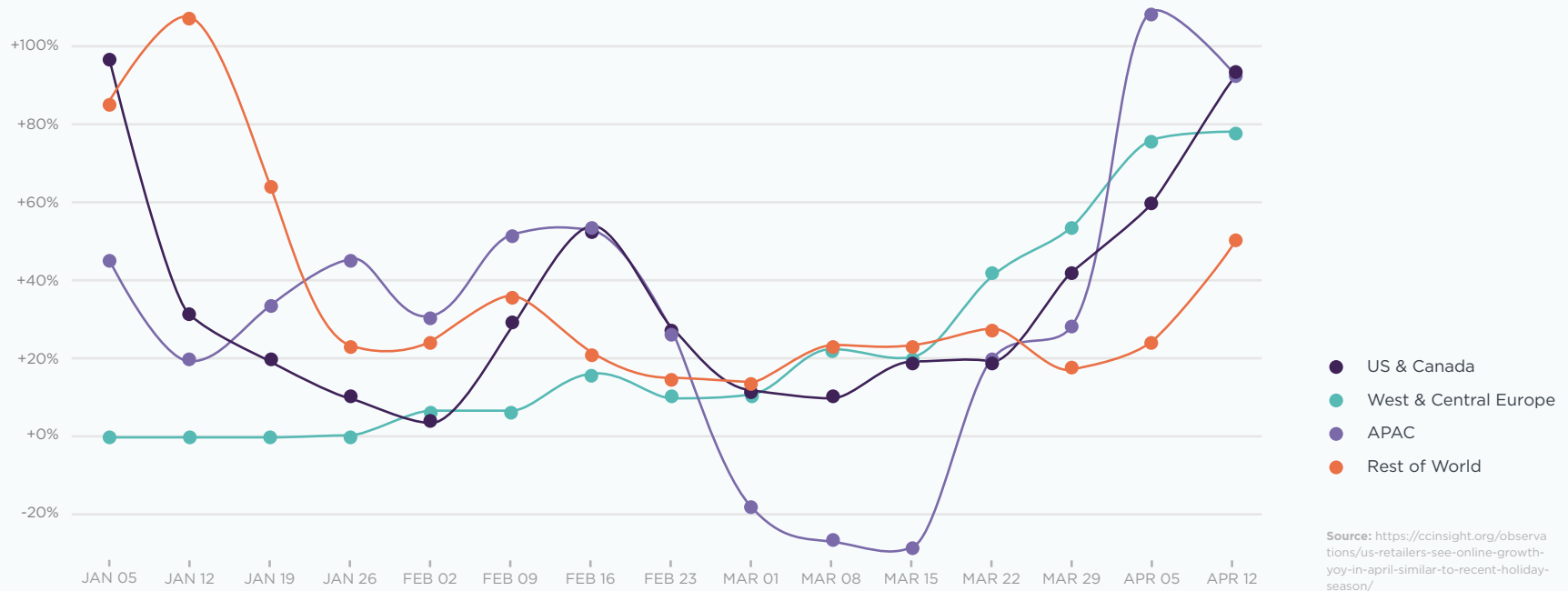
The right technology means resilience and flexibility in the face of both opportunities and challenges. Whether those challenges are global pandemics, like COVID-19, or local disasters, like hurricanes, as we pass through the 2020s we'll need to move faster and react better to whatever gets thrown our way.

Challenges can present new opportunities. COVID-19 showed businesses — especially those in the ecommerce space — that being prepared and able to pivot operations can really pay off for many companies.

In the U.S. alone, **online orders have increased by 56%** since people

2020 Online Order Growth Around the World

Legend:
- US & Canada
- West & Central Europe
- APAC
- Rest of World

X-axis: JAN 05, JAN 12, JAN 19, JAN 26, FEB 02, FEB 09, FEB 16, FEB 23, MAR 01, MAR 08, MAR 15, MAR 22, MAR 29, APR 05, APR 12

Y-axis: -20%, +0%, +20%, +40%, +60%, +80%, +100%

began staying in and shopping from the safety of their homes. This has resulted in **U.S. retailers experiencing a 68% bump in year-over-year revenue growth** from online channels as of mid-April — surpassing growth observed in the previous holiday season.

