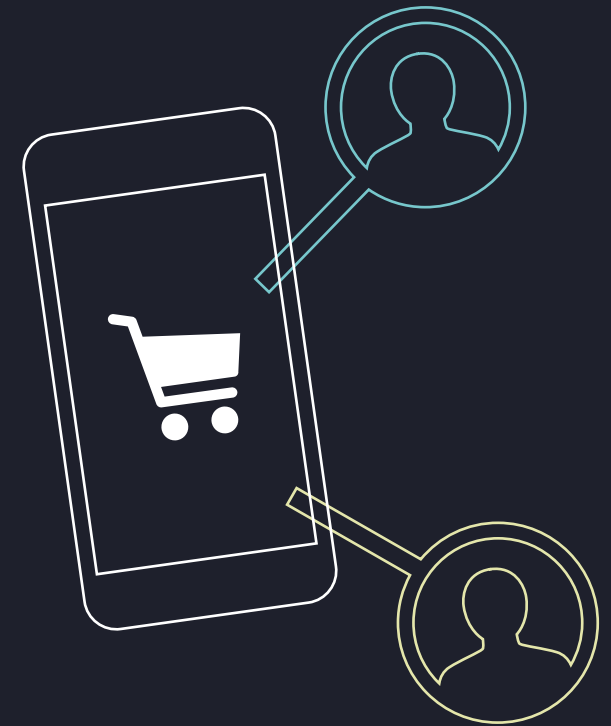# Mastering the art of B2B m-commerce

The ultimate guide to B2B ordering apps

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Contents

Introduction:

Why B2B brands need to embrace mobile

Tech's big role reversal

From heavy-duty enterprise applications to sales and CRM software, everything is going consumer. Tech in every sector is copying the look, feel and convenience of the most popular mass-market applications and devices.

Consumerization isn't the future anymore; it's here. And B2B companies need to understand what's happening.

Because 'consumer' increasingly means 'mobile'. Today's business buyers – many of them Millennials – are using their smartphones first when looking for vendors and getting the products, information, and customer support they need.

From query to quote and on to completed purchase, a finely-tuned B2B mobile strategy is essential to keeping up with their expectations. Doing nothing is not an option.

A digital, data-driven transformation is underway in B2B e-commerce, with new competition coming from unexpected vectors and customers demanding the personalized experiences that B2C companies take for granted.

In mobile, B2B's market maturity is still a long way off. Traditional business models and outdated techniques are still prevalent. Moving towards mobile requires stepping out of old comfort zones.

> "The modern millennial B2B buyer doesn't want to have to pick up a phone and call to order. Today's B2B buyers just want to get things done – right then and there."
>
> **Doug Root, CEO at Atlanta Light Bulbs**

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Chapter 1.
Looking for the first B2B Uber

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B2B customer expectations for mobile are being defined by the premium, seamless experiences provided by brands like Uber and Airbnb. That sets the bar pretty high.

B2B also comes with challenges. Pricing and payment aren't as straightforward as they are in B2C, having to account for elements like purchase orders, quotes, contracts, payment terms, credit checks, and more.

Product catalogs can also be extensive and complex, with the variation amongst individual products you'd expect from B2B but with options for customization.

Add to that the fact that many B2B e-commerce channels rely on inbound queries, but sales commissions depend on outbound sales – still the best way to close larger deals.

These complexities have led many B2B brands to put the launching and optimizing of an e-commerce channel on hold.
But other brands are focussing on mobile and getting great results.

Let's dive into the possibilities.

B2B eCommerce Platform

Desktop   Mobile

90% of B2B Buyers
were willing to buy again from a vendor that provides a superior mobile experience

Mobile can drive more than **40% of revenue** for leading B2B organizations

By 2020, mobile is projected to take more than
70% of B2B search queries

Chapter 2.

Three reasons why B2B companies need to take mobile seriously

Make it easy, everywhere

As we become accustomed to the ease and convenience of mobile in our personal lives, we expect those experiences to carry through to our professional lives too. Not because every consumer expectation is relevant in B2B, but the way we interact and the information we seek is being influenced by our personal experiences.

01   B2B Mobile e-commerce is even bigger than B2C

B2B has traditionally been desktop-oriented, but according to a recent study, mobile devices already drive 40% of B2B e-commerce sales for large organizations[1]. That's a big number – but it's only the beginning.

According to Forbes, B2B e-commerce will grow to $6.7 trillion by 2020, with most sales being mobile. These findings may surprise many of our readers. After all, B2B is traditionally desktop-oriented.

