

The logo for Digital River, featuring the words "Digital River" in a blue, sans-serif font with a registered trademark symbol (®) to the upper right of "River".

Digital River®

The title of the guide, "Ecommerce Solution Buyer's Guide", written in a large, white, sans-serif font on a dark blue background.

Ecommerce Solution Buyer's Guide

The subtitle of the guide, "The 10 fundamentals for global success", written in a white, sans-serif font on a light blue background.

The 10 fundamentals for global success

INTRODUCTION

When considering ecommerce solutions for a global online channel, there are a number of complexities to keep in mind beyond merely selecting a platform. Finding and implementing new technology is an important start, but technology is just the beginning when it comes to the business of running an effective global ecommerce operation.

To optimize the shopping experience and maximize revenue, you need the right processes and expertise to effectively manage every aspect of doing business worldwide. Any vulnerability in your back-end processes can expose your business to a multitude of liabilities and risk. Depending on the systems you have in place, an integrated, full-service cloud solution supported by the right experience and infrastructure may be the answer to delivering maximum value and success.

In a marketplace inundated with ecommerce platforms, few provide everything you need backed by a team of experts accountable for your success. Without full-service offerings, you're left filling in vital gaps and piecing your processes together through a hefty investment in internal resources or by managing multiple vendor relationships. It is vital to minimize your risk, create a seamless customer experience and find a solution that can scale with your business.

The considerations can feel endless when looking for the right solution for your business, but knowing what to look for and who to trust will position you to make an informed decision.



First You Need to Choose Your Ecommerce Model

Cloud-based SaaS vs. on-premise

Before you explore the 10 fundamentals for global ecommerce success, it is important to first identify the type of technology model needed to achieve your business objectives—multi-tenant SaaS, single-tenant SaaS, hosted, managed or on-premise. Often the decision comes between a cloud-based SaaS versus an on-premise solution.

If you're considering on-premise solution, it's important not to underestimate the internal resources required to build, maintain and constantly evolve your global ecommerce operations in house. While an on-premise solution may give businesses greater control and flexibility, the benefits of a cloud-based SaaS platform are compelling.

Improve business agility

Making upgrades and customizations in an on-premise environment tends to be labor intensive and expensive. With cloud-based SaaS, upgrades are seamless, automatic and frequent with continued innovation to meet market needs.



75% of North American and European enterprise software decision-makers surveyed by Forrester rated "business agility" as the top benefit of a SaaS platform.¹



The Many Benefits of Multi-Tenant SaaS

Reduce upfront costs

Multi-tenant SaaS offers a lower cost of entry, allowing you to avoid substantial capital investments that come with an on-premise solution.

59%

of North American and European enterprise software decision-makers surveyed by Forrester rated the ability to substitute upfront costs with regular monthly payments as a significant consideration in SaaS adoption.¹

Accelerate time to market

From design to deployment, cloud commerce enables companies to enter markets up to two years earlier than with an on-premise solution.

73%

of North American and European enterprise software decision-makers surveyed by Forrester rated "speed of deployment" as a key benefit of a SaaS platform.¹

Lower total cost of ownership

According to Forrester, the overall cost of a SaaS solution for ecommerce is typically lower than on-premise solutions when you consider the savings in business processes.³

43%

of online retailers surveyed by Forrester reported that the actual costs of ownership for their on-premise platform was higher than expected.¹

Simplify forecasting of future costs

Cloud-based solutions make it easier to forecast future costs compared to the less predictable nature of maintaining operations on-premise.

