



From digital distance to digital confidence

Building end-to-end trust into the
B2B manufacturing buyer journey.

About Sana

Sana Commerce is built on a simple conviction: B2B commerce should strengthen relationships, not stand in the way of them. In manufacturing, the distance between what you know and what your buyer sees has often been too wide. We are closing that gap by creating a new future of connected commerce.

We believe that when your business expertise and your customer's experience work in total sync, commerce becomes a conversation rather than a manual task. It's about more than just moving transactions online; it's about making the buyer-seller connection tangible and effortless. By removing the friction that slows you down, we help you focus on the trust and reliability that actually drive your business.

About the Research

Forrester is a leading global research and advisory firm. It provides proprietary research, continuous guidance, consulting, and events and conducts annual surveys of more than 700,000 consumers, business and technology leaders worldwide. Its offerings are grounded in rigorous and objective research methodologies.

*Note on Research Sources: This report features independent data from a commissioned survey conducted by Forrester Consulting alongside strategic analysis from Sana Commerce. Specifically, the Digital Distance framework and its associated insights, including the following terms: operational distance, emotional distance, and commercial distance, are proprietary to Sana Commerce and represent our unique perspective on B2B commerce.

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In 2026, we commissioned Forrester Consulting to survey 335 B2B commerce leaders on how their buyers behave online. The answer was uncomfortable.

The assumption in most boardrooms is that digital is working. Buyers have access to the platform. Orders are coming in. The channel exists, so the channel is performing. But when we asked the people closest to the data: directors, VPs, and C-suite leaders running B2B commerce across four global regions, a different picture emerged.

Buyers are bypassing digital at the exact moments they're most ready to buy. Not occasionally, and not randomly. At the moments of highest intent: checking availability, confirming price, requesting a quote – they're picking up the phone instead. This report covers why that happens, where it costs the most, and what it takes to close the gap.

335

335 B2B e-commerce decision makers surveyed: director level and above, across IT, e-commerce, marketing, and customer service.

03

Industries at the core of B2B complexity: manufacturing and materials, building and construction, and medical equipment and devices. Sectors where accuracy and availability aren't a preference, but a requirement.