B2B e-commerce, when compared to the B2C industry, is projected to be two times bigger than B2C in 2020. It's anticipated to be the hottest area of e-commerce growth from now until 2025.

What's changing? According to the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), evolving B2C habits are creating a paradigm in B2B e-commerce, too. According to BCG **"today's B2B buyers look for the same digital experience they encounter as consumers".**

[1] *NEED SOURCE*

8

02   Millennials don't fax

A report from Merit claims that 73 percent of B2B buyers today are Millennials – the original digital natives. They prefer buying online and default to mobile, which explains why B2B m-commerce is growing at lightning speed.

Millennials are the original mobile-first generation, and they've reached the age where they've moved into corporate purchasing roles. The 'Millenials are different' theme has been done to death, but in economic terms, they behave in ways that can still surprise.

Mobile-first Millennials

For example, unlike previous generations, they've been raised to expect the same user experience from B2B technology that they get from B2C. Their purchasing habits are also different. Post-GenX-ers are highly focused on practicality and getting things done. Making phone calls to place orders or obtain a quote isn't how they operate.

It's not that personal relationships aren't important to them; it's that the customs of human interaction have been changed forever by smartphones, social media, and SMS. Winning the business of people who have grown up with those technologies — and sustaining their loyalty – means respecting their habits and preferences.

70% of all B2B queries are expected to be on a smartphone by 2020.

If B2B stores continue to focus on desktop, they'll lose revenue and customers.

41%

of B2B customers say that self-service functionality is one of the top three ways B2B companies could make it easier for them to shop online.

73%

of B2B execs say that customer expectations for personalized experiences are significantly higher today compared to just a few years ago.

03   B2C barbarians at the gate

B2C companies are ahead of B2B companies when it comes to mobile branding and optimized shopping experiences. That's forcing B2B companies to raise their game.

Giants like Amazon see a massive opportunity in B2B. It already has a B2B marketplace that provides business customers with the pricing, selection, and convenience they expect from Amazon's B2C presence.
It's designed to make purchasing easy and mobile by combining Amazon's familiar one-stop shopping with quantity discounts, price comparisons, approval workflows, and multi-user accounts.

Amazon has parked its tank on B2B's lawn

There's an annual membership program similar to Prime that rewards loyalty with perks, including free two-day shipping. It also includes business-friendly features, like multi-user business accounts, approval workflow, payment solutions, tax exemptions, dedicated customer support, and more.

With consumer e-commerce behemoths encroaching on their space, B2B brands will need to get better at mobile if they want to protect revenues and margin.

> **"Today's mobile-first B2B buyers will select or reject you based on how easy you make the ordering process —even when your prices are higher."**
>
> **(Handshake research)**

Chapter 3.

Why the B2B mobile journey is different

Mapping the purchase from a to z

How can B2B brands reap the benefits and make sure B2B buyers continue to buy with them? It starts with recognizing that the buyer journey on B2B is different from B2C; both more complicated and pressurized.

So how can brands create a perfect B2B mobile journey?

The nature of B2B transactions means buyers need to go through several steps, from sales representative interaction, negotiations, contracts, and approvals before they can make a successful purchase—especially if it's a first buy.

That's why B2B e-commerce businesses must provide a more seamless transaction, building in advanced functionality for quote management, price negotiation, easy ordering, and inventory management.

Fact: all of this can be achieved on mobile.

Chapter 4.

What apps can do that mobile sites can't

Mobile websites: great, but not enough

Brands across the consumer and B2B spectrum have been making websites mobile for years now. But as good as mobile-responsive web design is, it still falls short at those crucial moments when people are ready to buy.

Though responsive websites are thoughtfully designed, and e-commerce teams spend hours trying to make the purchase journey better, responsive essentially means desktop websites re-sized for mobile screens. The buying experience can be awkward, and many would-be buyers simply give up.

Those bad mobile shopping experiences can have a significant impact, not only on conversion but also on future buying decisions.

To protect revenues and stop being swamped by a wave of negative sentiment, B2B brands need to expand their mix of mobile channels. After building a great mobile site, adding an m-commerce app is the next logical step.

On the B2C side, big brands like Sephora and Zara have all invested in an m-commerce app. The result? Mobile is now their top source of online revenue. B2B brands need to take note.

41%

B2B brands getting mobile right

Industrial supplier Grainger now sees **41% of its mobile sales** flow through its app.

Wholesaler Bulq.com boasts iPhone app revenues up **457% over its desktop experience** and a 93% repeat user rate.

