



B2B Commerce 2024:

The Big Trends and
Actionable Insights

About this guide



About Luminos Labs

Luminos Labs is on a mission to help B2B and B2C companies transform their digital commerce experience. We are a technology agnostic systems integrator helping the world's best B2B and B2C brands to navigate the complexities of digital commerce transformation. We specialize in complexity and are adept at making new and legacy technology work fluidly and reliably.

And, don't forget to ask us how we transform digital commerce with Polaris, our methodology for delivering projects on budget and on time.

About this guide

This guide comes from a recent panel on [Digital Commerce 360](#) covering Digital Commerce in 2024. This guide is the work of Luminos labs and includes the perspectives of our partners at Bloomreach, Znode, and Pimberly.



Jacobi Zakrzewski

VP Business Architecture
Luminos Labs

Got a question about digital commerce?

Feel free to email Jacobi directly at jacobi.zakrzewski@luminoslabs.com

Meet the pros

Jacobi Zakrzewski is the VP, Business Architecture at Luminos Labs, a leading B2B Commerce systems integrator focused on practicality, collaboration, and risk mitigation. Jacobi enables businesses to select, adopt, and improve technology platforms to match up with the overarching organizational goals as it relates to Digital Commerce Experiences. Prior to Luminos Labs, Jacobi was the VP of IT at a large national electrical distributor in the US with responsibility over Digital Commerce, Application Development, Business Applications, Infrastructure, and Cybersecurity. He is able to turn an organization's strategic aspirations into operational reality by capitalizing on the appropriate technology, supported by the right people, using effective processes.



Jacobi Zakrzewski

VP Business Architecture



David Boyd is an expert in product discovery with a wealth of experience in digital marketing and solutions consulting. Currently serving as the Presales Team Lead for Discovery & Content in North America at Bloomreach, David is renowned for his ability to seamlessly bridge the gap between business and technical requirements, while fostering successful client relationships.



Dave Boyd

Presales Team Lead





Tom Flierl

Chief Commercial Officer



Tom is the Chief Commercial Officer at Amla Commerce, leading the sales, marketing, channel management, and account management teams and managing analyst relations. He leverages over 20 years of business experience in branding, marketing, digital commerce, and technology to assist customers through their digital journey. Tom is frequently featured as a speaker and thought leader on digital commerce.



Martin Balaam

Founder & CEO of Pimberly



Martin Balaam is the CEO & Founder of Pimberly, an Enterprise SaaS platform for Product Information Management and Digital Asset Management for brands & retailers. Martin is also Co-Owner/Director of his family business, Welcome Furniture Ltd, the UK's largest manufacturer/Brand of Bedroom furniture for the Retail and Student Accommodation industry based in Caernarfon, Wales, UK

Before joining Pimberly, Martin was the Owner & CEO of Jigsaw24, the UK's largest IT Solutions business serving creative Film, TV & Luxury brands, an investment alongside NorthEdge Capital LLC, where he grew revenues from £45m to £125m in 5 years and then successfully exited in 2018, achieving over 3x returns - after the exit he founded Pimberly.

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of B2B commerce, understanding the key trends and actionable insights is crucial for businesses looking to stay competitive and relevant. This paper summarizes the insights from a webinar focused on B2B commerce in 2024, addressing the impact of AI, inventory management, search and discovery, and more. This webinar was moderated by Luminos Labs with panelists from Bloomreach, Pimberly, and Znode.



Questions for 2024

01

Let's put you in the shoes of the decision maker looking out at the digital commerce technology landscape here in 2024. Where is your head at with the first thing that comes to mind?

04

Who is truly ready for a composable technology architecture in 2024, and who would be better off sticking with the "monolith"? Why?

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What does 2024 bring that we either didn't really get to in 2023 or it is just emerging?

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Have we forgotten the basics for success in chasing trends? If so, what do you see from it?

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Is AI Integration a Game-Changer for B2B E-commerce, or Just Hype? What do you see as being achievable in 2024?

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Can you pinpoint a sacred cow in B2B commerce that businesses dare to really challenge or rethink in 2024?

Let's put you in the shoes of the decision maker looking out at the digital commerce technology landscape here in 2024. Where is your head at with the first thing that comes to mind?

The notion of flexibility in digital commerce, particularly in the B2B sector, has become essential for businesses whose goal is to thrive in a dynamic market environment. If you're a business who purchased a platform three to five years ago, there's a high chance that your business now in 2024 is drastically different since that time period. Tom Flierl, of Znode, highlights the critical need for digital commerce platforms that are not just robust but also agile enough to adapt to rapid changes in the business landscape.