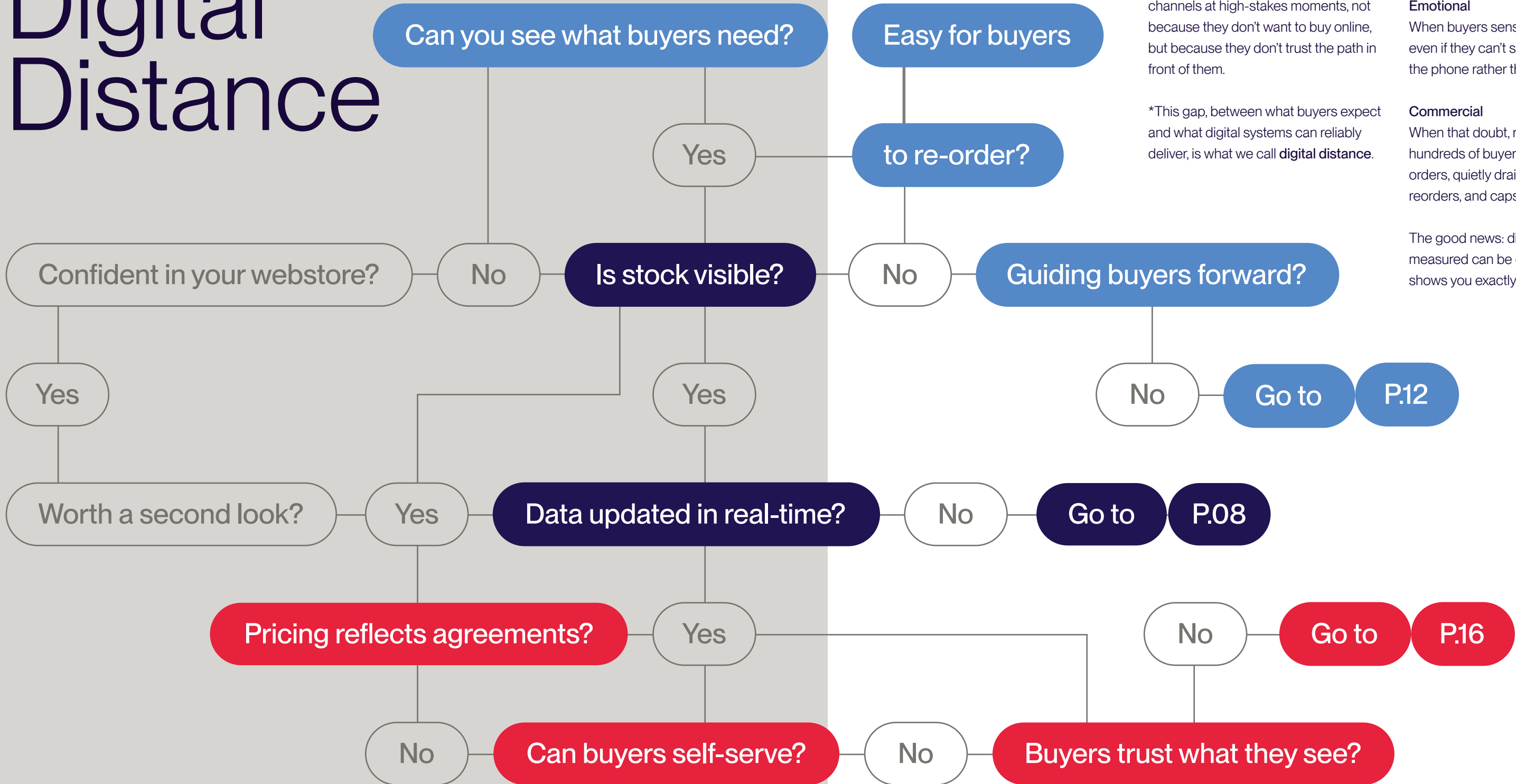
03

Global regions of industrial manufacturing are represented here: divided into North America; DACH; and UK, Ireland & Northwest Europe.

\$1B

The ceiling on annual revenue in our sample. With organizations ranging from \$20M to \$1B, these are the businesses that can invest in digital but still find their problems unsolved.

Digital Distance



Three moments,
three reasons
buyers leave

B2B buyers set out with a clear goal: to find everything they need and complete online orders with confidence.

It shows up in three ways, and most organizations are living with all three at once:

They expect accurate availability, relevant pricing, and a seamless path to purchase. Yet what they encounter can feel inconsistent. 7 in 10 organizations report that buyers bypass digital channels at high-stakes moments, not because they don't want to buy online, but because they don't trust the path in front of them.

Operational
When the systems behind the storefront aren't talking to each other, and the data buyers depend on can't be trusted.

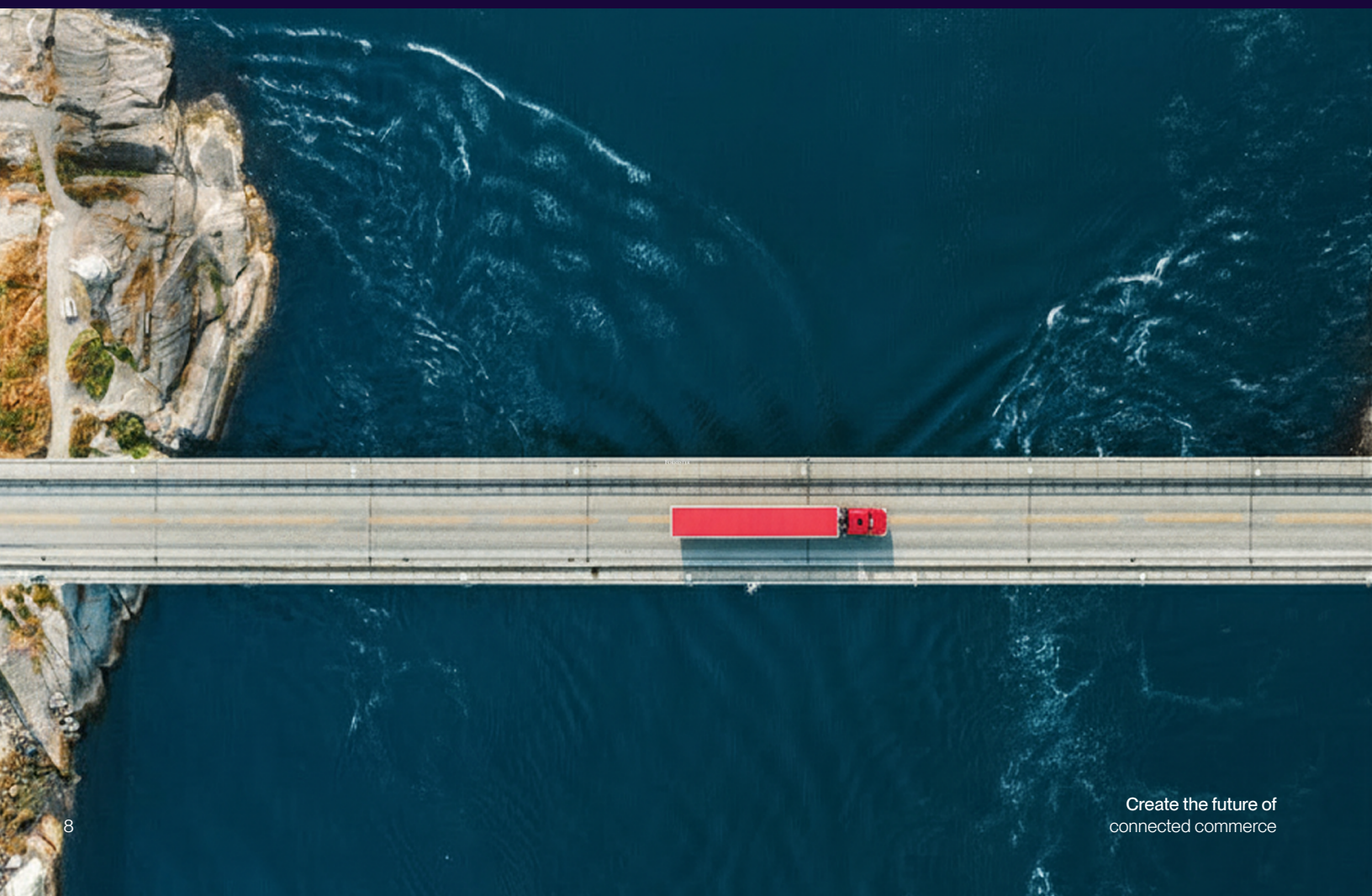
Emotional
When buyers sense something is off, even if they can't say what, and reach for the phone rather than the confirm button.

