B2X: A NEW PARA- DIGM FOR COM- MERCE

FORGET YOUR OLD IDEAS ABOUT B2C / B2B / B2G

Today's demanding professional consumers won't be defined by yesterday's categories. Sophisticated, technically savvy and demanding, customers' expectations are high and their time is valuable. As a baseline, they expect the same broad selection, elegant navigation and satisfying web experience wherever and whenever they shop.

You might be a B2B only company, and your products may not be "consumer products." But the person at the other end of a transaction is still a savvy customer through and through. They don't think of channels and labels the way you do. So forget your old ideas about B2C or B2B or B2G, or whatever other letter of the alphabet you assign them. Think of a new paradigm that defines them all - B2X.

SALES CHANNELS

B2A	Business to Association
B2B	Business to Business
B2C	Business to Consumer
B2D	Business to Distributor
B2E	Business to Employee
B2G	Business to Government
B2I	Business to Institution
B2M	Business to Market
B2B2B	Business to Business to Business
B2B2C	Business to Business to Consumer

WHAT IS B2X?

Is X a consumer? **Yes.**
Is X a business? **Frequently**.
Is X a distributor, reseller, strategic partner or government buyer? **Yes, yes, yes and yes.**

X is someone and everyone. And X is gravitating to commerce sites that offer him convenience and relevancy without a lot of wasted time. Just because X_1 works for a hospital, doesn't mean she wants to settle for a clunky web experience that's one step above an online product catalog. And just because X_2 is one of your regular buyers doesn't mean that he gets taken for granted, while prospect X_3 gets [360-degree view product photography](#) when purchasing online.

JUST SAY NO
TO CLUNKY ONLINE PRODUCT CATALOGS

Westmusic
Experience the power of making music.

BEST PRACTICES IN B2X SELLING

WEST MUSIC TREATS ALL MUSIC LOVERS THE SAME

If [West Music](#) knows one thing really well, it is that x= music lovers. That's the common denominator in its business. West Music sells its products and services to institutions, businesses and direct to consumers. These include instrument repair, lessons, music therapy services, and thousands of music product SKU's, representing hundreds of brands. While the purchasing process for the B2B and B2I channels require unique capabilities such as negotiated pricing, different buyer authorizations and more, the inventory is shared across all channels. To streamline processes and efficiently manage internal resources, West Music has deployed an ecommerce solution that lets them manage both B2B and B2C from one platform. Their B2B customers feel like the B2C shoppers they are in their personal lives.

X = SOMEONE

THE UNKNOWN VARIABLE:
SOLVE FOR X

In algebra, X has evolved to become the symbol for an unknown or variable quantity. In the B2X solution, X= someone. The more you know about X, the more you can affect that relationship.

X=me, X=you, X=my business, X=my department

The rationale is clear: the better you know the customer, the easier it is to identify what they need.

Is B2X a catchy term or slogan? It's both, but we hope it's more than that. At ShopVisible, it's a realization that comes from building and monitoring hundreds of commerce sites for all types of organizations.
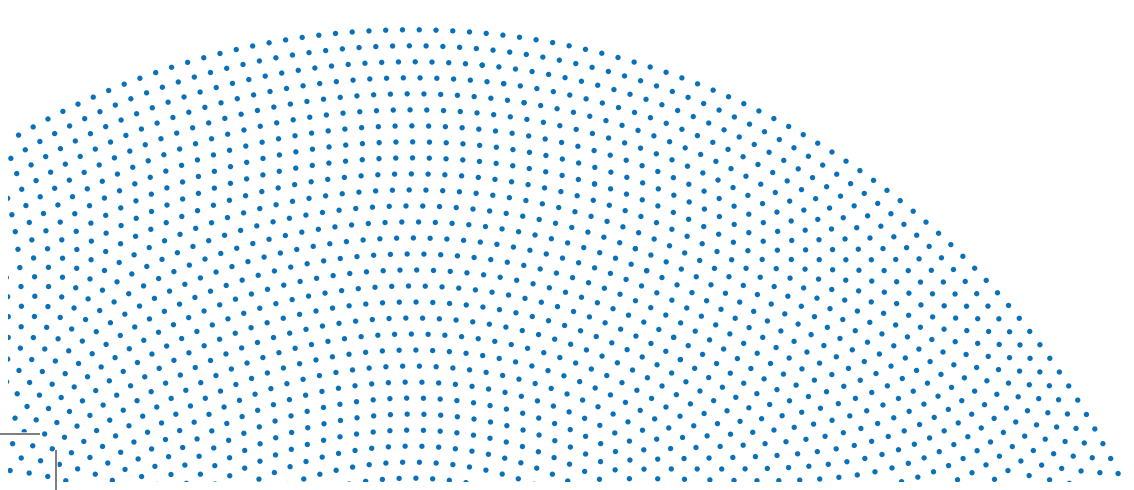
Read on. And let's solve for X.

