

5 SMART WAYS TO OPTIMIZE YOUR SAP COMMERCE CLOUD SOLUTION



INTRODUCTION

Intensifying global competition, soaring customer expectations and the economic challenges of COVID-19 have made accelerating digital transformation an imperative for every enterprise today. Businesses simply can't afford to postpone upgrading their customer experience any longer.

That means companies must meet consumers where they are right now in order to create trusted relationships, build loyalty and adapt to the new normal of the COVID economy. They need to be able to provide a holistic customer experience that is hyper-personalized, completely connected and based on empathy.

COMPANIES MUST MEET CONSUMERS WHERE THEY ARE IN ORDER TO CREATE TRUSTED RELATIONSHIPS, BUILD LOYALTY AND ADAPT TO THE NEW NORMAL.

When it comes to solutions in this area, SAP is a clear leader. Over the past few years, the company has invested heavily in creating an end-to-end software suite – C/4HANA – incorporating the recent acquisitions of market leaders Hybris, Gigya, CallidusCloud and Core Systems. The result is a fully integrated portfolio of five state-of-the-art cloud applications (SAP Customer Data Cloud, SAP Marketing Cloud, SAP Commerce Cloud, SAP Sales Cloud and SAP Service Cloud) — all under the banner of SAP Customer Experience (CX).

It's a milestone that demonstrates tremendous capacity and far-reaching vision. Yet some SAP customers still face issues around meeting customer expectations. Why?

The reason is that SAP Commerce Cloud, while a tremendously powerful platform, lacks the ability to address some significant content and experience management scenarios that have become increasingly urgent.

SAP COMMERCE CLOUD LACKS THE ABILITY TO ADDRESS SIGNIFICANT CONTENT AND EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT SCENARIOS.

One example is, global Marketing. Merchandising and communication teams need to publish updated rich media content not just faster but also across a growing number of channels, often in many different languages simultaneously and customized to accommodate various regions, audiences and brands. And they also need the ability to preview the entire customer journey across sometimes dozens of different scenarios to ensure brand identity and messaging consistency. This is not a level of content management complexity that SAP Commerce Cloud is designed to handle.

The good news is there are several big steps SAP customers can take to get their SAP Commerce Cloud solution back on track — initiatives that can be implemented quickly, without major disruption and without the need for capital expenditures. This eBook examines five steps enterprises can take today to ensure their CX is realigned to the new reality of commerce.

ADDRESS WHAT'S MISSING



The roots of SAP Commerce Cloud go back to Hybris, an eCommerce platform acquired by SAP in 2013 and focused on product content management, catalog management, search & merchandising and order management. And while those capabilities are robust, Hybris does not actually provide some of the key functionality found in an enterprise content management system (CMS).

But do enterprises really need advanced CMS functionality? If there's any doubt, consider the speed with which the global pandemic has transformed the world of business, requiring organizations of all types to pivot their business model to an all-digital delivery system practically overnight. Big brand retailers, restaurants, grocery stores, educational institutions and governments around the world have all had to figure out ways to communicate, educate and fulfill orders on an unprecedented scale. Every one of those efforts requires cutting-edge CMS capacity.

COMPANIES THAT EMBRACE "HIGH-VELOCITY MARKETING" WILL HAVE A SERIOUS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

In the era of hyper connectivity, this is the new normal. And companies that can embrace this kind of "high-velocity marketing" will have a serious competitive advantage. Imagine a business that can offer new products or services along with new messaging across all their digital media properties within minutes of the next major global news event. This is the power to move at the speed of culture.

Another economic dimension the coronavirus crisis has revealed is that companies focused solely only on delivering mass-market goods or services at a low price point are surprisingly vulnerable. With supply chains suddenly disrupted and transportation networks compromised, businesses based on "transaction efficiency" are disappointing customers who then look to other brands to fill that need.

Long-term brand loyalty requires more than just providing efficiency. It involves delivering a real experience that touches customers in meaningful ways — which requires rich content as well as the ability to manage it at scale. But SAP Commerce Cloud doesn't provide true enterprise CMS tools to create, publish and update new content-driven experiences quickly.

Given the intricacy of the C/4HANA solution, replatforming your commerce system may not be a realistic option. But a "smart spend" strategy can address the limitations of SAP Commerce Cloud by employing a solution that allow brands to enhance enterprise content capabilities in targeted ways and position themselves for future growth.

TAKE AN INCREMENTAL APPROACH



The biggest myth when it comes to adding new functionality to commerce systems is that more is better. Expensive, all-in-one software suites promise “room to grow” but these products often come with fixed tools, making it hard to use best-of-breed options, or include many more features than most companies will need. Does it really make sense to pay for items that marketing and merchandising teams won’t be using?