Commercial
When that doubt, repeated across hundreds of buyers and thousands of orders, quietly drains conversion, delays reorders, and caps growth.

*This gap, between what buyers expect and what digital systems can reliably deliver, is what we call **digital distance**.

The good news: distance that can be measured can be closed. This report shows you exactly where to start.

Is it in stock? Real-time says it's on the truck.



Buyers have a clear top expectation: accurate pricing and availability information. 49% rank it as their number one requirement for a good B2B buying experience. Most organizations know this. The problem is delivering it. *Operational distance is what happens when the systems powering the experience can't keep up with what buyers need to know. Data exists, but it's delayed, disconnected, or inconsistent.



46%

46% switch away from digital to check inventory elsewhere.

The Integration Problem

This hesitation isn't caused by the interface. It's caused by what sits behind it.

In many organizations, commerce platforms operate alongside ERP, WMS, CRM, and PIM systems that are not fully aligned. Each holds part of the data required to complete an order, but without consistent integration, that data is often delayed, incomplete, or conflicting.

57% of organizations cite poor integration as a high-impact challenge. ERP is the biggest gap, flagged by 64% of respondents. It is the single system most responsible for the real-time visibility buyers expect, and sellers struggle to provide.

When Teams Cover For Tech

When the data can't be trusted, people fill the gap.

Orders are checked, validated, and corrected manually. Availability is confirmed outside the platform. What begins as an exception becomes a standard part of the process, particularly as order volume and complexity increase.

88% of organizations report that manual work increases with order complexity. The digital channel, rather than reducing operational load, quietly adds to it. Every exception handled by a person is a signal that the system couldn't handle it alone.

When Trust in Data Breaks Down

Over time, this has a direct impact on how buyers perceive the digital experience.

When availability cannot be consistently trusted, hesitation becomes the default response. Buyers look for confirmation elsewhere or avoid digital channels altogether, particularly for more complex or high-value orders.

Only 53% of organizations believe their digital commerce platform supports the full range of order types their customers require (for e.g. repeat, first-time, split orders) and a similar proportion believe buyers trust the accuracy of what they see online.

In this context, digital is no longer a dependable path but one that requires validation at every step.

How important are these for B2B buyers?

Accurate pricing and availability information	49%
Feeling confident that their data is protected	45%
Quick access to technical and compliance information	45%
Seeing prices and products relevant to their organization	44%
Seamless connection of purchases to internal systems	44%

Key Takeaways

57%

More than half of sellers work with systems that don't talk to each other. ERP is the loudest silence – cited by 64% as the biggest gap in real-time visibility.

