

Supplier Guide to B2B Connected Commerce

Introduction

B2B connected commerce, powered by eProcurement integration, is the future of B2B transactions. Despite massive advancements in eCommerce and eProcurement technology, the world of B2B commerce remains largely disconnected. As digitization within buyer and supplier systems continues, the demand for eProcurement integration will accelerate at a rapid pace.

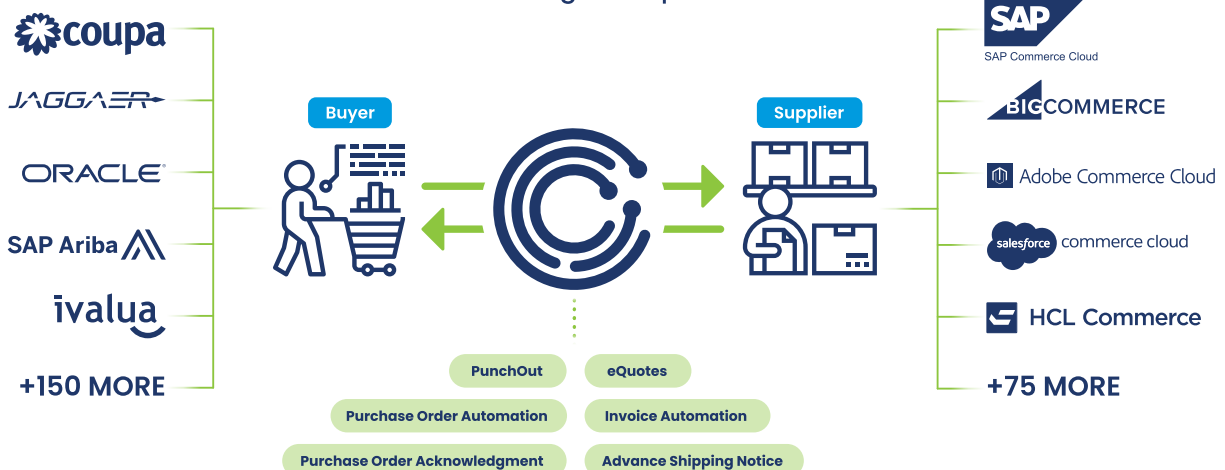
Suppliers are seeking ways to keep pace with customer demands and gain an edge over competitors, and leading companies are turning to B2B connected commerce to achieve these objectives. Leading companies are turning to B2B connected commerce to better meet buyer needs, improve overall business operations and drive revenue growth - and it's paying off. An independent [ROI study](#) conducted by Hobson & Co., a leading research firm, revealed that suppliers who invest in B2B connected commerce generate a 5-7X ROI.

In this eBook, you'll learn:

- ✓ Why companies invest in integrated B2B commerce
- ✓ B2B connected commerce solutions
- ✓ How to achieve B2B connected commerce

TradeCentric

Automating B2B trade through a single, seamless integration platform



Why invest in B2B Connected Commerce?

B2B connected commerce is the promised land for B2B buyers and suppliers. Rather than wasting time and resources on manual, error-prone eCommerce practices, B2B connected commerce empowers suppliers to streamline and automate the selling process while providing customers with a more sophisticated buying experience.

If you're like most suppliers, you're probably wondering why connected commerce is important. What benefits does it offer your business aside from appeasing your buyers' demands?

Connected commerce has various benefits that are paramount to suppliers, including:

1. Revenue Growth: Offering integration capabilities not only increases selling opportunities to existing customers through your eCommerce channel, but it also positions you to win new customers who are increasingly requiring state-of-the-art eProcurement integration solutions. TradeCentric suppliers reported a 20% increase in revenue from new buyers ([Source: Hobson & CO ROI study.](#))

2. Improve Operations: Reducing manual effort spent entering, correcting and processing purchase orders and invoices leads to an accelerated purchasing cycle with less days in Accounts Receivable. TradeCentric suppliers reported a 60% reduction in time spent setting up and managing eProcurement integrations ([Source: Hobson & Co. ROI study.](#))

3. Become a Strategic Trading Partner: Meeting buyers where they want to buy and offering a more efficient and seamless purchasing process strengthens relationships with customers. TradeCentric suppliers reported a 20% increase in revenue from existing buyers ([Source: Hobson & CO ROI study.](#))

4. Elevate Your eCommerce Strategy: Having an eCommerce storefront is no longer enough – which is why leading businesses are investing in integration capabilities. In a landscape where competition is as tough as ever, this is a key way leading suppliers are keeping customers satisfied and staying ahead of competitors.