ROOM FOR IMP-ROVE-MENT

"ONLY 50% OF B2B FIRMS CONSIDER THEIR WEB SITES TO BE EFFECTIVE MARKETING TOOLS."

29%
MOBILE SHOPPERS

use their phone for shopping-related activities and more than half of mobile users are repeat visitors to daily deal sites, according to Nielsen

THE FIRST ATTRIBUTE OF **X:** THEY WANT IT ALL

They want it all—product, information, prices, delivery status, and more—when and where they want it.

This is a great time to be a consumer. Today's omnichannel customer is transforming the buying experience. Theirs is a world of total access and instant gratification. Whether In a store, on a laptop, at work, watching TV with a tablet on their lap, playing an Xbox, they are connected everywhere. In this day and age, a mobile device is often a more important resource than a salesperson. Customers now expect to research and purchase where and when it works for them, not for you.

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

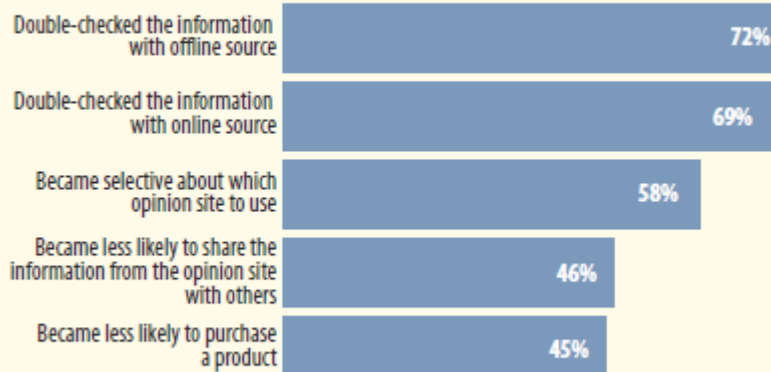**ONE SHOPVISIBLE B2B COMMERCE CLIENT HANDLES OVER 25,000 PRE-NEGOTIATED ACCOUNT LEVEL PRICE LISTS.**

X HAS E-FLUENCE

Online or offline, word of mouth cannot be ignored. With limitless access to products, price comparisons, peer reviews, and instantaneous transactions, consumers have power through ratings, reviews, referrals, and of course viral social media channels like Twitter. Others gravitate to super influencers. Burson-Marsteller refers to these individuals as E-fluentials, and says that on average E-fluentials pass on positive reviews to 11 other people; negative reviews to 17 other people. Not only do your commerce channels need to support reviews and ratings, you need to work them to your advantage like the E-fluentials.

E-fluentials' Responses to Potentially Biased Reviews on Opinion Web sites

Response	Percentage
Double-checked the information with offline source	72%
Double-checked the information with online source	69%
Became selective about which opinion site to use	58%
Became less likely to share the information from the opinion site with others	46%
Became less likely to purchase a product	45%

YOUR WEB EXPERIENCE SHOULD LOOK LIKE **THIS**

NOT **THIS**

THE SECOND ATTRIBUTE OF **X:**
THEY ARE SOPHISTICATED

"Click here to download a pdf of our catalog" simply does not cut it.

Business B2X customers have entered the 21st century. At one time they were satisfied with a hefty print catalog/price list and an occasional sales call or free lunch. However, as the lines between work experiences and personal experiences have blurred, expectations for B2B websites have elevated. Product sites that do little more than emulate print catalogs in pdf format are outdated. Products that are hard to find or order encourage drop off. Think about it. If you had a choice, would you rather drive to a dusty warehouse to choose products from stacks of indistinguishable pallets, or visit a modern mall and browse amongst all the beautiful storefronts? It's a no brainer. Sizzle sells and convenience converts.

Great design and navigation, search, filtering, detailed descriptions, images, rich media, personalization, product reviews, social media, and mobile are all features that add to your website's sizzle factor. These are increasingly the standard, not the exception, that customers have come to expect.

But it is not all about sizzle – once you have mastered the art of presenting your products, you have to facilitate the sale in a much more complex environment. It's no easy task getting there. Businesses transacting with one another have levels of complication that far surpasses the needs of selling to an individual. Fit for Commerce consultants estimate "the implementation of a B2B ecommerce platform is typically 10X more complicated than B2C."

B2B organizations deal with various networks and channels of business partners, distributors, resellers, and dealers with many different locations. Within these groups are discreet levels of purchasing authority, uniquely contracted prices with different parts of the organization, product subsets, complex shipping and logistics arrangements.

Despite the dizzying complexity, there is good news. Figure out how to build intimate, configurable and pleasing customer experiences within the confines of these corporate rules and regulations, and you have solved for X. **Ease the transition for B2B customers, and you may have a customer for life.**

The upshot of this is that once businesses master these issues, they actually have some real lessons to teach B2C websites when it comes to understanding, nurturing and retaining B2X customers.