Globally, logistics vendors reported that **online order shipments in March and April were nearly 50% higher** than they were in 2019.

Additionally, **43% of ecommerce merchants report rising sales**. As order value increases, average daily sales grew by 39% between March and April.

At the time of this writing, most countries are already exceeding or on track to outpace January 2020 online retail activity. As of mid-April, the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region has more than doubled its online retail activity.

West and Central Europe have seen the biggest increase in online shopping with 80% growth since the beginning of 2020. The U.S., Canada, and the rest of the world will surpass January's ecommerce activities by summer if their upward trend continues.
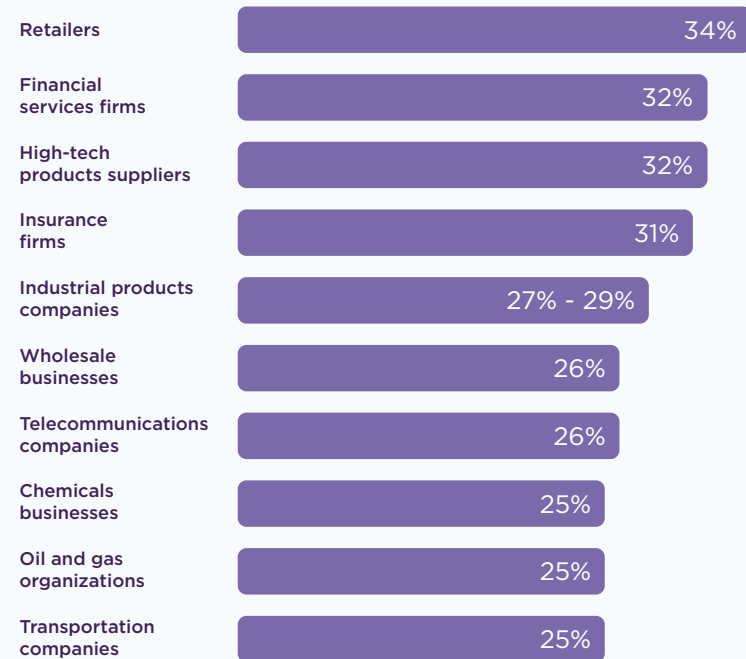
Digitalization has never been more necessary than it is for retailers right now. The ecommerce brands that are able to pivot their operations the most efficiently and effectively will become the winners of 2020 and beyond.

SaaS ecommerce technologies allow ecommerce businesses to be more agile when both opportunities and challenges arise. As our economy becomes increasingly connected, businesses all over the world will likely continue to be affected by recessions and other catastrophes.

If you're not a huge enterprise company, you're uniquely prepared to pivot quickly to serve consumers with an agility that the giants just can't manage. However, you're *also* likely to be operating on a tighter budget with fewer resources, which may have kept you from developing the ecommerce technology support system you need to survive and thrive through the ups and downs — until now.

The need for software that empowers businesses large and small to automate the optimization and syndication of their products has never been more pressing. **Here's what you need to know about today's ecommerce technology and how to build a custom business platform to handle whatever the market throws your way.**

Various Industries Are Allocating Large Portions of 2020 Technology Budgets to Ecommerce Technology*

Industry	Percentage
Retailers	34%
Financial services firms	32%
High-tech products suppliers	32%
Insurance firms	31%
Industrial products companies	27% - 29%
Wholesale businesses	26%
Telecommunications companies	26%
Chemicals businesses	25%
Oil and gas organizations	25%
Transportation companies	25%

*Ecommerce technology includes: Marketing tools, sales programs, customer service platforms, customer analytics, mobile apps, supply chain management, order management, sales automation, B2B ecommerce systems, tech support, and more.