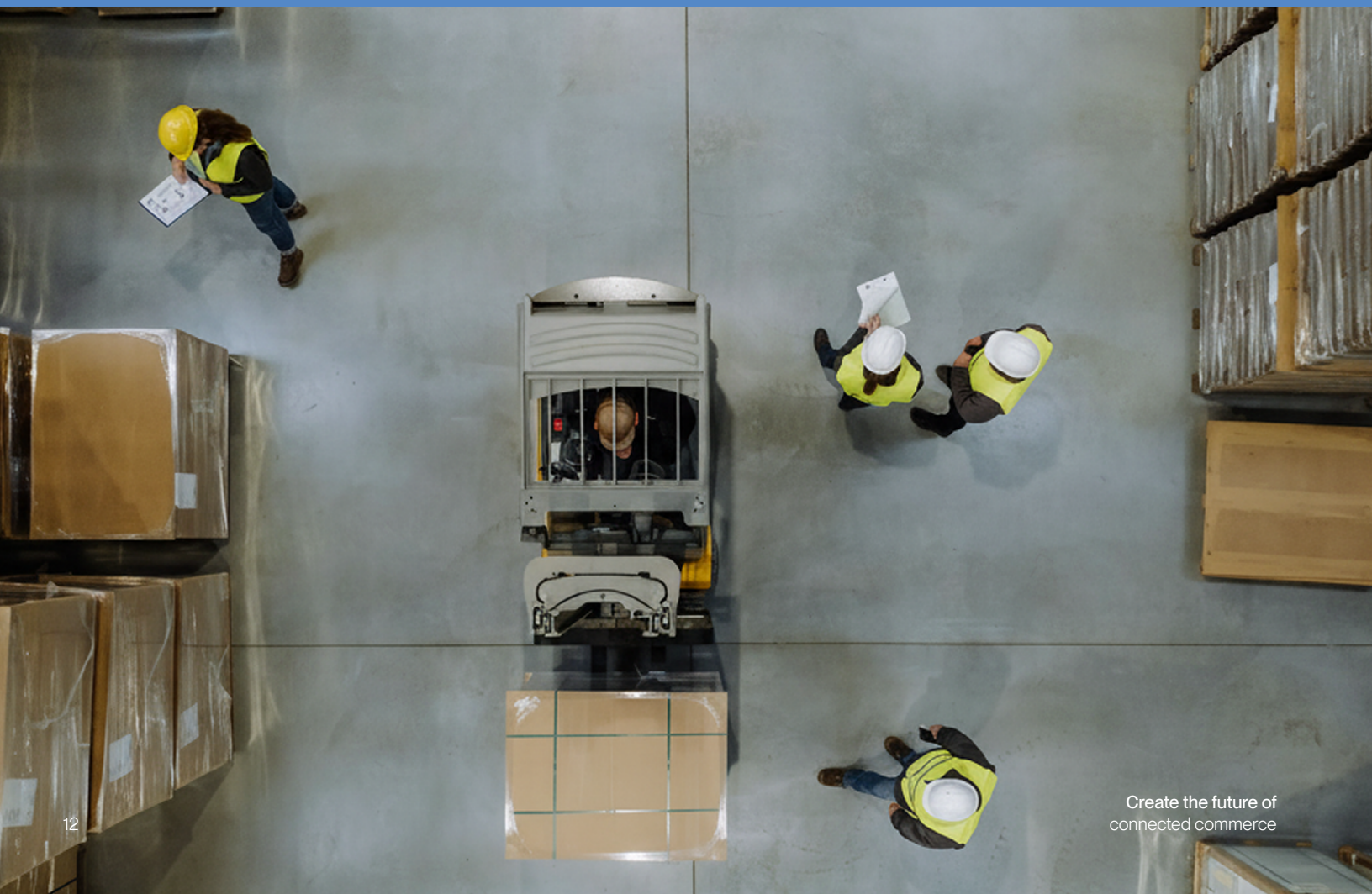
88%

The more orders in, the more manual work follows. For nearly 9 in 10 organizations, growth doesn't simplify operations. It complicates them.

53%

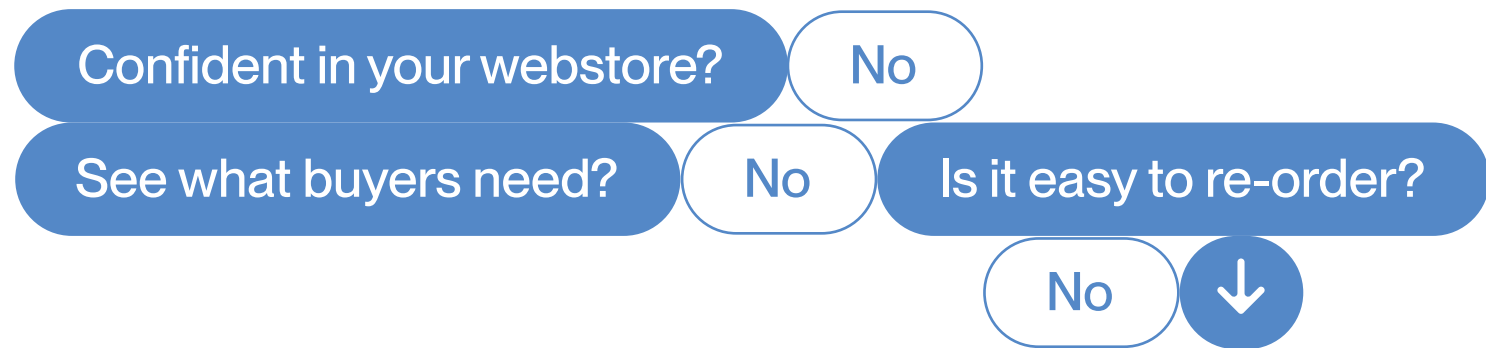
Only half of respondents believe their platform can handle the full range of orders their customers actually place. The other half already know it can't: they just haven't fixed it yet.

Reordering slow? Insights make it flow.



