BIGCOMMERCE | Extend

ECOMMERCE GROWTH GUIDE

How to Take Your Business from $1 Million to $100 Million

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Meet the Ecommerce Experts

Ethan Griffin

Ethan Giffin is the Founder and CEO of Groove Commerce, a full-service ecommerce agency that helps leading ecommerce brands design, build and grow their websites. An entrepreneur at heart, Ethan started his first business at 10-years old and has grown to become an Inc. 5000 honoree and an EY Entrepreneur of the Year Finalist. Discover more about **Groove Commerce**.

Vince Vachio

Vince Vachio formed VSG Commerce™ (VSG) in 2006 to focus on working with direct to consumer and B2B online prospects and clients looking to build and manage their websites. Vince's goal is to align with companies who want a partnership over time and a firm who will assist in their next level of growth. Find out more about **VSG Commerce**.

Scott Robertson

Scott Robertson is the Managing Director of CQL, a full service digital agency, who leads a team of industry professionals in the design, development and implementation of world-class ecommerce solutions. Scott has over 20 years of sales, marketing and management experience developing global programs and closing multi-million dollar agreements. Learn more about **CQL**.

Danielle Lewis and Michelle Pittell

Danielle Lewis and Michelle Pittell are co-presidents at Brand Labs, a female-led agency solving unique ecommerce needs. Leveraging their experience from being on both the agency and customer side of ecommerce projects, along with their team's in-depth expertise in UX-driven design and custom development, they are able to build tailored solutions that provide the most value for their clients. Discover more about **Brand Labs**.

Ryan Garrow

Ryan Garrow is currently the enterprise strategist for Logical Position and has been a driving force behind its rapid growth and nationally-recognized success. Ryan joined Logical Position in 2015 with the acquisition of TQE-Marketing where he was the CEO. Ryan is routinely hired by businesses and organizations, locally and nationally, to speak on strategic marketing, sales and business management strategies. Learn more about **Logical Position**.
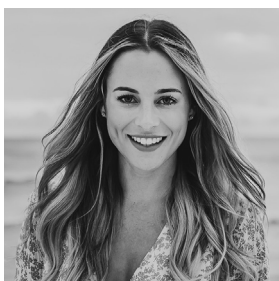
Tara Verkerke

Tara Verkerke is the President of Sales and Operations at DigitlHaus, an Elite, award-winning BigCommerce agency focusing on custom UX design, development and CRO to redefine client's ecommerce experiences for long-term optimal growth. Tara has over 10+ years experience in sales and ecommerce, working with enterprise clients while also leading a team of professionals. Find out more about **DigitlHaus**.

Airon White

Airon White is a Manager, Product Marketing at BigCommerce where she leads a small team of product marketers. A big thinker with a bold vision, Airon has a passion for bringing the right products to the right customers at the right time. When not trying to solve problems, she spends time with her family, enjoying hiking, music festivals, movies and being active in the Texas sunshine. To learn more, **request a BigCommerce demo**.

Rohan Shah

Rohan Shah is the Founder and Chief Revenue Officer at Extend. Previously, Rohan led product at Boston Consulting Group's Digital Ventures practice, and prior to that he was the founder and CEO of a venture-backed company, Within. To explore how you can boost revenue with product protection, **get started with Extend**.
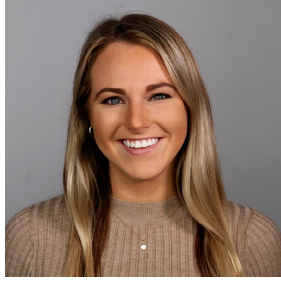
Alex McPeak

Alex McPeak is a Content Strategist at Klaviyo. She helps entrepreneurs and small businesses grow. Before joining Klaviyo in 2020, Alex spent several years writing, editing, and podcasting throughout the Boston tech scene. Alex graduated from Emmanuel College. Find out how you can create more profitable marketing through email, SMS and more with **Klaviyo for BigCommerce**.

Sara Sousa

Sara Sousa is the Director of Product Marketing for Global Partnerships at Brightpearl. Sara has been with Brightpearl for three years and focuses mainly on the integrations built with partners across the ecosystem, as well co-marketing relationships with all Brightpearl partners globally. Learn more about how to improve back-office operations with **Brightpearl for BigCommerce**.

Jake Wallace

Jake Wallace has been building partner relationships for nearly 10 years and now leads the Technology Partnerships team at Trustpilot. He enjoys collaborating with innovative partners to the benefit of our mutual customers on their journey to success. Create your **free account with Trustpilot** to start collecting reviews for your ecommerce site.

Christian Little

Christian Little is the Director of Marketing for PayHelm, a leading BigCommerce Analytics app that empowers you to understand your ecommerce data. Christian has a MBA in Marketing and 20 years of experience in ecommerce marketing and analytics. **Try PayHelm today** with a 14-day free trial.