Companies are looking for solutions that can accommodate growth, changes in market dynamics, and evolving customer preferences. The ability to quickly adjust and respond to these changes without extensive overhauls or downtime is a key competitive advantage.

"Your customers are going to have different expectations," says Dave Boyd of Bloomreach. "So if you're trying to build out an experience, you want to make sure that whatever it is that you're purchasing is a baseline of your platform to enable you to build and develop on top of that."

While technology plays a huge role in being adaptable to change, another aspect companies don't realize is how their own team members could be holding them back from adaptability.



"Maybe they launched new product lines, maybe even launched some new brands," says Tom Flierl of Znode, "they need to move data in and out of the platform fast, and they're stuck." Is it [the ecommerce platform] flexible enough to change with my business?"



Tom Flierl

Chief Commercial Officer
Znode

Challenges in Adopting New Technologies

Many B2B businesses operate on legacy systems that are deeply embedded in their operations, so transitioning from these systems to newer technologies can be a significant challenge. Legacy systems often have complex integrations and dependencies that make switching to new technologies a high-risk project. Martin Balaam of Pimberly says that it's about the usability of the technology. It's important that your team members are able to articulate how to use the new platform that's being adopted.

"That's the human aspect...that just breeds the competence in terms of the successful deployment [of the platform]" said Martin.

Businesses need to either strategize on how to integrate new technologies with these legacy systems or phase them out without causing operational disruptions.

Resistance to change within an organization can also be a significant barrier to adopting new technologies. This resistance can stem from a lack of understanding of the benefits, fear of the unknown, or discomfort with altering established workflows.

"What we're seeing is more salespeople becoming part of the eCommerce conversation." said Tom Flierl, who sees this point of view from an eCommerce platform perspective. "We're also seeing a nice return on investment from replacing full time employees that are traditionally inside salespeople or customer service reps through automation."

As scary as this may sound to some people currently in a sales position at a company looking to transform their back-end systems, this doesn't mean the automation is taking away the salesperson or customer service employees' job. It's about getting them involved in the automation process.

"It's the relationship building," says Dave Boyd, "It's evolving, but it's not something that we're going to replace...it's just meeting them where they are now. We're making us accessible, wherever you are, we're meeting you in the moment."

Your salespeople can still build and have those relationships with customers through being a human and listening to their needs, to then help them find what products they are looking for and how much quantity. Then to allow them to log into a portal and order what it is they need, wherever they are.

Integrating sales teams into the eCommerce experience can lead to better customer interactions, data utilization, and overall efficiency. The sales team plays a critical role in driving adoption and providing valuable insights into customer needs and market trends.

Question

01

What does 2024 bring that we either didn't really get to in 2023 or it is just emerging?

Now that you've got all of your back-end systems up to date, how do you make sure that you're delivering a unified experience for each of those different channels? Customers are expecting a personalized experience regardless of what touchpoint they're using.

"You go onto a site, whether it's a B2B buyer or B2C user, they're expecting that [personalized] experience," said Dave Boyd.

While everyone would like to find out what is the best customer experience for ordering, it comes down to your product type. There's so many variables in B2B that, to me, it's still about the integrations of other platforms." says Tom Flierl.

It can feel like a never ending cycle to find the right tech stack for your business, but at the end of the day it may simply come down to what's next in the integration list in the backlog.

When you've sat with legacy systems for so long, sometimes it's more about keeping the lights on, even when a business knows that they have a problem that needs to be addressed.

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"There are so many variables in B2B that, to me, it's still about the integrations to other [systems] platforms."



Tom Flierl

Chief Commercial Officer
Znode

Is AI Integration a Game-Changer for B2B E-commerce, or Just Hype? What do you see as being achievable in 2024?

The role of AI in personalization underscores its importance in understanding and catering to individual customer preferences and needs. AI-driven personalization can manifest in various forms, such as personalized product recommendations, customized content, and tailored search results, leading to a more engaging and satisfying customer experience.

"It's never perfect, right?" says Dave Boyd, "We can always iterate and make it better and I think that's something I'm excited about to see how AI can figure out the voice of the customer even further. Your customers are always going to describe items differently than what's provided by a pin."