Strengthen security

Gartner recently reported that cloud-based SaaS solutions are more secure than on-premise IT data centers.²



The 10 Fundamentals for Global Ecommerce Success



Platform

1. Seamless shopper experience
2. High quality, consistent product content
3. Self-service commerce management tools
4. Complete order management and logistics support
5. Subscription billing options for recurring revenue



Process

6. Global reach with localization capabilities
7. Tax, fraud management and compliance infrastructure
8. Robust payment offerings



People

9. Commerce-focused digital marketing
10. Customer support across all touchpoints



1. Seamless Shopper Experience

Enable a powerful user experience to create lifelong buyers

In the age of the consumer, brands around the world are seeking the best solution to create a seamless experience across their entire customer lifecycle. From discovery to purchasing to engagement, you need a trusted partner that offers comprehensive business infrastructure; support solutions; full service capabilities; and powerful tools for selling digital, physical and subscription products in the global, online marketplace.

Finding a solution that can provide the right technology and the right mix of tools, services and applications will give you everything you need to quickly and easily serve your customers—no matter how large or complex your program, how global your business or how unique your business model.

Access to applications that allow for personalization, campaign management, presentation management, site testing and content management functions will allow you to fully embed commerce deeply within your entire .com experience.

Power & Personalize Your Shopper's Experience

Recommendation & personalization

Expand your merchandising capabilities by showcasing products based on your customers' browsing history and purchasing patterns. Providing a cross-section of products (or content) that your shopper may find useful or intriguing based on their own previous history, or the history and patterns of similar visitors, drives engagement and ultimately conversion.

Web Content Management System (WCMS)

Look for a WCMS system that offers dynamic flexibility for the branding, layout and site flow of each store. You should be able to easily adapt to different geographic regions, promotional campaigns and seasonal displays with different styles and layouts that can be applied to specific pages, products and locales.

Segmentation

Bring an unprecedented level of flexibility and control to market-focused merchandising and sales with micro-stores. This feature enables you to create highly targeted experiences for shoppers—from custom branding and discounting to the application of purchasing restrictions—helping you to close more business.

A/B testing

Test product pricing, merchandising discounts, content and site flow on your store to capture key measures of performance and drive conversion.

Searchandizing

Acquire internal search tools showcasing the right product(s) to the shopper.



Finding a solution that can provide the right technology and a comprehensive mix of tools, services and applications will give you everything you need to quickly and easily serve your customers.



2. High Quality, Consistent Product Content

A strong Product Information Management (PIM) toolset gives you flexibility and control.

Consumers are spending more time than ever researching their product purchases online. In today's market the quality of your product content is vital and it needs to be exceptional. To compete, your brand will need advanced tools that can manage complex product catalogs and data syndication, validate and enforce data quality, support complicated content creation processes and provide you with the ultimate authority over your content.

Whether you sell physical goods or provide digital offerings, your ecommerce solution should have a flexible product management system in place. Look for an intuitive, web-based toolset for controlling your products, catalogs, content and pricing. It is also important to have the ability to set role-based permissions, possess bulk import/export capabilities and REST – based APIs for the creation of new products and categories, and change existing items.

Products

Your solution should provide the ability to create customized product attributes, giving you the opportunity to tailor your site to engage your customers without additional engineering.

Catalogs

A solid partner will allow you to organize a collection of products and price lists for your store and localize your catalog by creating locale-specific categories, micro-sites/brands and other channels. You should have the ability to create attribute collections specific to you without the need for custom engineering.

Categories

A robust solution provides the structure to assist shoppers in browsing products based off of the groupings you have defined and allows you to create subcategories based on product types to target your intended consumer audience or other unique factors.



3. Self-Service Commerce Management Tools

Strengthen and support every step of the order process

As many as **30%** of online shoppers spend 30 minutes or more researching a product before making a purchase decision.¹

More staggering perhaps is that **83%** of shoppers conduct online research before heading to the store to make a purchase.²

The positive experience your customers have when they visit your web store is extended through successful commerce management—the design and features of the shopper-facing environment. The level of control you want or need over your products, catalogs, content and pricing is entirely up to you and your ecommerce team. When searching for the best solution, look for a platform that offers you a healthy combination of brand control through self-managed tools and the ability to offload the work of managing your store if and when necessary.