Create the future of
connected commerce

*Commercial distance is where the journey loses momentum. Every B2B organization is chasing the same thing: a digital channel that drives revenue, converts consistently, and makes repeat purchasing effortless. The infrastructure is in place. The buyers are there. The intent exists. Commercial distance is the gap between a buyer who wants to move forward, and a digital experience that helps them do it.



47%

47% of sellers identify faster, easier reordering as a key opportunity.

What sellers are measuring

Organizations are clear on what digital should deliver. For most, success is defined in commercial terms with 67% pointing to increased online revenue, while 62% focus on improving conversion rates.

But growth at this level is not just about attracting buyers. It depends on how effectively the experience moves them from one step to the next.

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Every extra step is costing you

This is where earlier gaps begin to take their toll.

*Operational issues create hesitation, emotional gaps create doubt, and without guidance, buyers lose momentum.

When buyers are left to navigate without clear signals they revisit steps, search for familiar products, and repeat actions that should already be simplified.

Each interaction requires more effort than expected. This is why 42% of organizations are prioritizing reducing friction in the buying process recognizing that even small points of effort accumulate and directly impact conversion.

The repeat purchase problem

The impact is already reflected in how organizations are responding. 41% are still working to make digital the default channel for existing customers, and 47% highlight faster, easier reordering as a key opportunity – clear signals that repeat demand is not being captured as effectively as it should be.

The result is a channel that captures demand, but does not convert it as efficiently as it should.



We had so many problems with data getting out of sync before, and pricing accuracy is critical because if customers can't trust your pricing, they can't trust you.

Nicole Tucker, Senior Director
Business Development & Connectivity

Key Takeaways

67%

67% of sellers define digital success by online revenue growth. But revenue follows momentum, and momentum requires a digital experience that carries buyers forward.

42%

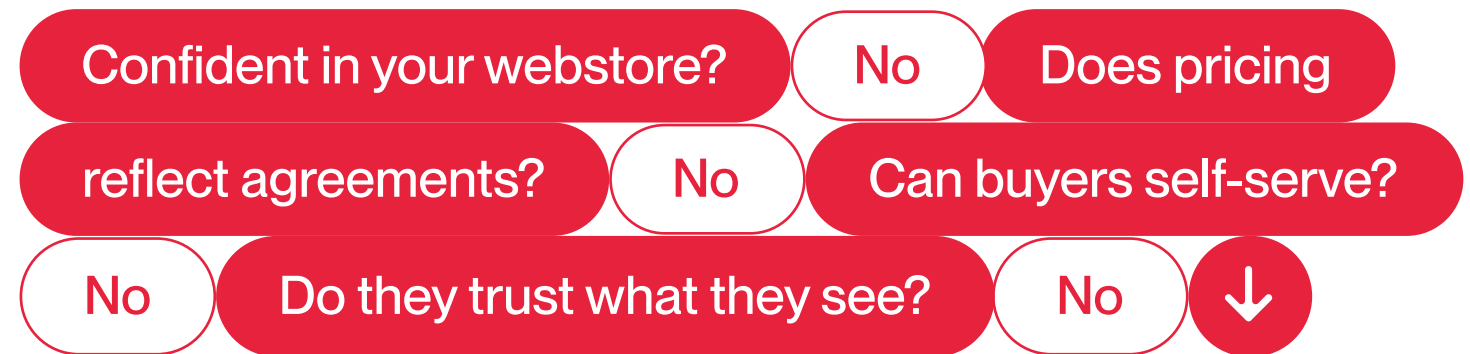
42% are prioritizing friction reduction in the buying process. Small points of effort add up. Every unnecessary step between intent and checkout is a conversion that didn't happen.

47%

47% identify faster, easier reordering as an untapped opportunity. In B2B, the repeat purchase is the most predictable revenue available. It should also be the easiest to capture.

Agreed pricing applied? Always verified.

*Emotional distance is where certainty starts to slip. The problem isn't whether information is available, but whether it's believable. Only 53% of organizations believe buyers trust what they see online. When digital experiences don't reflect buyer-specific pricing, terms, or history, every interaction starts with doubt that must be overcome before moving forward.



58%

58% of buyers require manual intervention for orders.

Manual steps in

This doubt doesn't stop transactions. It just changes how they happen.

Rather than completing the purchase digitally, buyers seek confirmation. And organizations respond: customer service teams validate quotes, verify pricing, and support order placement not as an exception, but as a standard part of the workflow.

58% of customer service challenges involve manual order intervention. The digital channel isn't broken, it's just not trusted enough to be used alone.



No context no confidence

The deeper issue is what the experience communicates about your customer relationship.

B2B commerce runs on familiarity. Buyers have preferred products, negotiated prices, and established order cadences. When none of that is visible in the digital experience, the platform signals to the buyer that it doesn't know them. And a buyer who feels unknown will always look for a human before they act.

Top 3 customer service challenges from commerce solution

Requires manual intervention for orders	58%
Increases time spent handling basic inquiries	55%
Creates challenges due to lack of real-time pricing or availability	50%

Everything may look in place, but trust can still be eroding beneath the surface.