The $1 Million Inflection Point

Leaders at every ecommerce company have to balance growth with revenue goals — but once you hit $1 million in gross merchandise value (GMV), this can become a make-or-break moment. Make the right decisions now, and you'll set yourself up for success in the future.

"Most companies starting out quickly struggle with the operational efforts to sell, fulfill and service when going from $1 million to $10 million to $25 million annually. An investment must be made to help the teams adjust, survive and thrive in this environment," said Vince Vachio of VSG Commerce.

GROSS MERCHANDISE VALUE
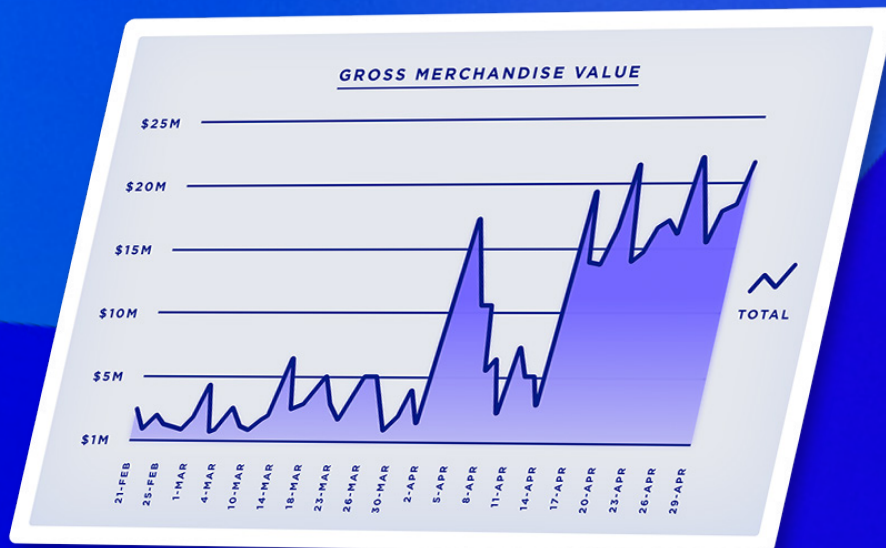
The decisions brands must make at this stage can become even more complicated by a number of converging market forces, from increasing data regulations to supply chain woes and changing customer behaviors.

More brands are competing for customers, and they're doing it with less third-party data. That means a lot of businesses this year are more than likely paying more for less.

On top of that, brands are battling supply chain uncertainty — increasing the complexity of inventory management and the importance of clear customer communication and relationship-building.

Plus, consumers have more options than ever, and they're wielding that power in new ways by carefully guarding their brand loyalty.

All these colliding forces — rising ad costs, supply chain pressures and consumer behavior shifts — are making ecommerce business, at the very least, less predictable. And that can make it more challenging to find the right growth levers.

So, how can ecommerce businesses scale from $1 million to $100 million in today's market? While the path to success looks different for every business, our experts agree that there are four key steps for success:

1. **Check Your Foundation:** Automate and streamline foundational business operations to allow for attention to your next big growth levers.

2. **Balance Your Team Structure**: Leverage the right combination of in-house talent and agency resources.

3. **Perfect the Customer Experience:** Put your customer in the center of the entire shopping experience to differentiate your business and build loyalty.

4. **Recalibrate Your Marketing Strategy:** Make the most of your marketing so that you're acquiring customers in a financially sustainable way.

In this guide you'll find expert insights, best practices, strategies and more designed to set you up for success so that you can quickly accelerate growth for your ecommerce business.

YEAR-OVER-YEAR REVENUE GROWTH

50%
40%
30%
20%
10%

2018   2019   2020   2021   2022
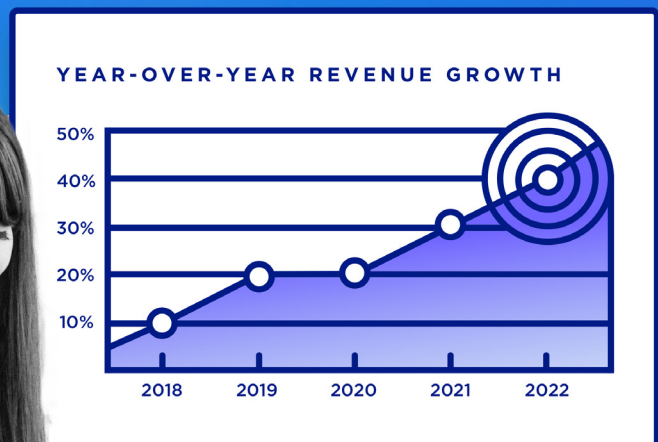
Check Your Foundation

One of the strongest themes running through the interviews conducted for this guide was to focus on the fundamentals. Your tech stack — and especially your ecommerce platform — is the foundation of your business, and your team are the people responsible for keeping everything running smoothly.