> **"Over half our shoppers are mobile at this point...once people use the app they kind of don't go back to desktop,"**
>
> **says Larisa Summers, VP of e-commerce.**

Chapter 5.

The case for B2B e-commerce Apps

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Why invest in an app?

Reason 1: They Drive efficiency

B2B buyers want a reasonable price, but it's not their only consideration. Efficiency and time-saving matter too, so they want their buying experiences to be fast and easy.

B2B buyers also live their professional lives on the go. Many are on the job site, in the field, hot-desking, and commuting. Some will simply want offline access to products, account information, order tracking, knowledge bases, manuals and more.

With a mobile site you have to log in every time and field information often isn't saved.

For that, you need an app.

Apps can also help B2B brands support sales teams, channel partners, customer support and field technicians. Sales can use apps to access accounts, quickly create discount codes or other incentives, configure quotes or place orders on the road, at a sales call or on the tradeshow floor. Support and field teams can order hardware, replacement parts, make account upgrades, and apply credits on-site.

B2B apps can integrate features like:

- barcode scanning
- custom pricing
- password-protected app
- volume-based ordering
- image search
- speech-to-text
- location-aware services
- one-touch payments
- multicurrency
- post-payment options
- gestures,
- offline access,
- push notifications
- messenger integration
- touch login and integration with mobile wallets

 – all proven tactics for optimizing the digital experience, driving revenue and building loyalty.

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Reason 2: Apps drive B2B conversion

One complication of B2B e-commerce is that many companies don't want their prices available to the public. By using the controlling mechanism of an online account linked to an app, B2B brands can get the right prices, product sets and other information to the right buyers when they need it – a sure-fire conversion booster.

With Millennials now at the forefront of many B2B buying decisions, making the mobile purchase journey as straightforward as possible is vital.
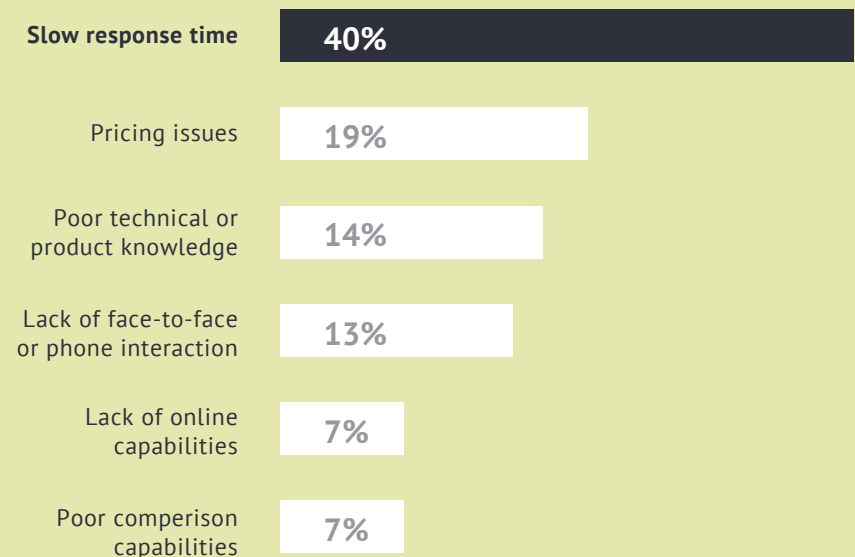
Digital is defining vendor selection

A report from Demand Gen suggests that when all other factors are equal (e.g., price, quality), the digital buying experience is decisive when selecting a vendor.

A study by McKinsey & Company found that slow site response times are a B2B buyer's biggest complaint with online ordering.

Speed and responsiveness are today's version of quality, face-to-face interactions. Ignore it, and you'll lose business.

A slow response time is buyers' biggest complaint

Slow response time	**40%**
Pricing issues	19%
Poor technical or product knowledge	14%
Lack of face-to-face or phone interaction	13%
Lack of online capabilities	7%
Poor comperison capabilities	7%

Source: McKinsey B2B customer decision journey survey, 2016

Reason 3: Location, location, location

Location services enable apps to personalize product info, shipping information, promotions and more based on a user's geolocation. As B2B buyers often buy in quantity or need same-day deliveries, access to accurate location-based inventory is vital.

Location awareness can also enhance customer service. Live chat or click-to-call features can connect customers to the right rep or agent.

The power of push notifications

Location can also be the trigger for push messages, one of the most impactful digital marketing tools available. By sending regular push notifications, sellers can easily engage buyers with new products and offers. This makes it easy for the seller to re-engage buyers and increase sales.