Connected commerce saves time and reduces costs by reallocating internal resources to focus on revenue-generating initiatives instead of fussing with manual entry on purchase orders and invoices.

Today's buyers expect integrated purchasing that can be managed from within their eProcurement solution. By integrating their eCommerce store with buyer eProcurement solutions, suppliers can offer a connected procure-to-pay experience that wins new business and grows revenue from existing customers.

Why invest in B2B Connected Commerce?

Why do buyers want eProcurement integration?

eProcurement is the fastest-growing digital sales channel, according to a report from [Digital Commerce 360](#). However, to take full advantage of their investment, buyers must integrate supplier eCommerce stores with their eProcurement solution.

Integration allows buyer and supplier systems to share data in the correct formats and automate time-consuming procurement tasks. It eliminates error-prone manual data entry and ensures procurement documents – including requisitions, purchase orders, and invoices – are automatically synchronized between buyer and supplier.

B2B connected commerce can be achieved leveraging one or a combination of the below solutions:

- PunchOut catalogs
- Purchase Order Automation
- Purchase Order Acknowledgment
- Invoice Automation
- Advanced Shipping Notices
- eQuotes

[Read on to learn about the benefits, challenges, and implementation details of each B2B connected commerce solution.](#)



PunchOut catalogs allow buyers to access a supplier's eCommerce store from their eProcurement solution. Upon logging into the eProcurement solution, buyers see the logos of integrated suppliers directly on the homepage. The buyer can then select the desired supplier and automatically authenticate into the online shop, giving them access to custom pricing, negotiated discounts, and other unique eCommerce features. After shopping is complete and the buyer has added all desired items to their cart, the integration then enables cart data to be seamlessly returned to the eProcurement solution. Finally, the system generates a requisition order for approval and further processing.

PunchOut removes friction from B2B purchasing by allowing buyers to easily find and access a supplier's eCommerce store. Data exchange is handled automatically, removing the need for time-consuming and error-prone manual data entry.

PunchOut Challenges for Suppliers

Suppliers who lack PunchOut capabilities are often unappealing to buyers who rely on eProcurement to manage spending. Without a PunchOut integration, buyers must fall back on manual data entry.

Without technical support from experienced professionals, PunchOut integration can be difficult to achieve due to :

- PunchOut integrations are complex to implement and support
- The lack of standardized PunchOut protocols and the vast array of eCommerce and eProcurement solutions require suppliers to build custom integrations for each buyer
- Integration requires substantial IT resources

PunchOut Benefits for Suppliers

In addition to attracting buyers who prefer to transact via their eProcurement solution, PunchOut catalogs enhance brand and product visibility to increase order frequency as well as average order volume.

Other PunchOut benefits include:

- An enhanced customer experience with up-to-date product details, inventories and pricing
- Expedited order approval
- More sales driven through the eCommerce platform
- A simplified ordering process that generates larger and more frequent orders

PunchOut Benefits for Buyers

PunchOut eProcurement integration reduces procurement workloads and administrative overhead for buyers, allowing them to leverage the full capabilities of their eProcurement solution for sourcing, purchasing, and approval workflows.

Other buyer benefits include:

- Streamlined purchasing workflow
- Improved shopping experience
- Enhanced compliance with procurement policies
- Greater visibility into procurement and spending

Purchase Order (PO) Automation



Purchase Order (PO) Automation sends a purchase order to the supplier's eCommerce system. PO automation eliminates the need for manual PO processes, which often use paper or PDF purchase orders. With PO automation, the buying organization simply follows its eProcurement solution's existing order approval process, and the purchase order is automatically sent to the supplier in a suitable format.

Purchase Order Challenges for Suppliers

Inefficient manual PO creation and distribution delays order confirmation and slows the purchase cycle. Reliance on static document formats and pre-digital delivery methods adds significant latency to the purchase cycle, leading to:

- Time-consuming and costly PO-invoice reconciliation
- Inaccurate purchase orders that slow fulfillment, invoicing, and payment
- Lack of transparency and oversight of the ordering process

PO Automation Benefits for Suppliers

PO Automation streamlines B2B ordering, reduces order errors, and expedites order acceptance and fulfillment.

Other supplier benefits include:

- POs delivered direct to order management and other integrated systems, eliminating costly data entry and administration
- Digital purchase orders are error-free and accurate, reducing fulfillment errors and remediation costs
- Suppliers who can accept digital purchase orders increase revenue by meeting buyers' need for automated procurement workflows

PO Automation Benefits for Buyers

PO Automation takes care of essential procurement tasks with minimal manual intervention. Once the order is approved, the integration solution automatically formats and sends the PO, immediately confirming the order.