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Key Takeaways

55%

More than half of buyers spend more time on basic inquiries, often not because the option isn't there, but because the experience doesn't reflect the relationship well enough to trust it.

53%

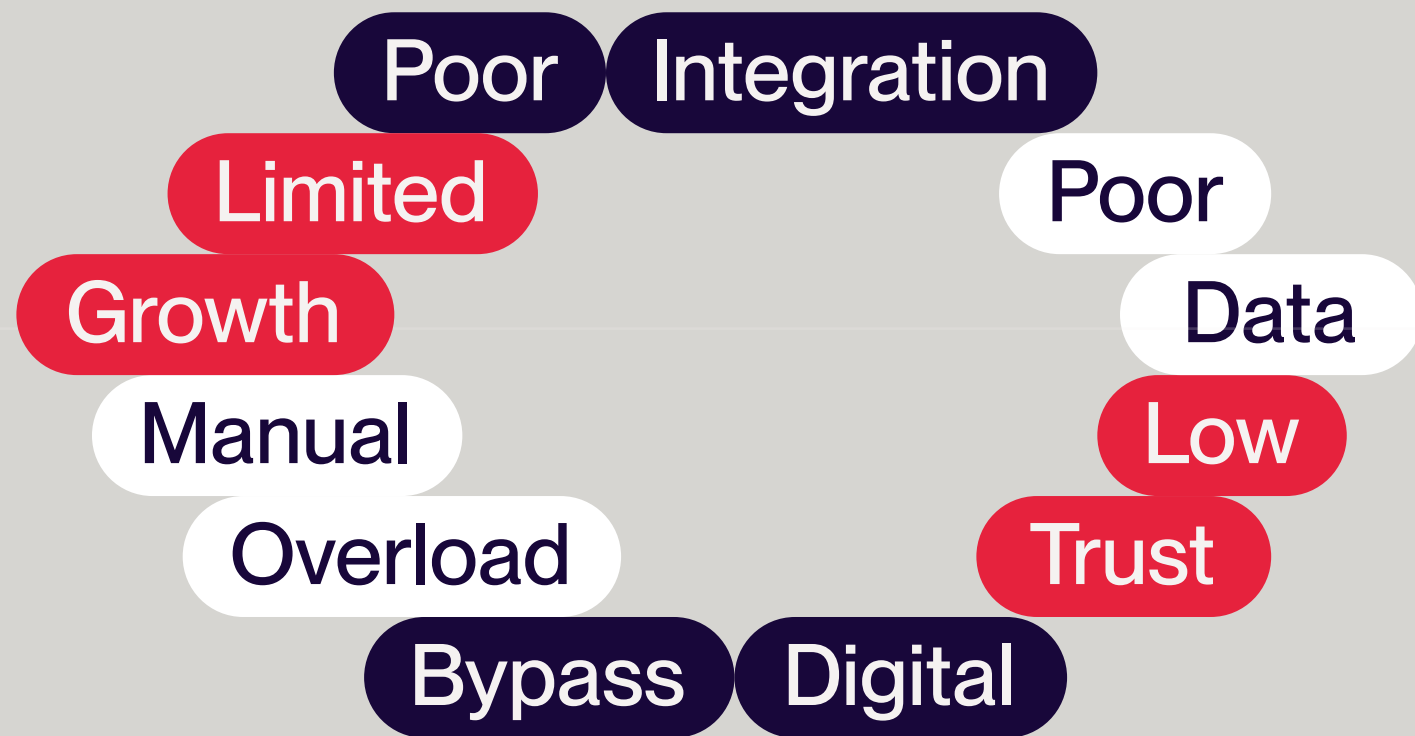
Only half the organizations believe their buyers trust what they see online. The other half are running a digital channel they don't fully believe themselves.

58%

58% of customer service challenges involve manual intervention. Teams aren't stepping in because buyers can't use the platform, they're stepping in because buyers won't.

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The multi-lane roundabout



Digital distance doesn't happen at a single point. It builds and then it repeats. The experience begins with intent, but instead of moving forward, buyers get pulled into a loop: poor integration, poor data, low trust, buyers bypass digital, manual overload, less time for growth, back to poor integration. Like a multi-lane roundabout, there is constant movement but no clear exit.

70%

7 in 10 Organizations report that buyer bypass digital at the exact moments of highest buying intent and highest risk.

Why the loop persists

This pattern is already visible in how buyers behave. 7 in 10 organizations see buyers bypass the digital channel at least occasionally, not as an exception, but as a consistent response when the experience doesn't provide enough certainty.

Each time this happens, work shifts back to internal teams. Orders are checked, questions are answered, and manual processes increase. Over time, this reduces the capacity to fix the underlying issues, reinforcing the cycle rather than breaking it.

What looks like progress is often just movement within the loop.