As well, the more comprehensive the solution, the likelier it is that a complete rip-and-replace will be required. That means any existing customizations of your SAP Commerce Cloud platform will either be lost or have to be rebuilt from scratch. This is the kind of expense and effort that enterprises today can hardly afford.

With a future so uncertain for many industries, the smarter approach is to add new content management components incrementally – grow as you go. The biggest vendors will require you to rebuild your site on their platform. But a more flexible way is to simply use your existing site as-is and add new pages one at a time. From there, pre-built site templates can easily be integrated and provide enhancements giving merchandisers the ability to drag-and-drop content and products from different repositories to create new customer experiences, more sophisticated digital asset management (DAM) tools, translation workflows and omnichannel delivery options can be added down the road as needed.

[The staged approach is a proven path to success for SAP customers where big digital projects are broken down into smaller sprints](#)

Taking this kind of staged approach is a proven path to success for SAP customers. Global B2B brands, in particular, have seen significant benefits by breaking down big digital projects into smaller sprints, focusing first on consolidating all assets under a centralized DAM, for example, then moving on to initiatives like improving mobile performance, enhancing personalization or adding new merchandising elements like shoppable videos and 360° spinners to content experiences across all channels.

Working with the right partner here is crucial, as they can help set expectations and develop clear milestones and goals for each stage of development. This allows enterprises to get some quick wins – such as improved conversion rates, reduced time to market (TTM) or higher average order value (AOV) – and maximize time to value.

03

UTILIZE PRE-BUILT INTEGRATIONS



Whether replatforming, upgrading or adding new functionality, making adjustments to a digital experience platform (DXP) can be costly. According to industry analysts, the vast majority of that expense is related directly to integrations with internal and external systems — a percentage expected to rise to 85% by the year 2021.

To contain development costs and reduce time spent on customization, the smart strategy is to rely on pre-built integrations. Top CMS vendors employ teams with deep experience around SAP's product line – starting with Hybris and continuing through Commerce Cloud – who have created holistic toolsets available as out-of-the-box, productized integrations. The result is that any enterprise running C/4HANA can easily connect their SAP Commerce Cloud system to an advanced CMS and begin enhancing commerce pages with rich content almost immediately.

MAKING USE OF A PRODUCTIZED INTEGRATION MEANS THE SOFTWARE VENDOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL UPDATES, SUCH AS THE NEW FRONTEND SPARTACUS

Another advantage to this approach is the support that's provided. When companies opt for custom integrations they also become responsible for keeping those integrations up to date, which is a serious challenge on a platform like SAP Commerce Cloud where SAP is constantly innovating. Making use of a productized integration means the vendor is accountable for staying on top of all updates.

For example, in 2019 SAP released a new frontend for SAP Commerce Cloud called Spartacus, which is an open source JavaScript Progressive Web App (PWA) that enables customers to fully customize the shopping experience via native app-style functionality. Spartacus replaced the legacy storefront B2C accelerator templates that were originally part of Hybris. But this important upgrade required a significant retooling of the pre-built integration and would've presented a major disruption to the IT departments of enterprises not prepared to handle it.

It's a certainty that over time, the level of complexity around tightly integrated systems will only increase. So will the stakes. With a digital-first business, every second counts. And in a shaky economy, every dollar does, too. Ask yourself: Can you really afford that downtime?

OPT FOR “HEADLESS PLUS”



In revamping your SAP Commerce Cloud system, important steps include determining new functionality needed, growing incrementally and choosing the right integration approach. But picking the right CMS is critical.

Most organizations opt for a “headless” approach, where the CMS exists as a backend-only system — storing content and making it accessible for frontend presentation via a RESTful API. Going headless provides real flexibility for developers, allowing them to create powerful user interfaces through the use of open APIs. However, this approach actually makes it harder for marketers who need to orchestrate customer experiences across a growing number of scenarios (touchpoints, channels, segments, etc.).

IN A HYBRID HEADLESS APPROACH, THE CMS EXISTS PRINCIPALLY AS A BACKEND SYSTEM BUT ALSO PROVIDES IMPORTANT FUNCTIONALITY FOR BUSINESS USERS

This is why a better choice is to go with a hybrid headless approach sometimes referred to as “headless plus.” In this framework, the CMS still exists principally as a backend system but also provides important functionality for business users, such as the ability to fully preview the frontend experience. For example, a marketing team may need to see what a new campaign looks like across different regions, devices and even at various points in time. What if your team could instantly see how a new promotion would look to a German-speaking male customer in San Francisco on Christmas Eve? Or to a Japanese-speaking female customer shopping the post-holiday sales in Paris?

But beyond just preview capabilities, a headless plus CMS allows content teams to orchestrate and update the entire customer experience across different brands in real time and without IT involvement, including the ability to have regionally specific products appear in the right place and have content displayed in the correct language (as many as needed) where editors can manage the translation process right in the UI.

