

# The Changing Face of B2B Buying and Selling

Customers want to purchase products digitally

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**eMarketer Editors**

**B**usiness-to-business (B2B) ecommerce sales will have explosive growth in coming years and will soon rise beyond the business-to-consumer (B2C) market, according to industry forecasts. B2B buyers want to make business purchases online, and B2B companies continue to see the benefits of using ecommerce to supplement their existing buying mechanisms.

The vast majority of B2B executives in North America agree B2B ecommerce is critical to business advantage and results, according to a May 2017 survey by B2B Online, IFC Olson and WBR Insights.

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## 94%

**of B2B executives in North America  
said B2B ecommerce is critical to  
business advantage and results**

Note: strongly and somewhat agree  
Source: B2B Online, IFC Olson and WBR Insights, "Accelerating Digital  
Transformation in B2B Ecommerce," Sep 27, 2017

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"While digital has been transforming B2B sales for more than two decades, there is still a need for more complex solutions to support the intricacies of B2B commerce," said eMarketer senior analyst Jillian Ryan. "B2Bs typically work with a consultancy to determine how aggressive their digital sales strategy should be and the best way to implement it."

Direct web stores are the most common type of B2B ecommerce. B2Bs either build in-house or partner with a vendor to craft an on-site experience that will serve their buyers. Features like advanced search, detailed content, custom account specifications and mobile accessibility are all important. Many B2Bs are enhancing their direct offerings through hybrid approaches that balance a blend of online self-service with human-assisted sales.

Indirect digital channels—like a distributor or marketplace—aren't as common as direct, and B2Bs must carefully weigh the pros and cons of selling through these methods.

Subscribers to eMarketer's premium platform, PRO, can [read the full report here](#). Nonsubscribers can [learn more here](#).

*In the latest episode of "Behind the Numbers," eMarketer's Ryan explores how B2B buying and selling are transforming as digital commerce continues to grow.*