Other buyer benefits include:

- Reduced order and fulfillment errors
- No manual PO processing costs
- Faster order-to-delivery timelines

Purchase Order Acknowledgement (POA)



Purchase Order Acknowledgements (POA) confirm that a supplier has received a purchase order and intends to fulfill it. POAs can also be used to highlight problems with order fulfillment, such as inadequate inventory, or to reject an order altogether.

A POA integration communicates acknowledgment data from the supplier's eCommerce system to the buyer's eProcurement solution, enabling buyers to verify and track the order's status. The POA includes key order information, including line items, quantities, and pricing.

POAs allow buyers to monitor orders in their eProcurement solution, providing a single interface with a complete overview of order progress. Like other eProcurement integration solutions, POAs eliminate the need for manual data entry and ensure that order data is accurately communicated between buyer and supplier systems.

Common POA Challenges

Suppliers may be unable to deliver POAs in the correct format to buyer eProcurement systems. The alternative is low-tech PO acknowledgments that require manual entry into buyer eProcurement solutions.

- Order confirmations delivered via email have lower visibility compared to POAs automatically registered in eProcurement solutions
- Manually creating and sending order acknowledgments imposes substantial administrative costs

POA Benefits for Suppliers

Purchase Order Acknowledgments enable suppliers to send accurate and up-to-date order information to the buyer's eProcurement solution. Automating the POA process:

- Keeps buyers informed about the status of their order
- Provides responsive customer service if an order cannot be fulfilled or needs to be amended
- Reduces the cost and complexity of delivering POAs
- Delivers POAs direct to the buyer's preferred eProcurement platform

POA Benefits for Buyers

eProcurement users prefer to work with buyers who provide Purchase Order Automation because it allows them to:

- Receive fast order acknowledgments with accurate details
- Monitor and respond to price and availability issues
- Centralize order management within their eProcurement solution

Invoice Automation



Invoice Automation delivers digital invoices to the buyer's eProcurement solution. The supplier's eCommerce system generates an invoice once an order has shipped. The eProcurement integration validates and formats invoice data for the buyer's systems before delivering it directly to their eProcurement software for processing and payment.

Invoice Automation streamlines and accelerates invoicing and payment, significantly reducing workloads for procurement, accounts payable, and accounts receivable processes - freeing them to focus on other important business aspects

Common Invoicing Challenges

Manual invoicing is slow, time-consuming, and error-prone. Suppliers who invoice outside of the buyer's eProcurement solution are less likely to be paid quickly or on time. Integrated eProcurement can automate three-way matching and expedite invoice reconciliation, resulting in faster payments.

- Manual invoice processing and reconciliation of invoices with POs generates significant workloads for buyer accounts payable (AP) and supplier accounts receivable (AR) staff
- Manual invoice handling slows the purchase cycle, delaying payments and causing potential cash flow issues for suppliers
- eProcurement users prefer suppliers who offer an integrated invoicing process

Invoice Automation Benefits for Suppliers

Invoice automation accelerates payment by delivering invoices direct to buyer systems for automatic three-way matching and payment.

Invoice automation also:

- Streamlines accounts receivable workflows
- Eliminates expensive and relationship-damaging invoice errors
- Grows revenue and profit by meeting buyer integration requirements

Invoice Automation Benefits for Buyers

Buyers prefer to receive invoices direct to their eProcurement solution because Invoice Automation, alongside PunchOut and PO Automation, provide an integrated procure-to-pay system. Buyers can manage the full procurement process from within their eProcurement platform and enjoy benefits that include:

- Reduced accounts payable costs and workloads
- Fast, automated three-way matching and expedited invoice reconciliation
- Accurate invoice records to avoid over or underpayment
- Early pay discounts for settling invoices quickly and efficiently

Advanced Shipping Notices (ASN)



Advanced Shipping Notices (ASN) communicate information about an upcoming delivery to buyers. ASNs are generated by supplier systems and sent to buyer eProcurement software once an order has shipped. They include the details a buyer needs to verify the order and prepare for delivery, including order numbers, order dates, included items, shipping and packaging methods, and delivery addresses.

ASNs increase warehousing and distribution efficiency for buyers. ASNs can also provide information about incomplete deliveries, allowing buyers to adjust operational plans. They play a key role in helping buyers to maintain a consistent and predictable supply chain, which is why many buyers won't purchase from suppliers incapable of delivering ASNs to their eProcurement and warehousing systems.