With frontend frameworks constantly changing, CMS providers need to keep up. A case in point is the new Spartacus storefront for Commerce Cloud. Vendors with headless servers that provide a flexible GraphQL API are in a good position to help clients take full advantage of the new interface quickly and with minimal disruption.

In a time of massive digital – and global – change, brands need both the flexibility and the power that a headless plus CMS provides.

05

CONSOLIDATE YOUR BRAND EXPERIENCE



As outlined previously, the ability to go live with fresh, regionalized content-driven experiences – quickly and at scale – is an imperative for big brands. But what are the tactics that underpin that strategy for SAP customers? And what is the technical approach that best supports those tactics?

In fact, the ability to successfully expand global reach while maintaining brand consistency depends on consolidating content in a centralized system where it can be easily localized. Because many global brands are built through acquisitions, the result is that different technologies often power different parts of the operation. So first steps should focus on streamlining: migrating onto an enterprise CMS that's open, adaptable and best-of-breed; uniting digital assets (images, videos, product content, promotions etc.) in a single repository for efficient reuse; and putting in place new workflows to enable teams to translate, customize, preview and publish new experiences quickly and across all channels.

THE ABILITY TO EXPAND REACH WHILE MAINTAINING CONSISTENCY DEPENDS ON CONSOLIDATING CONTENT IN A CENTRALIZED SYSTEM WHERE IT CAN BE LOCALIZED

When multiple sites are involved, the ability for content editors to navigate between them instantly is essential. SAP Commerce Cloud customers should seek out an enterprise CMS with multisite navigation that's built in. As well, the best content management systems are able to display localized content and the content it's derived from side-by-side in a single window, allowing editors to instantly update local sites whenever the master site content changes.

Maintaining a global presence means a need for mass customization: brands must have the ability to reach millions of customers at once, across different devices and regions, but speak to each one as an individual. The COVID economy has only accelerated this trend, dramatically raising customer expectations around a company's ability not just to deliver on the brand promise but to empathize with them and provide personalized support above and beyond the competition.

SUMMARY



To get SAP Commerce Cloud back on track, think in terms of systems. C/4HANA operates as your company's system of record and transaction — storing customer data, marketing intelligence, commerce information, sales transactions and customer service cases.

But enterprises also need a “system of experience” to handle complex content management needs, translation and localization services, experience preview-and-orchestration capabilities and complete omnichannel content delivery. And that system is a powerful CMS that enables SAP clients to not just master CX but to become an iconic, trusted and enduring global brand.

ENTERPRISES CLEARLY NEED A “SYSTEM OF EXPERIENCE” TO HANDLE COMPLEX CONTENT MANAGEMENT NEEDS

CoreMedia Content Cloud is the right CMS for SAP. It's the engine behind today's most successful online brands, supporting category leaders across industries including retail, luxury fashion, manufacturing, media, B2B, telco and finance. With CoreMedia Content Cloud as a foundation, SAP customers are pioneering new business models, consolidating separate brand & commerce sites and achieving a richer omnichannel experience. In short, they're getting more out of their SAP Commerce Cloud platform and succeeding even in challenging economic times.

And CoreMedia is not just a CMS. It's a company devoted to building enduring partnerships, with a 24-year history of successful digital projects and a 98% customer retention rate. Based in Hamburg, Germany with sales leadership on the US East Coast, CoreMedia combines the best of both worlds: rock-solid German engineering and the can-do spirit of American ingenuity. That, along with a global network of leading ISV partners, means our team is ready to tackle the toughest projects.

Taking the first step in getting SAP Commerce Cloud back on track is easy: just contact CoreMedia. Our consultative, low-pressure approach is about building a joint value road-map together, discussing your challenges, determining your requirements and creating an implementable solution together to ensure long-lasting success. Let's talk.

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ELEVATE the customer experience overnight with more dynamic storefronts, shoppable brand sites, and cutting-edge targeting. Blend real-time product information with marketing content to deliver consistent product messages to any digital touchpoint. Streamline your workflows, refresh your content constantly, and take global campaign collaboration to the next level.

CoreMedia Content Cloud is an open, best-of breed, API-driven solution that combines a headless content repository with an advanced Web-based UI that allows editors to access content from any source and preview complex front-end customer experiences in real time. CoreMedia Content Cloud's omnichannel content delivery engine can expose content in a media-neutral format that can be rendered by any target channel from web sites and mobile apps to out-of-home displays and point-of-sale kiosks and shelf-displays.

CoreMedia's clients include global brands, such the Boots Walgreens Alliance, Calvin Klein, Continental Tires, Emerson Electric, Luxottica, Pandora Jewelers, and the Yoox Net-a-Porter Group.

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