Source: https://www.digitalcommerce360.com/2020/03/11/a-look-at-whos-investing-in-ecommerce-technology/
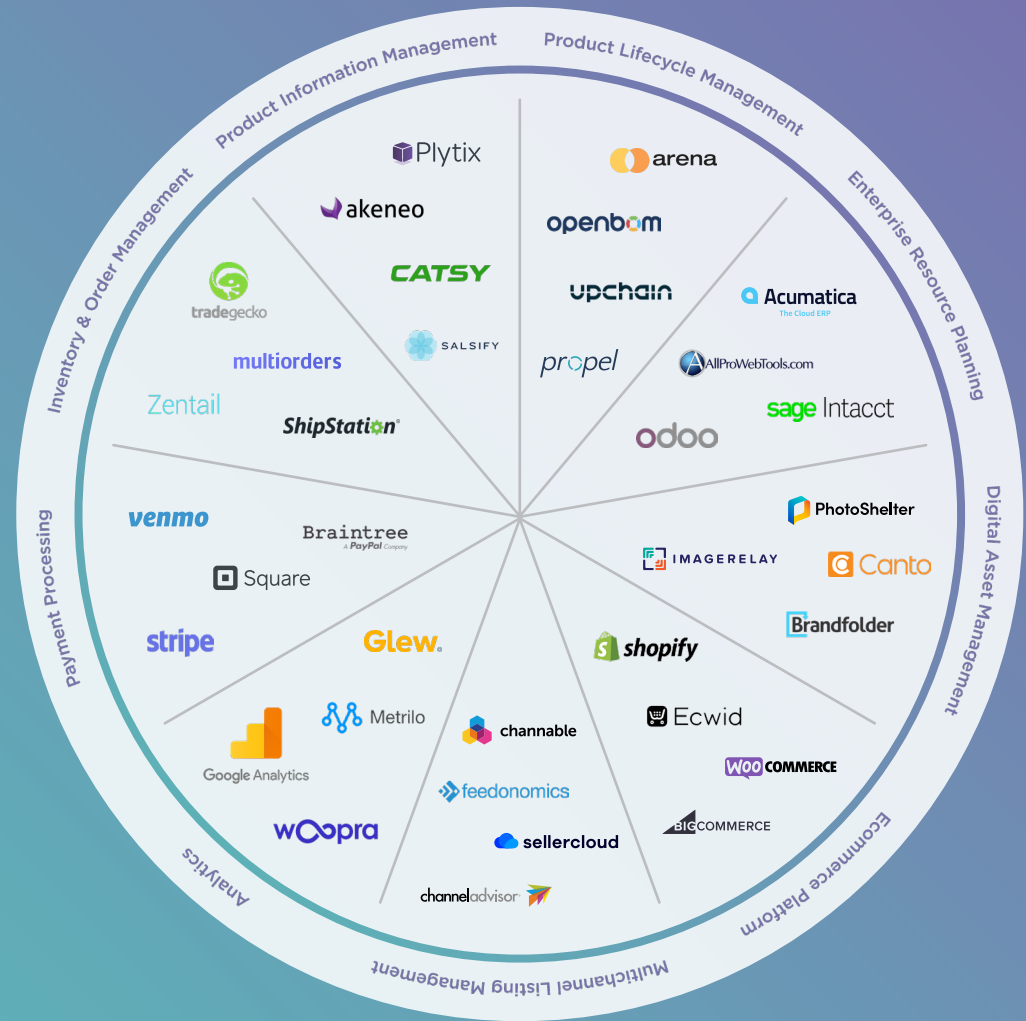
Key SaaS Ecommerce Technologies

Today, software-as-a-service (SaaS) solutions are swiftly replacing the expensive and complex on-premise or self-built ecommerce platforms of old.

SaaS-based ecommerce technology offers all the features modern retailers need to serve their customers and run their businesses effectively. And because it's hosted off-site by a vendor with subject matter expertise in their specific industry and software, good SaaS ecommerce tech is always up to date, always ready to handle new market trends, and always ready to scale as your business grows and changes.

And with the integrability of SaaS ecommerce tools, you can also rest assured that your back-office functions remain secure while you enjoy flexibility and variety in your front-end functionality.

If that sounds like the kind of environment you want to develop at *your* business, keep reading to learn about the most important ecommerce technology out there.