¹ <https://seiz.com/blog/40-online-shopping-ecommerce-statistics-know/>

² <http://content.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,2004089,00.html>

Management Made Easy

Pricing

Customize the pricing on your site based on your promotions and product types to show additional value to your customers. Look for easy-to-use tools to publish and modify price lists based on shopper engagement, locales and global opportunities. Look for the following rich pricing rules to aid in your success:

Pricing Types

- List price defines the standard price of products without promotions and is the default list by all stores.
- MSRP defines the price that the manufacturer of the product suggests and is often used by resellers.
- Custom price sets and custom prices that differ from other price lists
- Cost of goods reflects the total cost to create the product.
- Subscription renewal sets renewal prices for subscription products.

Features

- Multiple locale prices per currency/multiple currencies
- Volume licensing
- Bulk price upload from Excel
- Fixed or floating conversions
- Tiered pricing (merchandising)
- Price list start and end dates

Promotions

Create many types of offers to fulfill your marketing and sales initiatives:

- Create offer discounts, such as tiered, shipping and percent or amount discounts
- Set coupon codes to provide discounts to shoppers upon checkout
- Set offer restrictions based on locales, purchase plans and usage limits
- Create custom bundles to offer a defined group of products with or without discounts for guided-selling opportunities
- Automate start and end dates
- Deploy URL-triggered offers
- Configure in-cart merchandising, including bought-also-bought spotlights and coupon code entry.
- Reduce cart and site abandonment and receive personalized, dynamic offer management

Reporting

Access configurable and actionable reporting to view and download for information on store traffic, sales and related activities.

Digital asset management

Host image files, rich media, documents and additional assets to create a dynamic, engaging storefront for your customers.

Channel partner management

Select a platform that provides solutions for channel conflict, complex ordering, subscriptions, incentives and compensation.



4. Complete Order Management and Logistics Support

A positive post-purchase experience is critical.

Your solution should offer a system that has the flexibility to be as unique as your company.

Complete and easy order processing from transaction to fulfillment is imperative in today's competitive landscape, and you need a provider who is all-in for your success. While basic order management is a common offering with most platforms, many ecommerce leaders understand it takes more sophisticated order management capabilities to create a best-in-class purchase experience.

Your solution should offer a system that has the flexibility to be as unique as your company. From exclusive shopping cart features and multiple fulfillment options to intelligent inventory management and superior customer service, advanced order management tools will ensure you have everything you need to create the best order process possible for your customers, while keeping the back end manageable and profitable for your business.

Shopping cart

Customize settings to promote upsells, offers, bought-also-bought items, cross-sells and additional promotions to increase conversion rates and average order values.

Order orchestration

Offer valuable features aimed at orchestrating orders, ensuring both compliance with regulatory requirements and a positive shopper experience.

Fulfillment

Connect with a network of global fulfillment centers to provide balanced fulfillment costs and customer satisfaction.

Customer service

Provide a seamless, cost-effective customer shopping experience from pre-to post-sale with best-in-class technology to handle returns, refunds, satisfaction discounts and post-order editing.

Tax calculation

Calculate taxes quickly and accurately and minimize tax rates to lower costs for your consumers.

Fraud management

Protect your business and customers with superior fraud management technology and services.