To support growth, your tech and your team will need to be agile enough to mobilize in new and different ways.

"Keep it simple," advises T.J. Gamble in a **recent podcast interview** with Jeff Bullas. "Try to figure out where your attention is going, where your resources are being spent and try to alleviate those pressure points."

Fine-Tune Your Tech Stack

Fine-tuning your tech stack, automating processes and integrating systems will free up time for the business to tap previously untapped growth levers. Plus, any streamlining could save on operating costs that could be allocated toward other opportunities.

Still, make sure you know how your platform's pricing and other associated costs will go up as you scale. Taking all these things into account will give you a truer sense of what your actual technical costs will be.

Ecommerce platform

On-premise or open-source ecommerce platforms used to be top choices for building an enterprise-ready stack — but today, **software-as-a-service (SaaS) solutions** allow enough customization to meet scaling business needs.

Evaluate what functionality comes natively with the platform, and what you'll need to accomplish with **third-party apps**. For example, various platforms may offer different options and versions of product information.

Because SaaS is easy enough for business users to operate, many brands are moving in that direction to take the operational load off of in-house developers. Those developers can then spend more time innovating to differentiate their businesses among customers.

Or, if you don't have in-house developers already, a SaaS platform means that you could limit expansion in that area by supplementing with an ecommerce agency.

"As more modern feature sets and technologies are released by ecommerce platform solutions, retailers and manufacturers are more willing to explore options to transition their technology to a more marketing-driven solution vs an IT-driven solution," said Scott Robertson of ecommerce agency CQL.

A platform that requires less in-house talent for maintenance and upkeep will give you more leverage to create interesting, differentiating experiences for your shoppers.

"The **BigCommerce platform** is intuitive for marketers to use while still allowing you to build the tech stack you want. With seamless backend integrations, the platform scales with you as you grow. Plus, there's a wide variety of pre-built integrations to choose from, and 90% of the platform is open, with APIs to connect and build customizations," said Airon White of BigCommerce.

Apps and plugins

A trap some growing businesses fall into is adding too many integrations, too fast. Thoughtfully consider the value to your particular business and prioritize from there.

"It's important for merchants to keep their tech stack as lightweight as possible as their company grows in order to control costs," said Vince Vachio from VSG Commerce. "Integrations should make selling easier, but will not drive sales on their own."

Evaluate each integration based on its cost, conversion rate lift, revenue increase and positive impact on customer satisfaction.

While you want to limit the bells and whistles, don't skimp on the power behind your **back-office processes**. One of the most challenging parts of scaling your business is keeping your systems efficient as you deal with higher volumes. It's a good best practice to get your systems set up in a scalable way before you need it.

Integrate and Automate Back-Office Operations

Relying too much on manual processes in the back office leads to mispicks, inaccurate reporting, and a front-office lack of resources — ultimately degrading the customer experience. Or, as Sara Sousa from Brightpearl, puts it, "Volume kills manual processes."

Automated order processing and inventory-demand planning are two interconnected areas where merchants tend to see the most value.

If you're not yet using an order management system (OMS), that might be the place to start. If you're outgrowing your OMS, it might be time for **enterprise resource planning (ERP)** or a **retail operating system (ROS)**.

Automating key back-office workflows not only saves time and resources, but also decreases human error leading to a better end consumer experience. When you have the tools to automate repetitive manual processes, you can take the money that frees up to reinvest in your business.

Inventory management

Inventory is expensive — to buy, to store and to move. Optimization requires walking a delicate balance between running out of high-performing inventory and overstocking the warehouse.

"For retailers, optimizing inventory and being able to accurately predict demand for their products is the key to striking the delicate balance of avoiding stock-outs of the most profitable items and avoiding having warehouses packed with inventory that can't be shifted," said Sara Sousa from Brightpearl.

Brands have a lot of capital tied up in their inventory, and today's supply chain disruptions are compounding typical challenges. Unfortunately, these disruptions could be the norm going forward.

A real-time **inventory control system** can help.

Without a real-time inventory control system, merchants can find themselves double-selling inventory, then having to reach out to customers to explain that they've oversold, processing refunds, and dealing with unhappy customers.

But combining the right tools with the right data sets can help you make better, faster decisions.

"To plan for seasonality or peak shopping seasons, using a demand planning tool can help you to forecast what inventory is needed to meet demand.

Invest in an operating system that can provide real-time, detailed visibility on inventory levels across channels, and even assess supplier performance and cash conversion. Ultimately, the more you know about how your suppliers work and how long it takes your business to convert inventory into cash, the more you can avoid volatility in your supply chain.