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Key SaaS Ecommerce Technology for SMBs

Product Information Management

Product information management (PIM) is the process of **handling the data, content, and other materials** that a retailer needs to market and sell their products.

Product information management software creates a single source of truth for these resources, which streamlines and can often help automate the creation and optimization of data for both internal use and multichannel distribution.

Learn More →

★★★★⯪ 4.5 on G2　　**Read Reviews →**

Akeneo is unique in that it provides open-source software, which enables tech-savvy retailers or those with access to development resources to customize the PIM to their exact specifications.

★★★★⯪ 4.8 on G2　　**Read Reviews →**

Catsy is a PIM by ecommerce managers for ecommerce managers, so it has all the features you need to organize product attributes and syndicate product content across channels.

★★★★⯪ 4.5 on G2　　**Read Reviews →**

Collaborate smarter, manage product information at any scale, and get to market quickly with **Plytix**'s single source of truth for product content and other assets.

★★★★⯪ 4.4 on G2　　**Read Reviews →**

Salsify unites PIM and digital asset management capabilities to help retailers manage more of the customer experience.

Digital Asset Management

Digital asset management (DAM) enables organizations to store and organize their digital assets like photos and videos in a single repository so that they're easy to find, optimize, and of course, *use*.

DAM software does this by carefully cataloging assets using metadata. Some DAM solutions also include features such as import and export functionality, versioning, preview and thumbnail views, and automatic conversion of files to different types and/or sizes.

The best PIM platforms often come equipped with DAM capabilities, so double-check if your chosen solution does before making an investment in this tool.

Learn More →

★★★★☆ 4.5 on G2   **Read Reviews** →

Brandfolder's intuitive interface doesn't just help ecommerce managers efficiently manage assets but also understand how they're performing.

★★★★☆ 4.3 on G2   **Read Reviews** →

Canto might work with some big brands, but their customizable pricing means you won't necessarily have to pay big money for their highly-rated DAM capabilities.

★★★★☆ 4.6 on G2   **Read Reviews** →

Overcome time wasted managing scattered digital assets, answering file requests, and conducting fruitless searches with **Image Relay**.

★★★★☆ 4.3 on G2   **Read Reviews** →

With high marks for their customer support and one reviewer even mentioning how easy it made migrating over 60,000 digital assets, **PhotoShelter for Brands** delivers on its promise to empower effortless visual storytelling.

Product Lifecycle Management

Product lifecycle management (PLM) is the process of **overseeing product manufacturing** workflows and maintaining collaboration to ensure speedy and profitable product development.

PLM software is a tool for brands that are also involved in the production of their own products. It connects all the people, processes, and data throughout the product lifecycle to make sure everyone from the original designer to the consumer is happy with the outcome.

Learn More →

★★★★☆ 4.1 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

With flexible pricing and an interface that supports distributed teams and global supply chains, **Arena's PLM** is a good fit for the modern business that needs help managing the product development process.

★★★★⯪ 4.2 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

OpenBOM's real-time collaboration and data management technology keeps teams connected from the initial design phase throughout manufacturing.

★★★★⯪ 4.2 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

Propel's all-in-one PLM, PIM, and QMS (quality management system) platform is ideal for the company that's building its ecommerce tech stack from the ground up.

★★★★⯪ 4.4 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

Easy-to-understand and affordable licenses make **Upchain** an easy start for someone exploring their PLM options.

Enterprise Resource Planning

The goal of enterprise resource planning (ERP) is to help integrate the processes and data that are essential to running a business.

Despite the name, ERP software isn't only for big, enterprise ecommerce retailers. Businesses of all sizes can use ERPs to manage their most important operational data; including inventory, accounting, supply chain information, and even the creation and maintenance of fundamental product data like SKUs. This product data is usually exported from the ERP to a PIM platform where all the marketing copy, imagery, and other final touches are added to prepare products for sale.

Learn More →

★★★★⯪ 4.3 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

Acumatica earns high marks for its cloud-based software, ease of use, and a robust suite of features without the robust price tag.