Inventory management

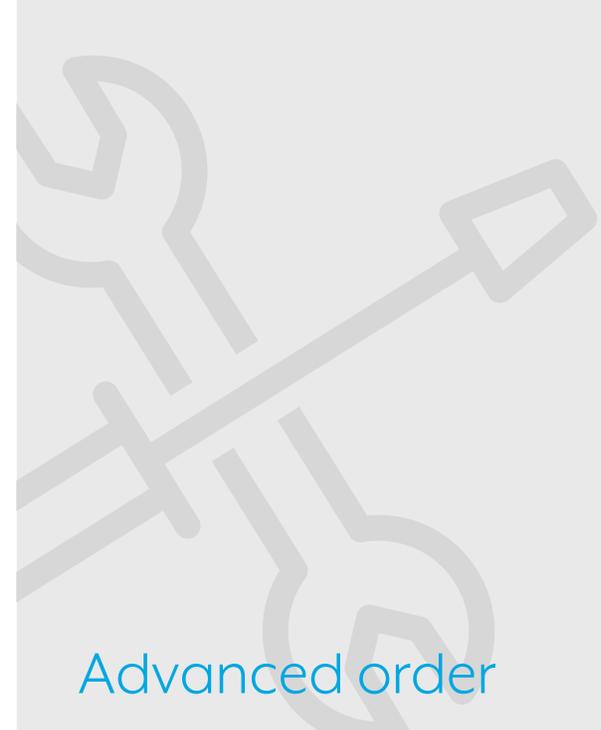
Access the full suite of inventory management tools to enable you to adjust smartsourcing logic to increase customer satisfaction while managing your costs.

Channel lead management/where to buy

Enable purchasing across your channel.

Payments

Offer the right mix of local payment options, currency and language to convert more shoppers and maximize your revenue



Advanced order management tools will ensure you have everything you need to create the best order process possible for your customers.



5. Subscription Billing Options for Recurring Revenue

Use smart monetization tools and strategies to build stickier customer relationships

The way people buy is changing and online merchants in almost every industry are adjusting the way they monetize products. Companies are shifting from one-time perpetual sales, or fixed monthly subscriptions, to consumption models that blend one-time, subscription and usage-based billing. And product offerings are being tested- mixing elements of software, services and hardware. Now that the line between products and services is blurred, forward-thinking merchants are experimenting with connected devices and using data insights to build stickier customer relationships.

When it comes to choosing the right subscription billing partner, look for strong capabilities in optimizing customer relationships. Pricing models should be simple and the buying experience seamless. You should also make sure your partner is able to support your global expansion. While many platforms are able to support almost every conceivable model of recurring subscriptions, most fall short of providing vital business processes needed to sell globally. Great value can be had in partnering with a full-service vendor. The alternative is to either manage multiple vendor relationships or assume the risk and investments in house.



6. Global Reach with Localization Capabilities

Leverage established expertise and entities to facilitate your global success

When planning for global expansion, aggressive go-to-market timelines are nearly impossible to meet without a proactive ecommerce partner that already has the right processes in place. A full-service ecommerce provider offers an established ecosystem of experts, payment methods, partnerships, warehouses, and fulfillment operations that you can plug into for greater speed and agility. On top of that, your provider should protect your brand by combating fraud, taking on risk and simplifying billing, taxes and compliance.

Going global means thinking local. To maximize your global success, almost every aspect of your business should be localized, including demand generation, payment methods, compliance, taxes, fulfillment and customer care.

Consumers expect a shopping experience in their own language, with their preferred payment methods. If you are unable to offer the right mix of local payment options, language and currency, your global business will be a bust. A full-service commerce partner should be able to optimize your global conversions by delivering a localized shopping experience wherever the customer is located.



7. Tax, Fraud Management and Compliance Infrastructure

Shield your business from risk

Data breaches, compliance failures, tax penalties—these are the types of threats that induce stress and rob business executives of valuable sleep. While expanding into global markets can have big rewards, it also comes with countless risks. You can have the best ecommerce platform in the world, but it means nothing if your business is forced to dissolve for failing to comply with industry rules or local laws.