Work out whether your cash is tied up in more days in inventory and raw materials than in days to collect on sales — a good retail operating system will easily do this for you. Then, decide if you need to switch up your workflows and practices to speed up how long it takes to convert your inventory into cash."

— Sara Sousa, Director of Product Marketing, Global Partnerships, Brightpearl

With the right tools, you'll even be able to forecast an "unprecedented" year-over-year performance, so you can keep your inventory under control, as well as **automate key back-office processes**.

📊 Monitor your business metrics

With the right data, you can **make better decisions about everything** from which channels will best lift your revenue to which new products you should sell. Having a fully integrated back office means being able to see a holistic view of your business performance and, from there, **identify growth opportunities**.

"At PayHelm, we like to look at traffic sources and corresponding conversion rates. If, for example, you find a website like Reddit sending traffic that's converting because people are talking about your products there, it's probably worth targeting these people with paid advertising there.

Conversely, using that data for ROI analysis is also a great tool. Let's say you paid an influencer to promote you on their Twitter account. You can look at the traffic from their promotion to see how those people are engaging. Follow the flow from that particular source — sometimes you'll find interesting things happening on your website that might be turning people away.

You can also use data to improve merchandising tactics by reviewing all of your product sales to see what else people are buying in your store and discover commonalities between different products people are buying.

This can give you some really solid cross-selling options simply by creating deluxe bundles or special promotions around those products.

PayHelm is a great starting point for aggregating your data, combining BigCommerce data with Google Analytics and other platforms, so you have it all in one centralized reporting interface".

*— **Christian Little, Director of Marketing, Payhelm***
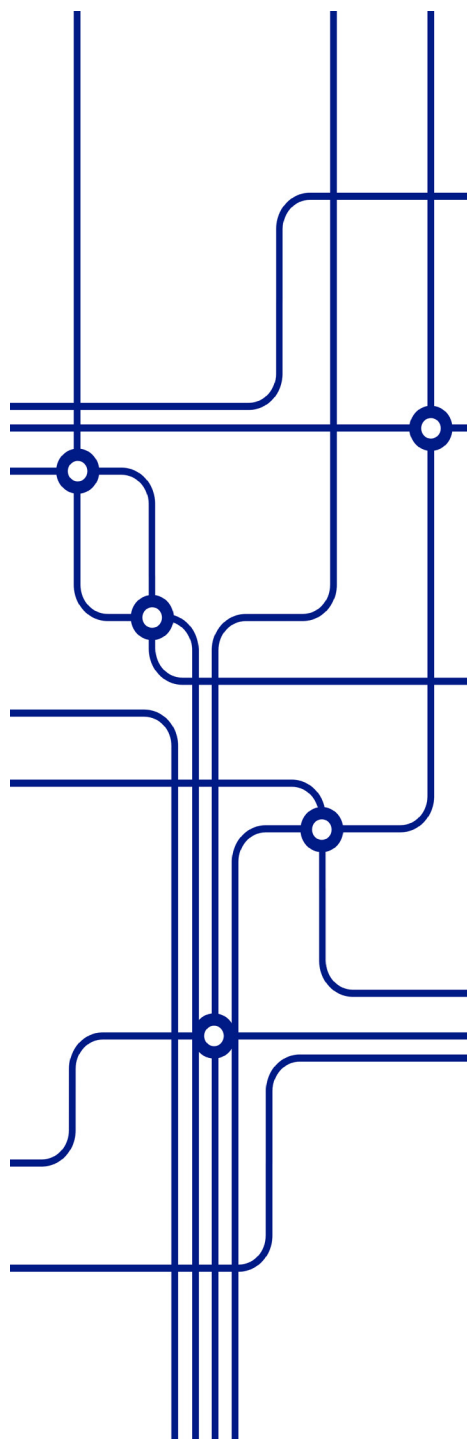
Balance Your Team Structure

The in-house versus agency debate rages across plenty of industries, and ecommerce is no different — but it does bring a unique set of challenges.

To be successful in any scalable commerce venture takes artful alignment of a wide range of functions and skill sets. Marketing departments alone need expertise in branding, email, SEO, content and paid advertising — to name a few. And to make the rest of the business work is just as complex, with IT, developers, warehousing teams, and finance and accounting.

The competition is fierce and margins are tight, so you have to stay lean as a team. Hiring the kind of talent that differentiates retailers in this environment is not cheap. So, how do you decide when to leverage an agency and when to hire?

Most ecommerce shops balance their team between in-house and agency support, but each business's mix will look a bit different.

Evaluate Your Options

At a certain size, hiring larger internal teams can seem enticing. But before going on a hiring spree, here are some of the challenges of bringing roles in-house:

- **Flat organizational structure**: most ecommerce brands just don't have the headcount to hire in full teams, and that leaves internal employees with fewer opportunities for growth.