The
structural
insight

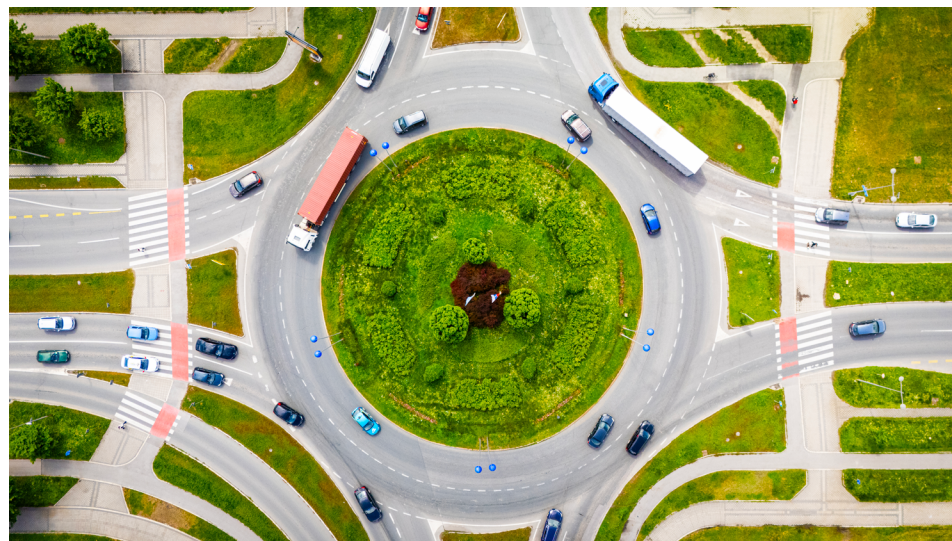
At its core, this is not a front-end problem. It is a system problem.

Forrester describes this as a vicious cycle, where gaps in integration and data create downstream issues in trust, operations, and performance.

Digital experiences are expected to deliver accuracy, trust, and growth but without a connected foundation across order management, inventory, and pricing, they cannot do so independently.

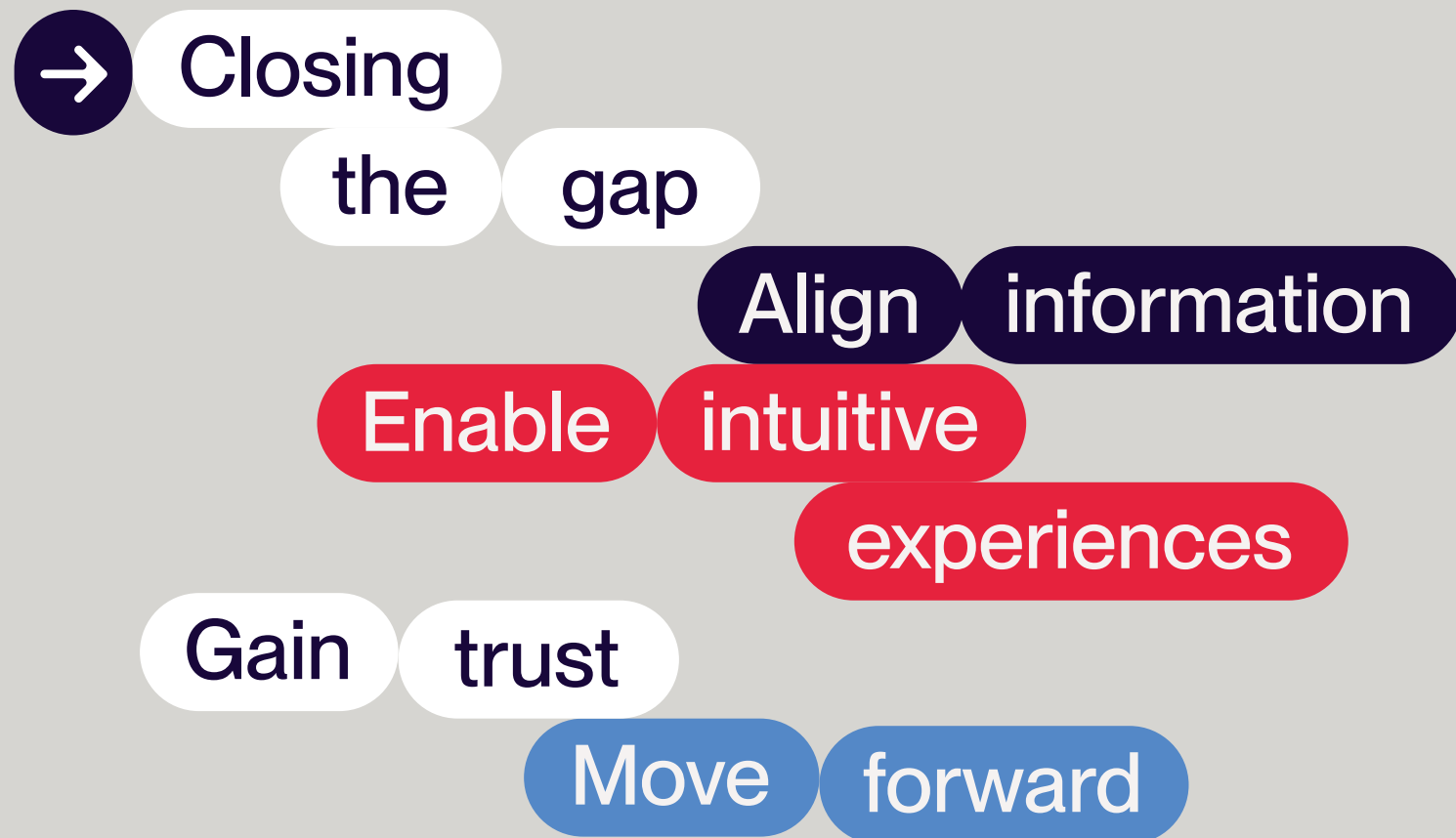
Instead of guiding buyers forward, the system redirects them, back into the roundabout.