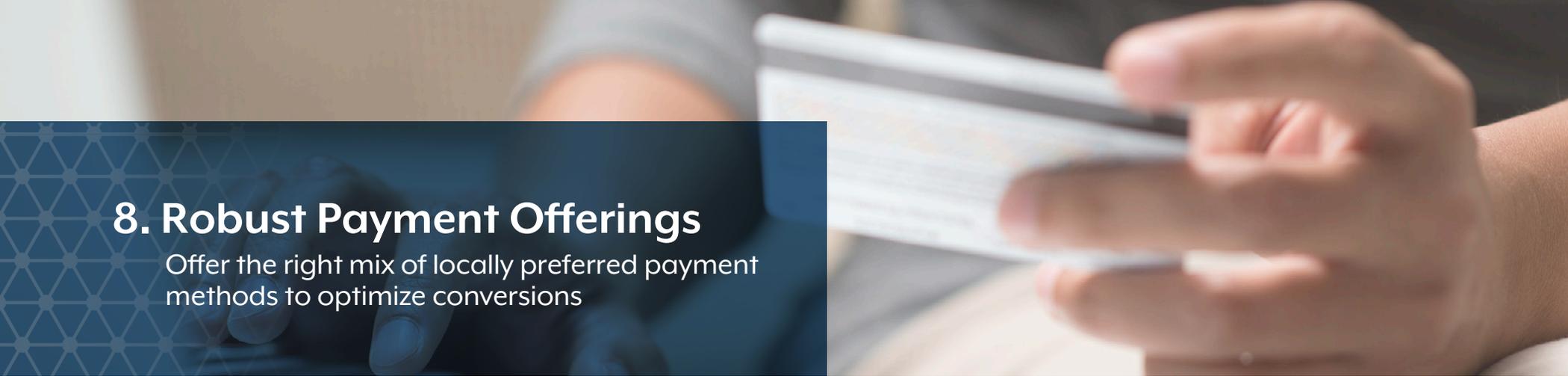
With rising fraud rates and a recent onslaught of high-profile security breaches, business leaders are paying attention and investing in top-notch security controls. In 2015, fraud rates by volume increased 30% compared to 2014.¹ Fraud is an ever-present threat to online businesses and cyber criminals are growing more skilled and organized year after year.

Adding to the headache of fighting fraud are the complex and ever-changing tax and compliance laws worldwide. With data privacy receiving international attention following the high-profile Edward Snowden case, the European Union has stepped up its data protection laws. And even within the EU, every country has its own unique and convoluted set of regulations that pose a risk to your business. Failure to comply with even a single law can lead to heavy fines and even prosecution.

When selling to consumers in other countries, you have to be careful not to add friction to the shopping experience. Duties, shipping costs, value-added taxes (VAT) and local sales taxes are all potential additions to the purchase price that can vary by country. Without the right measures in place, the buying experience can be confusing. To ensure you address country-specific regulations and provide a transparent experience, you need a global ecommerce partner with years of experience and experts in all corners of the globe.

Any vulnerabilities or missteps in global tax, fraud and compliance disciplines can have huge consequences. You can't put a price tag on these areas of global commerce, but having the right processes in place can deliver huge savings and peace of mind.

Fraud is an ever-present threat to online businesses and cyber criminals are growing more skilled and organized year after year.



8. Robust Payment Offerings

Offer the right mix of locally preferred payment methods to optimize conversions

How customers pay for goods and services is clearly an important aspect of ecommerce. What's not as clear are the regional nuances that need to be addressed in order to deliver a localized shopping experience that will maximize your success in various markets around the world. While Visa and MasterCard remain the most popular payment methods in the U.S., consumer preferences take on a very different look in markets where credit cards have not been widely adopted. For example, only 1% of online shoppers in China pay with international card brands and 49% use Alipay. If consumers don't see their preferred method of payment, they are very likely to leave your site without completing a purchase. And low conversion rates can mean millions of dollars in lost revenue.

To optimize your global conversion rates, you need an experienced ecommerce partner with the expertise, local entities and banking relationships needed to deliver a localized shopping experience. Look for a partner with multiple local entities and country-specific payment expertise to support your cross-border success. By offering the right mix of local payment options, currency and language, you will convert more shoppers and maximize your revenue.



9. Commerce-Focused Digital Marketing

Access deep global marketing expertise to drive commerce growth

Your goal should be alignment—bringing the right traffic to your online store to generate more revenue.