- **Lack of continuity**: it's great to have a top performer on your internal team, but when they leave for their next adventure, you'll have to backfill them. That's expensive — and it can also disrupt the continuity of your strategy.

"The difficulty for mid-market brands is that while they do have an ecommerce budget allocated, it is simply not large enough to hire an experienced team of designers, developers and marketing specialists," said Spencer Flaherty from Groove Commerce.

Leaning on agencies to shore up your internal team can help provide the expertise and strategic direction your team needs.

Leverage Ecommerce Agencies

One of the biggest **advantages of working with an agency** is that they have years and years of experience across their teams. Tapping into that expertise can set you way ahead of the competition. The specialists you find at a great agency are experts in their field and have learnings from across hundreds of brands.

"The advantage of outsourcing talent to a digital commerce agency is that you're able to buy fractions of talented people," said Robertson of CQL. "A good digital support partnership can provide portions of time from multiple disciplines: front-end and back-end developers, QA specialists, marketers, designers, UX architects, etc."

Particularly for the most rapidly changing disciplines, like SEM and search, it's incredibly valuable to have those experienced specialists in your corner.

"Google changes the game so often on paid search. It's constantly evolving, and having a company with scale that can have learnings across brands that help the entire group get better at what they do — it's very difficult to duplicate that with one or two employees internally," said Logical Position's Ryan Garrow.

Here are some key considerations when determining which roles to hire for or outsource:

- **Tech stack**: How much internal development talent do you need? Do you need enough backend support to justify in-house hires?

- **Sales channels**: How much do you sell on each channel and which channels are you still considering? How would that impact operations?

Best practices for working with an agency

Some ecommerce brands have bad experiences with their agencies — but more often than not, that's because there was misalignment from the get-go.

"Not having a solidified strategy, growth plan and goals established before meeting with agency partners can be deadly to a project," says Danielle Lewis from ecommerce agency Brand Labs.

"If an agency is unaware of future growth plans and goals, they will likely create a solution that may not meet the expectations of the client — wasting time and money and leaving everyone frustrated."

It can also be a challenge (and time consuming) to find the right agency to work with your business.

Selecting **an ecommerce agency that's already vetted by BigCommerce** and is familiar with their tech stack can help move your project forward faster and more effectively.

Find Your Perfect Balance

Customer-facing roles must live and breathe your customers. If community is important to your marketing strategy, bring management in-house (and give them the resources they need).
This includes:

- Email marketing

- Customer service

- Social media (at least the engagement portion — it often becomes a customer service channel)

However you choose to balance your team, "Having a long-term relationship with an agency should continue to be a component for specialized projects, growth spikes, and peak seasons," suggests CQL's Robertson.

Perfect the Customer Experience

Another theme running through this research was to focus on experience and loyalty-building instead of over-indexing on acquisition. While that customer acquisition treadmill might grow your first-time sales, it isn't sustainable. For real growth, you need to **deliver a customer-first experience**.

"Driving loyalty takes looking beyond just acquisition and the point of purchase. It takes a holistic, end-to-end experience. How do you build a relationship with a customer? Or, better yet, with anyone? It's by having a dialogue. A strong dialogue isn't created with a handshake, but rather with continued engagement across multiple parties," said Rohan Shah, co-founder and chief revenue officer of Extend.

Strengthen Your Brand Identity and Usability

A standout shopping experience on an ecommerce site requires attention to both form and function — brand identity and usability.

"The worst mistake we see with brands trying to scale too quickly is that they get in over their heads and no longer have the time to care about the experience they're delivering to their customer," said Verkerke. "Our go-to growth hack is to design an ecommerce experience that customers want to buy from."

Website design

The **best ecommerce experiences** offer sites that are beautiful and engaging, but also simple, intuitive, and frictionless to use. That means designing your experience with a mobile-first approach, which at this point, a great experience on mobile is table stakes.

But don't forget about the creative side, from the fonts you chose to the colors you use to make your brand memorable.

"Expanding the way we use fonts by creating new styles and using unique formats, we're able to craft unique and engaging experiences while further expanding the brand and identity," said Tara Verkerke from DigitlHaus Agency. "Additionally, dark backgrounds, solid colors and the use of contrast in UX design is allowing us more freedom to create bold and impactful designs."

Product details

Another key area to **focus on is your product details**. Shoppers want as much information as possible about your products so they can feel confident in their selection.

"Displaying all the product details, especially on mobile, is key. From size, color and material to ingredients, ounces and more, product details can make or break a purchase," said Spencer Flaherty from ecommerce agency Groove Commerce.

"We recommend merchants provide all of the necessary product information in the checkout, such as the product's name, its price, the quantity and whether it is discounted."

One-page checkout

The responses from our agency partners were unanimous: **one-page checkout** is a big priority for mobile usability.