Common ASN Challenges

Working with suppliers who can't send ASNs impairs buyer supply chain planning, negatively impacting downstream operations. Implementing ASNs may be technically difficult for suppliers, but failing to offer information-rich and accessible shipping notices can damage buyer relationships.

Other challenges include:

- Manual order entry by suppliers or buyers results in increased cost and elevated error rates
- Without ASNs, suppliers often resort to less efficient methods to communicate order details and changes, increasing costs for buyers and suppliers.

ASN Benefits for Suppliers

ASNs allow suppliers to keep buyers informed of their order's status with minimal intervention from sales professionals. The main benefit is happier buyers who place more frequent and larger orders.

Other benefits include:

- Reducing customer service workloads by automating the provision of up-to-date order, shipping, and delivery information
- Giving buyers the information they need to streamline receiving and inventory management workflows

ASN Benefits for Buyers

Accurate shipping and delivery information improves supply chain predictability and consistency.

- All relevant order information is accessible in eProcurement and warehouse management software
- ASNs make it easier to track and predict stock levels while reducing errors that could impact production and distribution plans



eQuote integration makes it easier for suppliers to create quotes and transfer them to buyer eProcurement systems. When a buyer submits a request for quote (RFQ), the supplier prices the order by creating a draft cart in their eCommerce store. The eQuote solution informs the buyer that a quote is ready, and they can then transfer the draft cart contents to their eProcurement solution for review and approval.

Common eQuote Challenges

RFQs are a common part of B2B sales, but constructing quotes is typically a time-consuming manual task. Sales professionals research products and pricing, apply custom and bulk order discounts, and enter the quote into an email or spreadsheet for delivery to the buyer. Research and data entry errors often lead to misleading quotes. Quotes become outdated as inventory levels and pricing change over time.

Other challenges include:

- Costs are increased as sales professionals' time is used responding to RFQs
- Data entry errors lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication
- Long RFQ turnaround times result in slower sales and an increased likelihood the buyer will select a more responsive vendor
- Manual RFQs offer a poor customer experience compared to eCommerce-based ordering

eQuote Benefits for Suppliers

An integrated eQuote solution provides a superior user experience to buyers, helping suppliers to win new business and strengthen relationships with their existing customers.

Other supplier benefits include:

- Reduced manual data entry
- Fewer quote errors
- Increased RFQ responsiveness
- More sales are driven through eCommerce

eQuote Benefits for Buyers

Buyers receive quotes quickly with minimal errors. Because quotes are made available as an eCommerce cart, pricing and inventory information is up to date when the buyer transfers it to their eProcurement cart.

Other benefits include:

- Quotes that integrate with eProcurement review and approval workflows
- Manual data entry is not required
- Buyers receive quotes faster, aiding procurement and inventory planning

Achieving B2B Connected Commerce

B2B purchasing is a complex process with many steps. Connected commerce deploys modern integration technology to radically simplify purchasing. It empowers suppliers to offer a streamlined procurement experience that eliminates manual data entry and reduces administrative overheads and costs. Most importantly, it allows buyers to leverage the full capabilities of their eProcurement system for purchasing, ordering, and payment.

As we've seen, connected commerce depends on eProcurement integration solutions which together provide a complete procurement automation package. Historically, suppliers have been reluctant to offer comprehensive eProcurement integration because it is technically complex and demands significant IT resources and expertise.

The value of an Integration-Platform-as-a-Service solution for PunchOut, Purchase Order Automation, and Invoice Automation is immediate and demonstrable. According to the [Hobson & Co. ROI study](#), a representative TradeCentric supplier generated a 762% ROI.

However, as eProcurement becomes more widespread, B2B suppliers can no longer afford to ignore buyers' integration demands. Buyers increasingly prefer self-service procurement options that integrate with their eProcurement solution. eProcurement sales volumes grew by 17% last year, a growth rate that is unlikely to slow. Buyers are happy to use eCommerce and they're prepared to place big orders via self-service channels. According to McKinsey & Co., 35% of buyers are happy to place orders of over \$500,000 in a single transaction via self-service channels.

Achieve Connected Commerce with TradeCentric

TradeCentric makes connected commerce a reality for B2B suppliers. The TradeCentric Integration Platform as a Service (iPaaS) will integrate your eCommerce and ERP software with hundreds of eProcurement platforms. The TradeCentric Platform empowers you to offer PunchOut catalogs, Purchase Order Automation, Purchase Order Acknowledgements, Invoice Automation, and other integration solutions to any buyer.

Thousands of businesses achieve their connected commerce objectives with the help of our integration experts and industry-leading integration solutions.

[Get started](#)