What's important is that your core product data is accurate. If the AI is going to describe the widgets that you're providing to your customer. Teaching it to properly understand and continuously adapt to how your customers are describing items, feeding that back into the pin, then feeding that back into your dataset that you're using to train your search engine is something you should be doing to make the most out of your AI.

“Even if you've got a massive, monolithic structure, you can massively benefit from picking off areas of pain. So long as you can get some of your data out and inject it back in, you can benefit from being able to use some best of breed products out there.”



Martin Balaam

CEO & Founder
Pimberly

Who is truly ready for a composable technology architecture in 2024, and who would be better of sticking with the “monolith”? Why?

When it comes down to it, composable means that you can implement into a monolith and take the best pieces of whatever is out there and utilize those in your platform. It really gets down to the foundational components of how you as a business are delivering that experience.

But what if there was another option than just monolithic and composable.

"I'm going to go the opposite direction here." says Tom Flierl "I think it's...a false question, because it only assumes that there's monolithic and composable."

Industry analysts have said in their predictions for 2024 they predict 2024 is the year of hybrid, or modular. This takes an API first approach that allows you to have real features built into the platform while easily being able to turn them on and off.

Another take, no business wants to hear that a new system isn't compatible with their other systems. "It's not a good business model to say 'Hey, for this new eCommerce platform, you're going to need to replace your ERP' that probably doesn't go well in organizations." said Jacobi Zakrzewski.

You also could entirely be changing thousands of people's day jobs and what system they work in if you switch out your systems, so going with a more composable approach allows for more flexibility and adaptability.

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It's hard to say who's truly ready for composable technology." says Dave Boyd. "I think everybody's ready for it."



Dave Boyd

Presales Team Lead
Bloomreach

Have we forgotten the basics for success in chasing trends? If so, what do you see from it?

The basics will always matter. You have to have a good base of good, accurate data along with a roadmap and backlog of how you're going to integrate your different systems in order to create a better experience for your customers.

"It really comes down to are you chasing digital for the sake of digital?" said Tom Flierl. "Or are you chasing digital for the sake of better ROI, better adoption, better utilization, ideally, margin capture, but that should be the conversation everybody's really having is it's about margin capture at the end of the day."

On the other hand, Dave Boyd of Bloomreach said "We can't evolve if we don't try trends."

Failure rate is bound to happen when trying something new and trendy. It's handling that failure quickly and learning from it, making those necessary changes that makes you stand out and have success with them. Customer expectations are going to want evolving experiences, and you can't learn what works without trying.

The concept from Dan Olsen's Hierarchy of Web User Needs is a basic pyramid that businesses can work through to establish where they stand digitally. Some businesses may feel that they can just skip over a part of the pyramid and work through it, when in reality that failure can cause a pretty big impact on their digital systems and cause a major setback.

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"It's easy to look at the shiny objects when you haven't even learned the basics yet."