★★★★★ 4.8 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

AllProWebTools is a true starter ecommerce solution that aims to help manage various business processes and product data from one simple solution — all for under $100 a month.

★★★★☆ 4.1 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

Odoo is an interesting ecommerce tool that enables you to create as complex or as simple (and affordable) of a resource planning platform as they want by integrating their choice of Odoo's internal and third-party applications.

★★★★⯪ 4.3 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

With a special focus on accounting, **Sage Intacct** enables midmarket ecommerce businesses to keep an eye on all their financial and operational resources in real-time.

Ecommerce Platform

An ecommerce platform serves as the customer-facing storefront that enables digital retailers to generate revenue. This is also called a CMS or Content Management System.

At its core, **ecommerce platform software enables online retailers** to list and sell products to consumers via the internet. There are a wide variety of ecommerce platforms offering a wide variety of features, so we recommend choosing one that either offers the features you need to run your business — website management, marketing, sales, operations, etc. — or easily integrates with platforms that do.

Learn More →

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ 4.2 on G2   **Read Reviews** →

BigCommerce's versatile platform for developing cutting-edge ecommerce experiences is just what a company needs to set itself apart from today's competition.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 4.8 on G2   **Read Reviews** →

Used by over a million merchants across 175 countries, it can't hurt to start with **Ecwid**'s free tier to see if the highly-rated ecommerce platform is right for your brand.

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ 4.3 on G2   **Read Reviews** →

If you aren't using **Shopify**, you've probably at least heard of it. This cloud-based, omnichannel commerce platform is the top choice among countless brands and retailers.

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ 4.3 on G2   **Read Reviews** →

WooCommerce is a highly-customizable, WordPress-specific ecommerce platform that powers over 24% of all online shops.

Multichannel Listing Management

Multichannel listing management specializes in sending product content to different retailers, marketplaces, and other platforms to keep all your listings up to date.

Multichannel listing management software does this by continuously distributing synchronized product content feeds to your various ecommerce sales channels, all while remaining **compliant with each of their unique requirement sets.**

Learn More →

★ ★ ★ ★ ★   **Not Rated Yet on G2 →**

Channable makes it easy to distribute ecommerce products to over 2,500 price comparison websites, affiliate platforms, and marketplaces — as well as generate ads for Google Ads and Microsoft Advertising.

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆   3.7 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

A well-established multichannel listing cloud platform, **ChannelAdvisor** is well on its way to delivering on its mission to connect and optimize ecommerce around the world.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★   4.8 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

Feedonomics' features like built-in A/B testing and a feed grader add value for a company that's still perfecting their product content syndication system.

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆   4.2 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

SellerCloud is dedicated to helping ecommerce retailers streamline their product content syndication to more than 45 sales channels.

Analytics

Ecommerce analytics ultimately enable businesses to understand consumer behavior and use this knowledge to attract and engage more customers.

Ecommerce analytics SaaS software achieves this knowledge by **collecting demographic data as well as behavioral data** such as what source brought them to your web store, how much time they spend looking at particular products and other offerings, where they end up making a purchase, and much more.

Learn More →

★★★★⯪ 4.5 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

Ecommerce companies can use **Google Analytics** and the Enhanced Ecommerce extension to better understand their users and improve the performance of their content, products, and more — all for free.

★★★★☆ 4.2 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

Glew's 70+ integrations empower ecommerce managers to see all their data in one place with automated reports and visualizations that enable informed decision making.

★★★★★ 4.8 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

Metrilo features like real-time reporting and segmentation help ecommerce companies grow with actionable customer data.

★★★★⯪ 4.4 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

Woopra makes it possible for ecommerce managers to see individual customer interactions across multiple systems in real-time.

Cross-Channel Tracking with Plytix

COMING SUMMER 2020

Plytix will soon be launching a beta version of our Google Analytics Enhanced Ecommerce integration, where ecommerce managers will be able to pull in data from multiple properties and views to see it all in one, simple dashboard. This integration will be the first of its kind to allow you to track data from third-party retailers and multiple channels.

Want to learn more?

Contact Us

Payment Processing

Payment processing **provides ecommerce businesses with the means to accept digital payments** from customers.