Not only does this help minimize friction in the purchase journey, but it also drives conversions by helping customers convert with fewer clicks. Don't end up with abandoned carts because your mobile visitors got frustrated with the checkout process.

"Simplicity in the checkout process is the most important piece. It comes down to a strong visual display and user experience," said CQL's Robertson. "The expectation on mobile is that the experience will be Amazon-like, as this has become the benchmark for shopping on the fly."

In addition to one-page checkout, auto-fill is another important feature.

"Avoid distractions, and display the most important information with mobile-friendly payment options," said Michelle Pittell from Brand Labs. "Also, utilize auto-fill for addresses and payment details to make the experience easy and quick."

Enrich Your Post-Purchase Customer Journey

The customer journey doesn't end at purchase — or even after shipping. After all, customers haven't even interacted with the product until after unboxing, which is often well after many businesses have forgotten them. Too many brands are missing out on rich **post-purchase opportunities** to build relationships that drive long-term loyalty.

"Post-purchase follow-ups are simply entirely underutilized: check-ins, surveys, review requests," said Scott Robertson of CQL. "While buyers are always willing to give feedback on their bad experiences, merchants must strive to get the good experiences documented and create loyal consumers in the process."

To stand out among competitors takes a broader perspective than the now-outdated purchase funnel. **Value-added services** can help merchants build additional touchpoints into the customer journey.

> *"Carefully crafting a customer experience with valuable post-purchase touchpoints is vastly underhyped. However, there's a lot of opportunity to create a dialogue with your customers.*
>
> *To accomplish this, merchants need an experience that keeps customers engaged in their own brand ecosystem. Value-added services help you do just that (and they can often be growth levers, too).*
>
> *What are value-added services? They add above-and-beyond value to the end-to-end shopping experience by keeping customers engaged, solving problems quickly, driving transactions, and protecting products.*
>
> *Winning merchants will master long-term customer relationships and community building, in part by inserting value-added services as meaningful digital touchpoints across the entire customer journey.*
>
> *To evaluate which services might have the greatest impact on your margins, think about how they might drive conversion, repeat purchases, customer satisfaction, and lifetime value. You have to make sure you're squeezing all the value you can out of every customer, every website visit, and ultimately every order."*
>
> *— **Rohan Shah, Founder and Chief Revenue Officer, Extend***

Customer reviews and testimonials

Customer reviews are essential for almost any business, especially if you're still building brand trust. Surfacing **customer reviews on your ecommerce site** can help a customer feel more confident about making purchases, thereby increasing conversions and revenue.

"Customer reviews and testimonials are one of the best ways to build trust with third-party verification. By featuring reviews on product pages, consumers know other shoppers have used the product and had great things to say about it. Online reviews help consumers make smart and better choices," said Jake Wallace from Trustpilot.
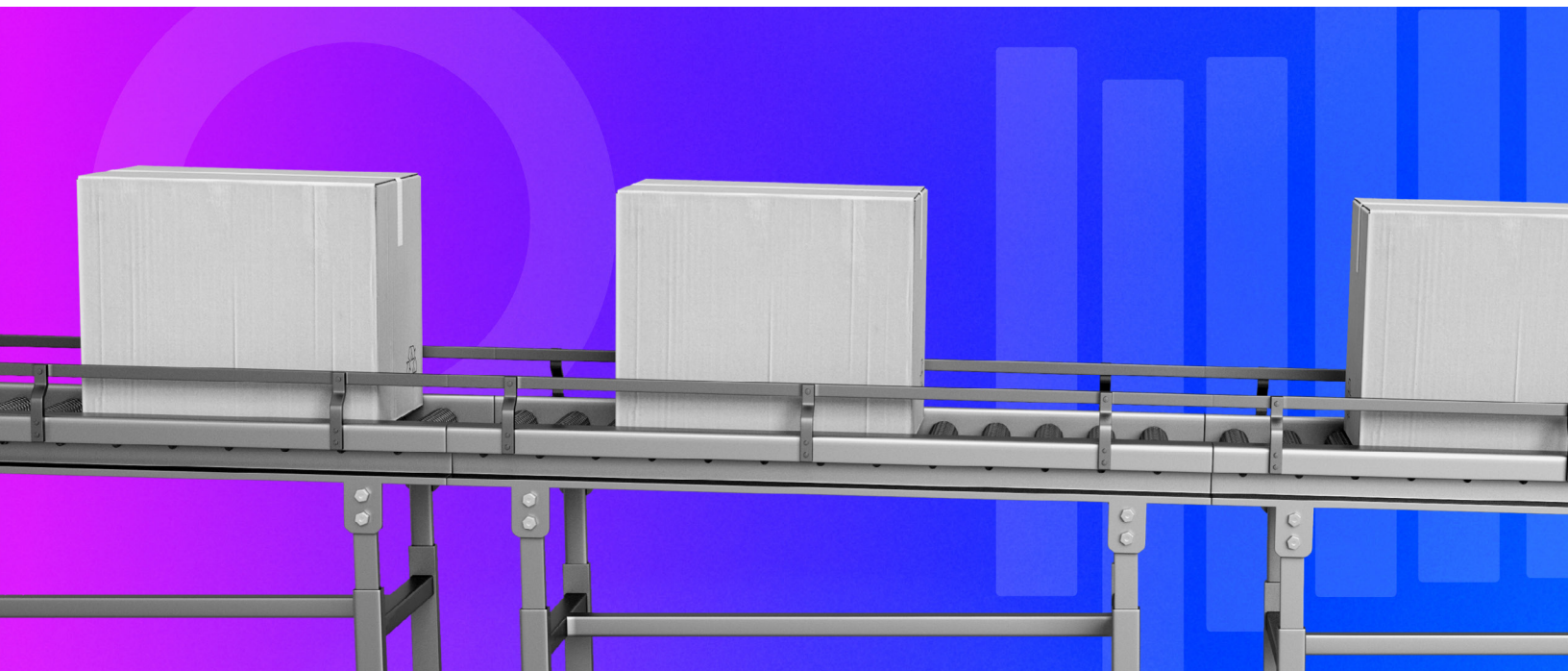
Shipping protection