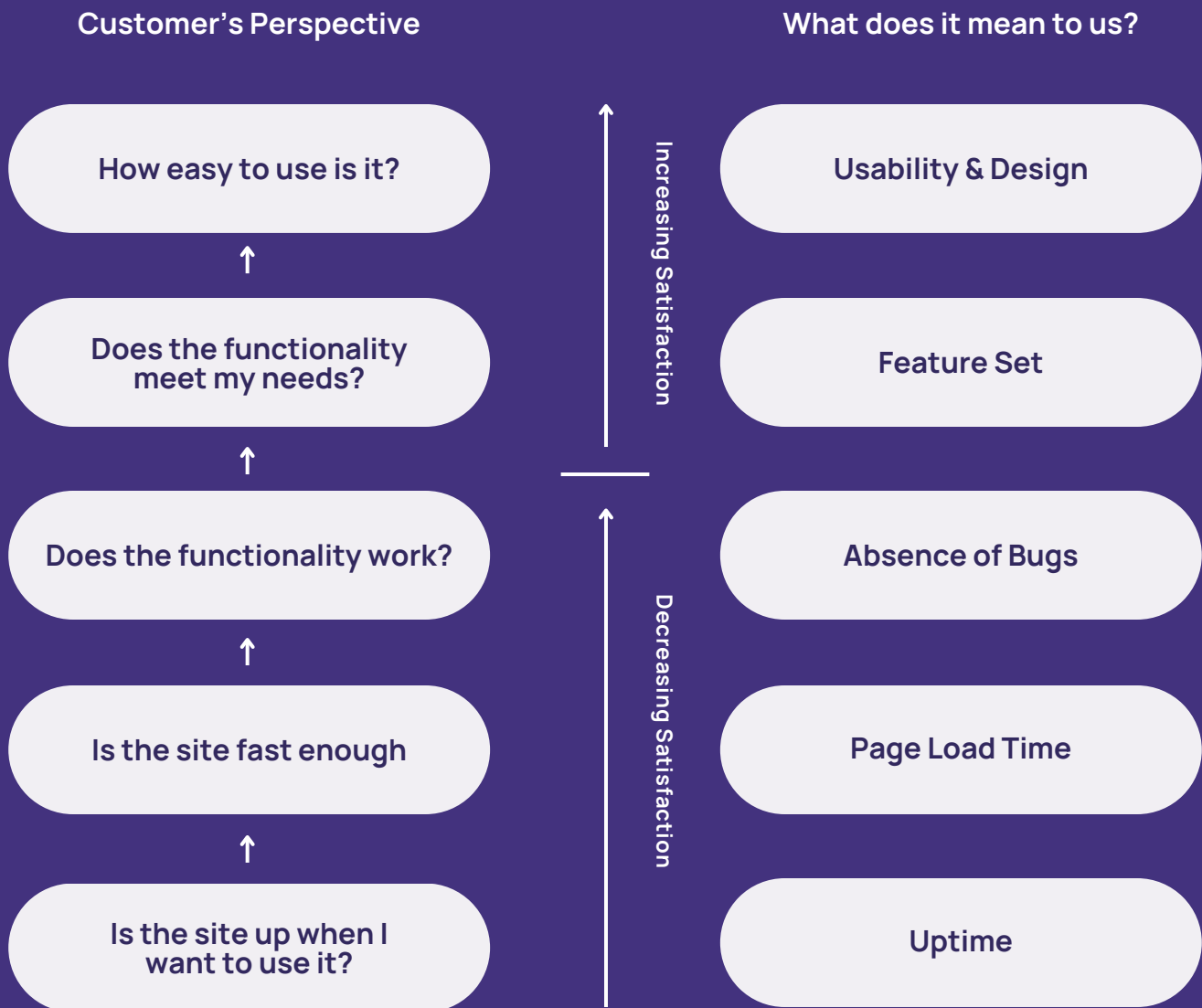


Jacobi Zakrzewski

VP Business Architecture
Luminos Labs

Olsen's Hierarchy of Web User Needs

(adapted from Maslow)



Can you pinpoint a sacred cow in B2B commerce that businesses dare to really challenge or rethink in 2024?

How someone explores and researches your product online is your digital persona and that is important. It's something that is well known in the B2C space, but when it comes to B2B, a lot of manufacturers or distributors may fall short. You should treat your digital property like a product of your company. The experience should be the same across the board.

Along with digital product representation, according to Dave Boyd, he thinks it's all about the relationship building.

"We should provide our customers now is whether it's the end user or whether it's the business-to-business experience, we should make sure that we're that memorable face that they look forward to seeing every time they need to make a purchase."

Just because your business is going digital doesn't mean that the relationship building with the customer ends.

"It's not about the order, the order can be taken online. If you take a look at some of the largest distributors right now, they talk about how really good sales reps are no longer taking orders, they're actually in consulting with their customers, helping them find the right assortment of products, helping them sell products, and saying you can just go to the website and order it." said Tom Flierl.

Businesses need to rethink the role of sales in 2024 and how to integrate them into the eCommerce experience. Afterall, they're the ones that know the customer and can help them through the digital process.

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"You spend a lot of time worrying about your physical packaging, and what it looks and feels like, but what about your digital packaging? Let's call it your digital persona of your product."



Martin Balaam

CEO & Founder
Pimberly

Taking Action

01 Do an audit of your existing tech stack:

- Saves Us Money
- Makes Us More Money
- Reduces Our Risk
- Makes Us More Resilient

02 What customer interactions aren't digital?

- Look into the Service Design concept - make a collaborative workshop
- Expand beyond sales and investigative support and service functions

03 How is your data quality?

- Look into your data management practices
- What makes you unique as a business (your data)

04 Are you ready for composable?

- Look at the Strangler Pattern approach
- Evaluate cultural and operational variables

05 Don't forget the basics

- Create a functional experience to stay on track
- Think about your customer's loyalty

06 What do you need to think about in 2024?

- Capitalize on reusable assets and configuration
- You don't need from scratch customization



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