THE THIRD ATTRIBUTE OF X:
THEY ARE FORCING YOU TO COLLAPSE YOUR ORG CHART

Traditionally, selling organizations have aligned their strategies, measurements, and incentives along with their organizational charts. Retail, wholesale, e-commerce and mobile teams each have a quota they are trying to hit, and they count their own beans differently. Often they are treated as different business units; sometimes almost as separate companies.

But customers don't "bucket" themselves in the same way. Consider Joe. Joe's back hurts when he wakes up in the morning, so he does some research online for a new mattress. He goes to a nearby store to try out the mattress himself. After bouncing around on a few models, he returns home, checks out some reviews online and ends up buying direct from his tablet while waiting for his kid's karate class to end.

Regardless of which "channel" he uses, Joe expects a seamless experience throughout the sales cycle. Pricing, availability, inventory, ship-ping, status, etc. must all be consistent across channels – whether he is talking to a sales rep or managing his own online experience.

Now, how should the company allocate credit for that sale? Who gets the commission and gets to count it toward making quota? It's not an easy solution because commissions and bonuses affect behavior. But at the end of the day, does it really matter for the bottom line? Business shouldn't put up barriers to sales based on channel differences. Instead, they should examine how a channel encourages a customer to buy with greater frequency, resulting in higher profitability for the company. At the very least, businesses should consider the collective revenue contribution across these channels. When organizations can get their incentives aligned, create mechanisms to measure attribution across customer interactions and get the company culture to embrace this philosophy across all these touchpoints, they will begin selling and relating to X on X's terms.

RESEARCH THAT STARTS ON SMARTPHONES LEADS TO PURCHASES ACROSS CHANNELS

RESEARCH ON SMARTPHONE

37% THEN PURCHASED VIA COMPUTER

32% THEN PURCHASED OFFLINE

OPEN
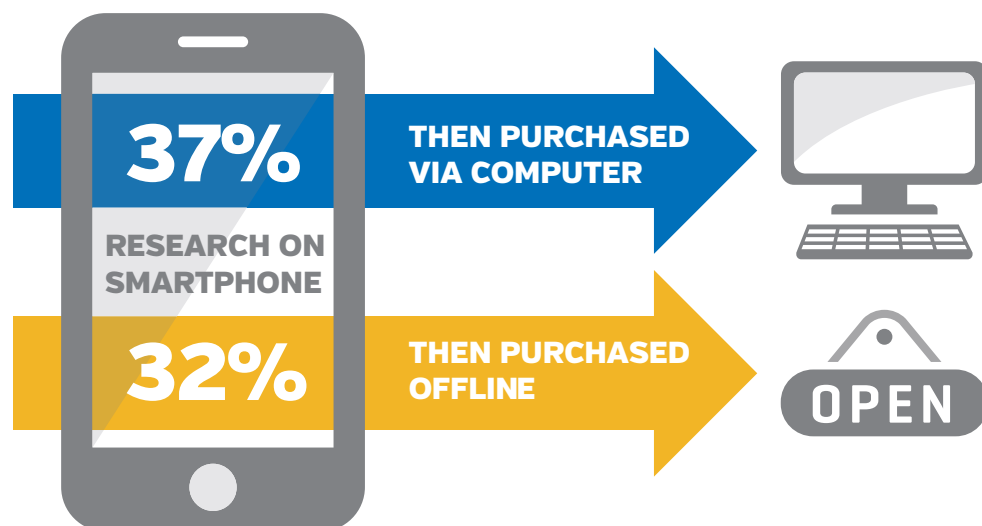
SOLVING FOR

X

CONCLUSION

The era of the ultra-connected consumer is forcing companies to reorganize their compartmentalized approach to commerce. Buyers today expect the same selection, navigation ease, and online 24/7 access professionally, as they do in their personal lives. And basic consumer sites would be wise to replicate some of the best practices of business and government sites when it comes to recognizing various levels of personalization, retention and lifetime customer value. Within this new B2X paradigm, X= anyone. X could be a business, or a consumer, or a group or subgroup with unique needs and demands. And the more that businesses solve for X and configure their businesses to serve X, the better they will be positioned to capitalize on this profound market change.

Shop Visible™

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ALPHA INDUSTRIES INC.

BEST PRACTICES IN B2X SELLING

ALPHA INDUSTRIES WINS BATTLE AGAINST CHANNEL CONFLICT

Alpha Industries "rugged look" military based apparel has a 50 year success history selling first to military (B2G) then to retailers (B2B). When the fashion world took notice, these garments migrated from their military roots into globally popular casual or street wear styles. And with e-commerce, increasingly consumers (B2C) wanted to be able to see the entire product line and purchase online. "We had been selling to other businesses for years, but when we decided to sell directly to consumers via the web we wanted to be very careful to avoid channel conflict", said Jesse Price, Alpha's Director of Online Marketing. When ready to buy, consumers are encouraged to visit retailer websites or brick and mortar stores for purchase. Today, the Alpha website serves double duty as a visually appealing clearing house of information for consumers and as a source of leads for retailers. Channel conflict resolved.