Today's uncertain supply chain makes shipping protection a more popular add-on than ever.

Because if you don't and the product is lost in the mail, you'll be responsible for absorbing the cost of shipping a new item. Or worse, if you can't ship a replacement, you risk your brand reputation as the customer might write a bad review and tell their friends to avoid shopping with you at all costs.

Merchants work hard to optimize the customer experience, and **offering shipping protection** helps ensure customers receive their products — no matter what happens after the items leave the warehouse.

Live chat

Live chat enables active users on your website to have real-time conversations with live support agents. In-store retail environments lended themselves well to personal, human customer service — but online, it's a little more challenging.

By adding a human touch onto your ecommerce site with live chat, you can continue to build strong customer relationships that drive revenue.

Product protection

Product protection helps keep customers in a working product by offering repair and/or replace benefits on certain types of items. It helps conversion by giving customers peace of mind, then drives repeat purchases through replacements and high customer satisfaction.

"Product protection is great for merchants because it's another opportunity to continue the dialogue with your customers, to get them back to your website. If you're solving your customers' pain points, they will come back," advises Rohan Shah of Extend. "Additionally, product protection is a pure profit play. The incremental revenue you earn with it can be invested in other value-added services."

Loyalty programs

After you've set up the first few essential value-added services that drive conversions and initiate repeat purchases, it's time to incentivize customers through a loyalty program.

But your loyalty program benefits you in plenty of ways, too. First, it drives revenue by increasing conversions, repeat purchases, and customer satisfaction. Just as importantly, loyalty programs provide a treasure trove of first-party data about your most valuable customers.

Self-service returns

It's already frustrating to receive an incorrect product or a product that fails to meet expectations. That frustration will compound if the returns process isn't customer-friendly.

A simple, self-service returns process provides packaging and shipping labels and enables the customer themselves to initiate the return. Solutions that enable frictionless returns can decrease costs while at the same time drive conversion, repeat purchases and customer satisfaction.

Recalibrate Your Marketing Strategy

Once you've got a solid operational foundation and a delightful, end-to-end customer experience, it's time to **tackle your marketing strategy**. **A key takeaway we heard in many of our interviews was that converging forces like rising acquisition costs, growing competition and increasing privacy regulations are shifting the scales from paid channels to owned channels.**

According to Alex McPeak at Klaviyo, "Marketers are going to need to adopt an increased focus on their owned marketing channels in this new privacy-first world. These channels primarily include your website, email marketing and SMS marketing."

That said, you probably shouldn't completely give up on paid channels. You just need to **be smart about your investments**.

Devote More Attention to Owned Channels

First-party data is becoming more and more important. Privacy regulations are changing the way third-party companies can collect and share data, and more regulation is likely in the future, not less. You have to collect your own customer data and really get to know them, so you can better personalize your offers and build long-term loyalty.

Search engine optimization (SEO)

Basic on-site SEO is absolutely fundamental to organic growth. Some quick tips to make sure you've got at least the foundation in place are:

- Reduce image sizes so that your site loads faster
- Build out content on your product category pages
- Make sure your metadata aligns to your top keywords

This is the ground level of what you can do with SEO, but it establishes a solid foundation for you to build upon. Once that's in place, you can leverage other options, like product reviews.