Success on a global scale requires a deep understanding of your customers, global marketing and analytics—your marketing team or company need to be experts in selling online and offer commerce-driven marketing solutions. Multilingual and multicultural experts will help tackle all cultural and local considerations. Whether you're looking for a fully managed or self-service marketing program, you will need the right mix of solutions to grow your business, bring in more revenue and uncover new opportunities.

Your goal should be alignment—bringing the right traffic to your online store to generate more revenue. Your team should excel in advanced analytics around commerce-driven customer engagement, retention and conversion and possess experience in direct-to-consumer marketing and ecommerce optimization to get the most out of your spend.

10. Customer Support Across all Touchpoints

Provide an exceptional shopping experience through every step of the buyer journey



Customer service is a critical component to any online business, directly influencing customer lifetime value. As more and more shoppers purchase products using mobile devices, they expect around-the-clock assistance at every point in the purchase cycle.

That's why it is important to provide your customers with the highest level of service everywhere you do business. Going global means you will need to service customers on a global scale. You will need to have access to a global team of customer service experts with flexible support plans that help provide a seamless, cost-effective customer shopping experience from pre- to post-sale.

Contact quality and the customer experience should be one of your highest priorities. It is important to offer flexible options that include inbound calls, email management and live chat and further a seamless brand experience by using your company name and custom messaging.

An experienced team will build and maintain strong customer relationships through multiple touch points.



To fully engage with your customer it is best to offer a comprehensive level of services:

- **Pre-sales:** Provide general product information to customers based on information available on the online store
- **Order assistance:** Place orders on behalf of customers and assist with order-specific issues (error messages, address verification, etc.)
- **Download support:** Provide download and troubleshooting assistance
- **Refund assistance:** Issues return requests within policy guidelines and supplies customers with refund information resulting from returns (dates, amounts, etc.)
- **Billing inquiries:** Send customer invoice/confirmation emails and answer general questions about billing (tax, shipping and handling, etc.)
- **Shipping:** Provides tracking/shipment information and processes claims/traces on lost and missing packages



In Summary

Considering all of the vital areas of commerce that have to be executed with precision and the risks involved, it's no wonder that even business leaders with big budgets and a do-it-yourself attitude are seeking trusted partnerships. Outsourcing critical areas of global ecommerce operations has proven to deliver a tremendous return on investment. A world-class global ecommerce partner will give your business greater agility, accelerate your expansion into new markets, provide best-of-breed technology, optimize conversions, create customer stickiness, and protect your business from global risks.

Keep the ten fundamentals of global ecommerce outlined in this guide in mind and ask yourself what makes the best sense for your business. Should you take a multi-vendor approach or select a single partner to whom you can outsource all or parts of your operation? Do a thorough audit of your internal resources to determine how your current systems and processes will be impacted. Establish clear roles, responsibilities and timelines with your commerce partner. The best way to expand into new global markets with speed, security and confidence is to go full steam ahead with a full-service ecommerce partner.

Now is the time to transform your brand! Go direct, go global... but remember a critical component to success is being local.

Commerce with Accountability

At Digital River, we believe in true accountability. Everything about our advanced cloud solution is designed for risk-free global commerce.

We work with tech-centric brands to power their shopping experiences; simplify billing, tax and compliance; combat fraud; and deliver across the globe. We're trusted advocates who are always focused on your success.

Benefits of a single partnership with Digital River:

-  Full service SaaS commerce cloud solutions
-  Speed to revenue into new markets
-  Reduced risk and complexity
-  Lower total cost of ownership
-  Strategic global growth with localization and payment methods
-  Value-added marketing, consulting and customer care services
-  Consistency of brand experience
-  Unified reporting

We're all-in, fully committed to each facet of your ecommerce business.
Contact us today.

E: info@digitalriver.com | US: +1 800 598 7450 | UK: +44 (0) 845 603 5070 | TW: + 886 2 8173 1711

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