Many wholesalers & distributors are opening multi-location cash-and-carry stores. As B2B buyers are always short of time, by offering an inbuilt GPS feature to track nearby pickup location, a B2B mobile app provides the convenience of ordering on-the-go.

These are capabilities a mobile responsive website simply can't deliver.

Reason 4: Apps drive Loyalty in B2B

Retaining customers is critical to B2B success. Compared to B2C, where customer churn is part and parcel of doing business, B2B brands depend on regular purchases to survive and thrive.

To this end, you may be glad to know that people return 2x faster to a mobile app within 30 days, than they do to a mobile website. Plus they even spend at least 27% more per session.

That's because, with a mobile app, customers are reminded of your brand and app constantly. Every time they check their phone (currently up to 200 times a day), they see your app logo on their home screen.

A glowing billboard on their home screen

A personal mobile device offers a walled garden of data that in-office desktops and browsers that anonymize sessions, or clear cookies can't provide. Buyers who download and use the app are likely to be existing account holders; this segment is also the most attractive to target personalized content, offers and service to.

Seeing your app icon and receiving special offers via push messages can enhance the experience, increase the likelihood to buy and even increase order value. Alternatively, defined user actions could prompt a customer service text or phone call from a real human, or a proactive perk such as a free sample or promotional offer.

Reason 5: Apps are cost-effective and high ROI for B2B

For a B2C vendor, it's harder to win back the return on investment. B2B buyers, on the other hand, make purchases more often and for more volume than their B2C counterparts.

This means that a B2B e-commerce mobile app tends to pay for itself quickly, with very little chance of it being net-negative.

This is especially true if you leave your app to a brand like JMango360. Our set-up costs are minimal, the monthly fee is small, and you get a dedicated app onboarding team to help you succeed; with conditions like these, it's almost impossible to fail.

But – even though building commerce apps is (relatively) easy -- getting customers to adopt and use them needs your attention. To deliver on your objectives and achieve ROI, B2B buyers have to know your app is out there, be convinced to try it, and find enough utility there to keep them coming back.
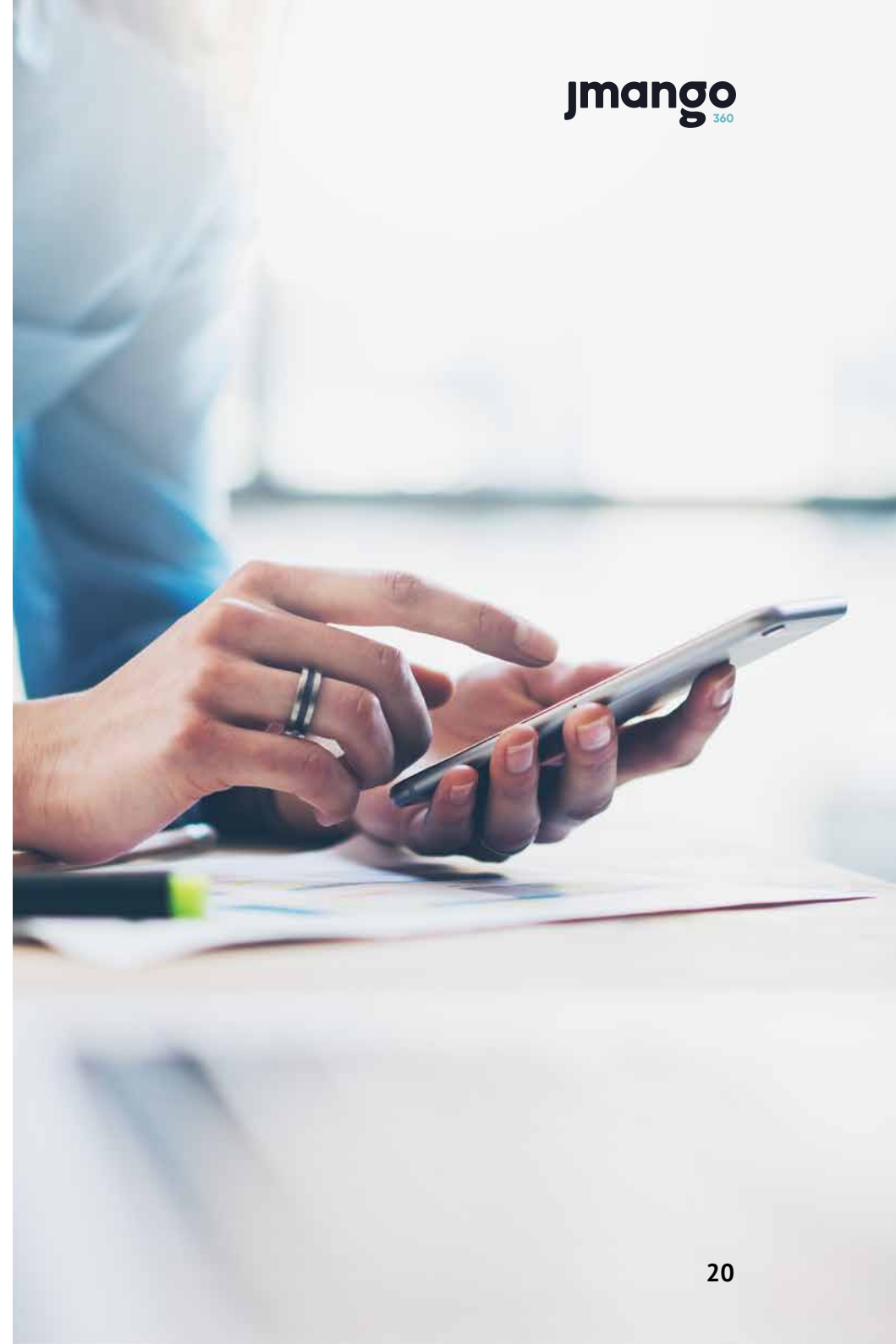
How B2B and B2C apps compare

