

ECOMMERCE REPLATFORMING CHECKLIST

FUTURE-PROOF YOUR BUSINESS WITH API-DRIVEN COMMERCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There's nothing more difficult than trying to meet today's digital consumer demands for remarkable customer experiences on disjointed legacy systems. A digital transformation is currently unfolding, and organizations must take advantage of the emerging disruptive trends. For most organizations, that means replatforming.

Replatforming is never an easy undertaking, especially when it entails the migration of multifaceted systems and operational and organizational complexities. Legacy applications and organizational silos prevent companies from leveraging new technologies and customer touchpoints.

This thought leadership brief will help build your business case for your upcoming replatforming project, outline the steps for moving from a monolithic platform to a headless solution and the common mistakes to avoid.

MONOLITH VS HEADLESS

Monoliths are the traditional ecommerce systems that tightly couple the front-end presentation layer with the commerce engine. They are siloed solutions that limit the ability to launch "experiential commerce," a unified, rich, and engaging shopping experience that allows customers to transact in the now. When the front-end is so tightly coupled to the back-end, adding new front-end experiences involves working with back-end code and often requires IT resources.

Headless commerce systems decouple commerce capabilities from the presentation layer. A decoupled content and commerce architecture can establish a flexible technology foundation that is highly extensible and future-proofs the business by giving it the agility to innovate without major disruptions.

When an organization realizes its current monolithic commerce solution can no longer meet its business needs, it's time to replatform. Upgrading the old system won't cut it.

Some are adding API functionality, sure, but they're doing so as an afterthought late in the game in a desperate attempt to stay relevant in a changing marketplace. These legacy platforms were never designed to be headless, and their APIs tend to be disjointed and ill-thought through. They aren't optimized for various touchpoints.

If you upgrade your monolithic system and go through a drawn-out, expensive migration, you'll still be behind, and you'll later have to start from scratch and replatform anyway.

API-DRIVEN BENEFITS

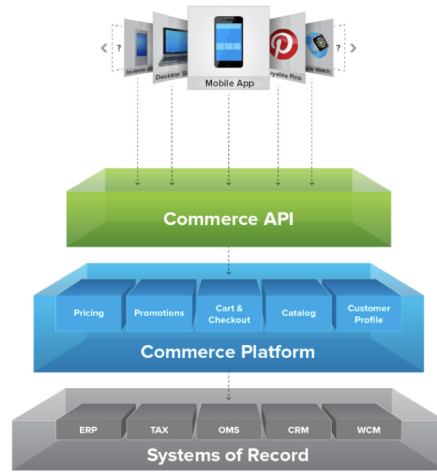
API-driven commerce, also known as headless commerce, gives businesses and organizations the ability to unify selling across brands, business units, channels, and geographies; and the agility to make any emerging customer touchpoints shoppable, all from a single unified commerce platform.

Agility comes from separating the front-end from the back-end, allowing new touchpoints to be quickly and easily added. There's no need to "rip and replace" your existing system. Moving to a headless API-driven platform allows for a progressive transformation or "phase out" approach.

Whether you hope to increase market opportunities, better mitigate against risk, or both, increased flexibility will allow you to do that. You'll need a bit of change management planning, however, to be sure your organization's flexibility matches your new technology's. As a better platform is phased in over time, you'll be able to choose which parts of your organization to adapt first, and how fast.

REPLATFORMING CHECKLIST

- Obtain
- Identify
- Select
- Stand up
- Align
- Segment
- Migrate



The first step in replatforming, of course, is to **obtain** buy-in from the C-suite. An initiative like this is easily justified if organizations can answer “No” to any of the following questions:

- Can the current monolithic commerce solution meet your business needs?
- Is the current commerce solution future-proof?
- Can your business remain digitally competitive with your current platform?
- Can marketing and customer experience teams adapt quickly and implement changes without IT?

After the C-suite is on board, you won’t need a content management system or digital experience platform, but you will need to **identify** a commerce vendor that’s able to work with any front-end. Decoupling commerce from content will allow you to innovate without any disruption.

You’ll want to **select** a headless solution that allows for a progressive transformation while you keep the legacy platform partially in place in order to keep business disruption to a minimum. No more “rip and replace.”

Rather than replacing your existing platform, you’ll want to **stand up** the headless solution alongside it and move application integrations one at a time over to the new commerce functionality while keeping the back-end systems where they are.

Before migrating, you should identify all your current systems of record for products, customers, and fulfillment and **align** your roadmap for them with where your new commerce platform will take you.

- Know where your product information is—whether it’s stored in a home-built system, in spreadsheets, or what have you—and ask yourself where and how it will be stored a few years from now.
- Do the same with your customer records. Are you currently using a third-party CRM or an in-house system? What level of interoperability do you hope to have between your CRM and your various channels?
- The same goes for your downstream fulfillment and financial systems. What state is your ERP in, and what’s your roadmap for it? You’ll also want to examine your segmentation potential. The more you can **segment** your touchpoints, product lines, and geographic regions, the more agile and flexible you’ll be in the marketplace.
- Which geographic regions are you operating in now, and which regions do you hope to be operating in one or two years in the future? Do you have a plan for payment types, payment gateways, and tax provider software in these various regions? Getting these in place can take time.
- Do you plan to add new channels or touchpoints?
- What’s your plan for mobile?

Once the new commerce platform is in place, it will be time to **migrate**. It’s best to use a phased approach here rather than migrating everything in one day. Start small with a single segmented touchpoint, product line, or geographic region, and add more at your own pace as you get comfortable with the new platform and work out any hiccups that may arise.

At the same time, be mindful of how these changes will impact your own organization; a “steady as she goes” approach beats throwing too many balls into the air all at once, whether you’re replatforming or going through any other business transition.

When done correctly, positive results are achieved immediately, with minimal negative impact and the shortest path to revenue.

SUCCESSFUL REPLatformING

A major tax software provider recently made the move from a monolithic platform to Elastic Path's headless solution. By the end of 2018, headless commerce will account for 50% of its overall revenue. Elastic Path gives the tax software provider the flexibility it needs to have all its business units on a single platform at a lower cost than with the former monolithic solution.

The company delivered business value quickly and with less complexity than with its previous platform. Manual processes have been reduced, go-to-market time is accelerated, and customers now have unified shopping experiences.

Takeaway: after selecting your headless platform partner, be sure to involve them from the beginning of the project and remain deeply engaged throughout the first phase.

A major telecommunications provider replatformed from its disparate systems to Elastic Path after suffering from fragmented infrastructure, disjointed data architecture, and limited extensibility and maintainability. The company's Digital Commerce Platform (DCP) is in production and has already successfully brought new products to market without needing much support from Elastic Path. Business executives are so pleased with the DCP team's success that they're now planning to bring the DCP platform to other areas of their business, such as retail, pre-paid, and B2B.

Takeaway: best results are achieved when employing the progressive transformation approach from one system to the next.

CONCLUSION

A headless commerce replatforming initiative reduces business disruption when it's rolled out progressively.

With an **API-driven headless solution**, you can build what you want, when you want. You're no longer limited by your old monolith and can let your customers' expectations guide your way forward instead.

About Elastic Path

Defining the future of commerce, Elastic Path pioneered the world's leading API-oriented commerce solution for enterprises. The company's flagship product, Elastic Path® Commerce, has helped the world's top brands generate over \$60 billion in over 170 countries. Customers from industries as diverse as travel, telecoms, publishing, software, and retail enjoy the benefits of a flexible, open architecture that monetizes brand-defining customer experiences, facilitates business agility and eliminates commerce system silos.

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