"Adding product reviews to product pages on your website is another unsung way to **improve your SEO performance**," advises Trustpilot's Jake Wallace. "Product reviews can help generate Review Snippets for your products in Google search, and the high frequency of keyword-rich content in your product reviews will prove to Google that you're an authoritative website."

▶ Content marketing

Another option that's long been the favorite of B2B marketers that's starting to gain traction for ecommerce businesses is **content marketing**. Content marketing focuses on the creation and distribution of content to attract and retain customers.

The goal of any content marketing effort should be to answer your audience's questions where they're looking for them — in a way that's tailored for each stage of the buyer's journey.

Do that well, and it will build your brand, drive customers to your website and generate more leads. It can also build customer trust in and affinity for your brand.

There are many different types of content marketing that lend themselves to ecommerce, such as:

- ◢ Blog posts
- ◢ Buying guides
- ◢ Videos
- ◢ Quizzes

You don't have to do it all; choose a few types that are right for your business, that align to your marketing goals, and that your marketing team (or agency partner) can do well.

✉ Email marketing

A core component of owned marketing is that it requires you to collect consent from people in order to collect their data and communicate with them.

Savvy marketers are taking their cue from their customers, and shifting their marketing efforts to using consensual communications, such as **email marketing**, to build genuine customer relationships.

"One tip for merchants who want to improve their email marketing program is to create a VIP segment of your very best customers. The qualifiers of this VIP segment can be based on purchase frequency, LTV, AOV, or total spent with your brand.

Where this segment really comes into play is with testing new ideas and collecting feedback, all the while improving retention and growing customer loyalty.

You can leverage this segment to get direct customer feedback, and promote opportunities for them to speak to someone on your team to relay their experience with your brand and suggest ideas for expansion or improvement.

These customers are also the biggest fans of your brand, which means they're going to be more receptive to new marketing campaigns. For example, if you roll out a referral program or a loyalty program, you could test the reception of it with your loyal customer base to see if it's worth rolling out on a larger scale.

Additionally, providing exclusive experiences like these, and other perks such as early sale access, event opportunities, or sneak peeks of new products, will make these shoppers feel extra special and create loyal customers for life."

— Alex McPeak, Content Strategist, Klaviyo

Keep Digital Advertising Agile

In the early years of ecommerce, it was much easier to garner attention and new customers via **Google or Facebook advertising** at a rate that still allowed for revenue growth — either via low cost of acquisition (CAC) or high lifetime value (LTV).

Now that there's so much more competition — and on top of that, the way CAC has risen — it's even more challenging for brands to reach profitability. Merchants have to be cost-conscious given the macro environment we're in today.

Garrow suggests building your traffic from the bottom up to capture existing demand:

"You've got brand search remarketing on the very bottom [of the funnel] — that's going to convert at a high rate. Brand search remarketing and non-branded search have better conversion rates because those users are looking for what you're selling," said Ryan Garrow of Logical Position.

Continuously test

You don't always have to chase the shiny new thing, because that shiny new thing isn't going to work for every kind of business. Jumping in the deep end with every new channel can lead to your business bleeding a lot of money. Instead, do some controlled tests to make sure you're where you need to be.

"I recommend most brands have some 'light money on fire' money. And this is just your test budget to make sure that you're constantly being able to push into new channels or test new things and try to get that first mover advantage," advised Garrow.

Be ready to pivot

Sometimes, brands that try to scale too quickly don't watch their data closely enough. That means they don't pivot quickly enough.

"You cannot be setting and forgetting on any part of your marketing, whether that's social, Google, Amazon, display or YouTube," said Garrow. "You're going to see data, and you're going to have to react very quickly. The brands able to react quickly are the ones that will succeed."

Take Action Now to Scale to $100 Million

The steps in this guide can help brands scale from their $1 million inflection point to the $100 million mark. While you'll have to adjust any specific tactic to your particular business needs, the key themes throughout this guide ring universal:

1. Reinforce the fundamentals — systems and processes — so that growing your business doesn't strain your infrastructure.

2. Balance your team with a combination in-house and agency support to have expertise where you need it most.

3. Put your customers in the center of everything you do to maximize the growth that comes from long-term customer retention and loyalty.

4. Hedge against uncertainty in third-party advertising channels by leaning into owned channels for acquisition and engagement.

"The most important takeaway that merchants looking to scale need to remember is that everything they do should be for the benefit of their customers. Whether that's investing in a new ecommerce platform, hiring an agency for a rebrand or building a content marketing strategy — it should be driven by what your customers want from you.

— *Airon White, Product Marketing Manager, BigCommerce*

Whichever way you approach these steps, growth won't happen overnight. But over the long-term having a solid plan in place should help you overcome any challenge you face as you scale. The next step is to take action now and start paving your path for growth.

Need more support? BigCommerce and its hundreds of agency and technology partners are here to help. Request a demo today to see how we can help you grow your ecommerce business.