Where buyers hesitate: A buyer enters with intent, expecting to move forward. Instead, they circle; checking, confirming, and repeating steps, without ever reaching an exit.



Closing digital distance* requires more than improving the experience. It requires addressing the order layer of commerce infrastructure. The point where data, systems, and processes come together to support every interaction. Only then can buyers move forward and finally find the exit.

Where to Begin



Closing digital distance* is no longer about improving digital alone. It is about closing the gap between what buyers see and what the business knows. For years, B2B commerce focused on access: getting products online, enabling transactions, expanding channels. Although that has improved, the real breakdown now happens later, at the point where buyers decide whether to move forward.

33%

For 1 in 3 organizations, that moment of decision breaks down at least half the time.

The strategic shift

What has changed is not just technology, but buyers. Expectations are higher, shaped by faster, more intuitive experiences, and there is far less tolerance for uncertainty. The question is no longer whether digital is available, but whether it feels reliable enough to act on.

This is where everything converges. Operational gaps appear as inconsistent data. Commercial gaps show up as friction and delay. But running through both is an emotional gap*, revealed in

moments of trust. It is what ultimately determines whether a buyer proceeds or pauses.

And unlike the others, trust doesn't fail loudly. It erodes quietly, in small moments of doubt. Together, those moments determine whether digital is relied on or bypassed.

That is the shift. If buyers hesitate, digital has already failed.

For organizations looking to close digital distance, the focus is not on adding more functionality, but on strengthening confidence throughout the buying journey.

01

Connect systems so buyers see one consistent reality

Disconnected systems create conflicting information, which quickly erodes trust. 57% of organizations cite integration as a major challenge, and 56% are prioritizing improvements. The goal is simple: remove contradictions so buyers don't have to question what they see.

03

Reduce manual intervention wherever possible

When buyers double-check through sales or support, digital has not earned their confidence. Manual intervention is still a major factor with 58% of customer service challenges involving manual intervention. Reducing this is about enabling buyers to move forward independently.

02

Make pricing, inventory, and order information visible in real time

Buyers cannot move forward confidently when the basics are unclear. Forrester's data shows that 40% of respondents see real-time product, pricing, and inventory visibility as essential to improving buyer confidence, order accuracy, and self-service effectiveness.

04

Build self-service experiences buyers can trust

This is not about adding more features. It is about making the experience easier to trust and easier to use. 48% of organizations are prioritizing new self-service capabilities, pointing to a clear demand for digital journeys that can stand on their own.

A note on what comes next

As organizations take these steps, a broader question begins to emerge. If trust depends on consistency, accuracy, and real-time responsiveness, what needs to change beneath the experience to support it?

Many are beginning to encounter the limits of their current systems, particularly in how orders, pricing, and inventory are managed across the business.

As Forrester's research suggests, back-office systems were not designed to support real-time, customer-facing interactions, creating a gap between what buyers expect and what systems can deliver.

This is where the next phase of digital commerce is taking shape and where the structure behind the experience will become an increasingly important part of the conversation.

Where Sana Commerce comes in

Closing this gap does not require replacing core systems. It requires connecting them, so the experience reflects the same reality the business runs on.

Sana Commerce is built around this principle. By anchoring digital commerce directly in ERP data, Sana creates a single source of truth across pricing, inventory, and order logic. Every quote, order, and update is reflected in real time, across both the webstore and internal systems.

This allows digital to operate as a true self-service channel. Buyers get accurate, reliable information, and can move forward with confidence. At the same time, internal teams reduce manual work, eliminate errors, and maintain full control over the order lifecycle.

The result is a connected commerce experience where systems, processes, and interactions work as one.

Final Thought

Digital confidence* grows when buyers no longer need to question what they see. When every step is clear, connected, and reliable, the journey moves forward without hesitation. That is how businesses move from questions to certainty.





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