Historically, B2B apps are rarely seen in Top 20 lists in the Google Play or iOS App Stores. The featured apps tend to be B2C apps due to the sheer number of consumers who download them, as well as the rapid rate of new development in this space. What's been hidden from view for the last couple years is the rising popularity of B2B apps.

Compared side-by-side, it's interesting to note the differences between the two app types, as well as the advantages and challenges of developing each.

	B2C APPS	B2B APPS
Key for Profit	• High user adoption	• Customer loyalty
Primary Measurements of Succes	• Lower prices than other apps • Continuous new features	• Optimized experience • Added business value
Upside	• Low barriers to entry • Lower standards for initial user download	• More frequent purchases at higher volumes • Mandated usage for organizational-level adoption
Downside	• Higher customer churn • Must achieve traction quickly	• Must win customers and gain early evangelists • Higher standards to prove business value

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Chapter 6.
Recognizing B2B customer diversity

Respecting the mobile me

One of mobile's defining characteristics is its personal nature. The relationships people have with their devices is diverse, and there's no one-size approach to mobile success in B2B commerce. Expanding the range of mobile B2B channels you offer will enable you to capture prospects and influence at different phases of the purchase journey.

Diversify by channel

For first-time buyers or prospects who've found you via organic search, a progressive web app or PWA can make sense. It provides an app-like experience and more capabilities but still loads inside the user's default mobile web browser. They don't need to be downloaded and installed, but they're still a huge step up from mobile web sites.

For other customers just having a working B2B ordering app will be enough. They're native apps, so they have more features and an even better user experience. Native apps do need to be downloaded before being used. But most B2B buyers will actually be thankful for this service and have no problem downloading your app, if it makes their ordering process faster and easier.

Diversify by segment

Another way to reach diverse mobile B2B audiences is to create segmented mobile approaches. For time-poor SME buyers, for example, you could focus on making everything digital: fast custom pricing, range of b2b payment options, and translating the 'service and personal' benefits of to offer support via chatbots.

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Chapter 7.

Move your B2B mobile strategy forward today

Get a B2B ordering app, live in 30 days

A digital, data-driven transformation is underway in B2B e-commerce, with new competition coming from unexpected vectors and customers demanding the personalized experiences that B2C companies take for granted.

B2B customers need self-service e-commerce to streamline their ordering process. With JMango360's ordering app for B2B and wholesale customers, you'll maximize their convenience.

Easy, affordable, flexible
For a long time mobile apps were only affordable for big brands. So we developed a SaaS platform to democratize mobile growth. We can launch a best-in-class app in just 4-6 weeks – beautifully designed and fully functional, with all the bells and whistles.

Our straightforward platform lets B2B companies and their e-commerce agencies create a native app or PWA, manage it, create B2B purchase flows, and track analytics without big budgets or development teams.

Start driving repeat orders today.

Talk to an expert

Contact our team and start driving mobile sales through the roof.

Talk to our B2B ecommerce experts

Get in touch with JMango360 today.

Contact us

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