Good payment processing software will include payment gateways that securely transmit transaction information to banks. You'll also get integrations with online wallets and other digital payment methods that provide an alternative to credit cards and bank withdrawals. Quite often, ecommerce platforms will come equipped with payment processing capabilities and you won't need to source your own.

Learn More →

★★★⯪☆ 3.6 *on G2*   **Read Reviews** →

With a focus on seamless mobile checkout, powerful security, and popular payment methods; **Braintree Direct** increased revenue by 30% for one mobile digital retailer and 33% for a large travel company.

★★★★⯪ 4.5 *on G2*   **Read Reviews** →

Square's new **Square for Retail** platform features a full point-of-sale solution that offers all kinds of intelligent business tools for ecommerce managers.

★★★★☆ 4.4 *on G2*   **Read Reviews** →

Stripe Payments is a fully-integrated, global payment processing platform that was built to help businesses like yours grow.

★★★★⯪ 4.5 *on G2*   **Read Reviews** →

Venmo for Business empowers companies to provide customers with a seamless payment option across their websites and/or apps.

Inventory and Order Management

Inventory and order management **consolidates sales and inventory tasks** for anyone that sells on multiple channels.

Inventory and order management software, also known by several other names including an order management system (OMS), does this by automating the processing, fulfilling, and shipping of customer orders — which is especially helpful for ecommerce companies who are active on various marketplaces.

Learn More →

We did not collaborate with G2 on this white paper, nor are we affiliated in any way promotionally. We just thought it would be nice to send you to a third-party software review site so you can do your own research. You can also check out capterra.com and trustradius.com for good, reliable software reviews.

★★★★★ 4.9 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

multiorders

Connect your shipping carriers, print labels, manage pricing, and keep track of stock levels on every sales channel with **Multiorders**' software.

★★★★⯪ 4.5 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

ShipStation®

ShipStation makes importing, managing, and shipping orders effective while their integrations with over 150 popular marketplaces, shopping carts, and carriers make your business more efficient.

★★★★☆ 4.4 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

tradegecko

TradeGecko's popular cloud-based inventory management platform (which earned G2's "Leader" badge for spring 2020) is out to make commerce effortless for retailers one order at a time.

★★★★★ 5.0 on G2   **Read Reviews →**

Zentail

With a heavy focus on Amazon sellers and those looking to expand into new channels from Amazon, **Zentail** makes perfect sense for you if you're just building your ecommerce tech stack.

The Ecommerce Starter Stack

In the digital world, a "technology stack" is a combination of tools that have been programmed to work together to achieve a specific goal.

When it comes to ecommerce, your tech stack will be made up of the software you choose to optimize and distribute your products and

content as well as anything else you need to run your business smoothly.

While every ecommerce business is unique, this is the ecommerce tech stack we'd recommend for any business that is getting started with building out their ecommerce system:

1 Start with an **enterprise resource planning (ERP) platform**. Ignore the misnomer here, ERPs are not just for enterprise companies. This system will allow you to manage and create new product SKUs, keep track of pricing and inventory, and manage all other core non-marketing data.

2 Get a solid **product information management (PIM) system**. This is a content staging area and a single source of truth for all your rich product data. Today, most PIM systems have **digital asset management (DAM)** built-in, so there likely won't be a need for a separate system, but it's important to be aware of. From here you can optimize content for distribution and even manage **multichannel listing syndication** to feed your product content to your chosen online retailers, marketplaces, and other platforms.

3 Now you're ready to sell online with an **ecommerce platform** or directly from your **multichannel listing** software. If you're interested in having your own storefront, add on an **ecommerce platform** from which you can manage your own website, marketing, sales, and operations to generate revenue. If you prefer to sell directly through marketplaces and retailers, then a **PIM with multichannel management** or a more robust multichannel listing management platform will take care of that for you.

4 Track your performance with **ecommerce analytics**. Google Analytics Enhanced Ecommerce is a great, free way to track your ecommerce store. But if you're selling on marketplaces and with other retailers, you will need to find an analytics system that can manage cross-channel data.

The Ecommerce Starter Stack

ANALYZE

SHOW & SELL

OPTIMIZE & ACCESS
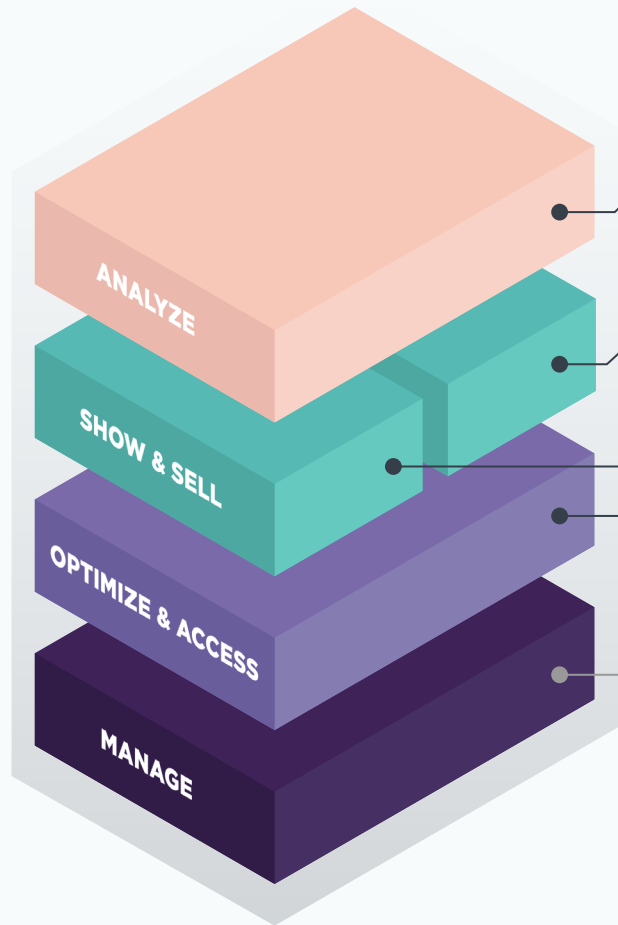
MANAGE

Ecommerce Analytics

A platform for tracking key ecommerce metrics like product performance or consumer behavior

Multichannel Listing Management

A tool to help manage your product listing content for your various stores, marketplaces, and other channels

Ecommerce Platform

An online storefront where you can sell directly to consumers

PIM (with DAM)

A single source of truth for all your rich product content, including assets

ERP

An operational database where you can manage finances, inventory, and other fundamental data

Summary

SaaS ecommerce solutions are here to stay. More importantly, they're here to make your work life better. They are more affordable, more agile, and easier to use than self-built or legacy software platforms while also being much smarter and more purpose-built than spreadsheets.

The flexibility provided by these platforms means you can be better positioned to strategically deal with challenges and opportunities.

The ecommerce businesses that were prepared to pivot when the COVID-19 pandemic hit are reaping the benefits of increased online order volume, value, and overall revenue. But that's only because they had the right technology in place to stay resilient and flexible through nearly daily developments and changes.

In our increasingly-connected economy, change should be considered the only constant. Whether you choose to incorporate our entire ecommerce starter stack or create your own just-right mix of the highly-rated SaaS technology recommended above, our hope is that this guide has eased the headache of comparing and selecting software and given you the tools to run your business smoothly no matter what changes come.

Happy hunting!

About Plytix

Plytix is an all-in-one product information management system built and priced for businesses of all sizes. We created this guide to help people searching for ecommerce technology solutions learn the landscape and discover what will work best for them. After countless conversations with companies large and small across the ecommerce space, we know that right now it is critical to adopt the right technology — but also overwhelming to do so.

For those companies looking for a comprehensive solution to manage their product content, Plytix provides the following solutions built directly into our PIM:

- ▶ **Product information management**

- ▶ **Digital asset management**

- ▶ **Multichannel listing and syndication**

- ▶ **Analytics (coming soon)**

If you are interested in learning more, **jump on a call with us for a no-pressure demo or consultation** and we will help you find out if Plytix is the right solution.

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