






eCommerce Success Factors for SAP ERP Evaluation and Decision Guide

**White Paper by
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Icons

Icon	Meaning
	Caution
	Example
	Note

History

Version	Notes
1.0	Initial internal Version
1.1	Public Version
2.1	Updated to include SAP Business ONE, SAP ECC, SAP S4

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“I don’t see why people are afraid of new ideas,
personally, I am afraid of the old ideas.” (John Cage)

The Problem

The time has come to focus on “Solutions” versus “Tools”. SAP does not offer an eCommerce solution as part of their SAP Business ONE portfolio. It is therefore crucial to review the market situation and provide information and resources about the current offerings related to eCommerce. During conversations with partners, customers and an online discussion, we compiled and organized the “Success Factors” for the perfect SAP Business ONE eCommerce solution. When deciding for an eCommerce Solution that works with SAP Business ONE you can measure the available features against those success factors. In order to do this in a structured manner we will complete the following path:

First we look at the solution scenarios based on SAP Business ONE. This is followed by a brief evaluation of the target market and its constraints. We then define the “criteria” that can be used to evaluate features. In essence, this criteria is designed to measure a solution’s capability to “Capture the Business Momentum”. There are many features and functionalities. We listed the “key eCommerce features” that should be present in a solution in order to enable “End-to-End” processes. The final step is to put the key eCommerce features to the test with the potential target user base in mind. We attempt to measure the overall solution with the innovative “Simple Yet Powerful Test – SYPT”. This visual representation is based on the Newton Cradle concept and showcases a solution’s potential to “Capture the Business Momentum”.

The Solution

The need for web technology is omnipresent and the ROI for web implementations is “undisputed”. Using the method shown in this white paper you can “dispute” and better decide for the “right” solution. We will focus on products that are highly integrated with SAP Business ONE. Therefore eCommerce solutions that are not integrated with SAP Business ONE by design are disregarded. Any solution can be integrated and it is not our goal to provide an integration guide in this document. We focus on solutions that are utilizing the DI-API or similar means to “extend” SAP processes to the web. Any “manual” integration will not be part of this white paper. The goal of this document is to highlight the need for end-to-end solutions that seamlessly integrate.

Most emerging companies need a solution that is simple to use, easy to implement and can help them “manage growth”. Growth is one thing, but “managing” growth is key. We will later see how the established “Success Factors” can help you identify how this “Management of Growth” can be handled with your preferred solution. In the next section we will identify and define the target market for the SAP Business ONE eCommerce solutions.

The Market – Focus on Emerging Companies

What’s a small company? If you ask consultants and customers there are many categorizations and criteria, which is causing some confusion. The definitions actually are different by country and industry - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Small_business. It points to the fact that the categorization is based on the perspective. For example, a company may be large from a SAP Business ONE perspective. However it may be small for SAP mySAP. Please find the complete SAP Business ONE categorization below:

- Emerging (1-10 Employees)
- Small (<50)
- Mid (>50)
- Enterprise (>500)

The eCommerce solutions discussed in this document are targeting the Emerging, Small and Mid-Sized companies. This customer segment is characterized by limited financial resources, limited IT management resources, niche market focus and success based approval processes. Therefore the potential solutions have to deliver an easy to manage solution that has the capabilities to be adjusted to detailed “niche” market needs.

The Criteria – Establishing “Business Momentum”

The quality of a product is determined by the criteria we use to evaluate it. During an online discussion on the LinkedIn SAP Business ONE forum (www.linkedin.com) participants were asked to contribute their perspective on the “Key Success Factors for eCommerce” as related to SAP Business ONE. The discussion further underlined the need to organize the success factors and structure them. For example some participants had general complaints about the available solutions while others requested specific features. It clearly showed that there are a variety concerns and requirements floating around. In order to help consultants and customers evaluate their potential eCommerce solution for SAP Business ONE our team organized the success factors as follows:

--Real-Time Integration as the basis to preserve the “Business Momentum”

A key selling point for SAP Business ONE is “Real-Time” information. It is therefore important to evaluate the level of integration for potential eCommerce solutions. Is the solution “Real-Time” integrated or is “Synchronization” required to keep the data updated in SAP Business ONE? There may be reasons to choose one method of integration over the other. However we advise that with respect to the SAP Business ONE designated target market “Real-Time” integration is preferred as it minimizes the requirement for additional consulting hours and/or manual synchronization. We are suggesting this, because a solution that is not integrated in Real-Time may require repetitive manual steps to get the data in sync. In a business management world there are some red flags when we hear “repetitive manual steps” and data that is not in “sync”. In addition the value of “Real-Time” integration is that the “Business Momentum” is preserved. The Newton Cradle nicely demonstrates the momentum when different components are connected in real-time. In this white paper we will identify the “Key Features for eCommerce”. Those will represent the components that have to be connected in “Real-Time” and preserve the “Business Momentum” in SAP Business ONE.

--Custom Component / Standard Component

Every eCommerce implementation is unique as customers have very specific requirements. At the same time each eCommerce implementation has to meet industry requirements and standards to comply. It becomes clear that a solid eCommerce solution for SAP Business ONE has to deliver the flexibility to meet customer specific requirements while also complying with new industry standards.

When evaluating an eCommerce solution we therefore identify the capability to “customize” the functionality for customers. In addition we list the “standard technologies” that are available. Therefore the “custom/standard” criteria must be evaluated as one. For example customers generally want to implement their custom design. However a modern eCommerce design has standard features that are often integrated with the design. Such standards are “Google Ads, Chat, Web Analytics”. As it may turn out most custom features should be based on a standard functionality in the eCommerce solution. This way you avoid programming and make sure the solution can be maintained.

When standard features are not available, eCommerce solutions are “customized” via programming. We highly discourage any programming for customer projects as it defeats the purpose of an out-of-the box solution. We advise customers to approach any programming additions with caution.

Having said that it must be noted that most eCommerce projects have some requirements that cannot be easily implemented in a standard format. That’s when your solution selection is crucial. How can a specific requirement be implemented? For example many customer scenarios already have an existing web and eCommerce solution. It was potentially developed as an expensive custom development. You need to treat such a system like any other “Island of Operation” and evaluate the potential for replacement or integration. Your eCommerce solution should provide options for both scenarios. For example an existing eCommerce website should be easily integrated with the SAP eCommerce checkout process. Therefore an eCommerce solution can serve as a “real-time” connected solution that integrates an existing website with SAP Business ONE.

--Completeness

Are any additional Add-Ons required to achieve “End-to-End” process integration? For example does your eCommerce solution require additional add-ons for Credit Card Processing, Shipping Rate integration, Newsletter Integration or any other essential functionality? This is a crucial aspect, because for any SAP Business ONE implementation you should limit the number of Add-Ons used.

--Proven Track Record / Certification

In order to prove the track record of a solution often the number of customers is utilized. However it is not a sufficient criteria when evaluating solutions. Therefore the following additional criteria should be considered:

- Is the solution “State-of-the-Art”? Often established solutions are outdated or based on old technology. You have to make sure that the solution has a long-term perspective looking forward and not only backward.
- Is there a significant number of customers who purchased the solution, but never used it or otherwise never went “Live”. This could point to a discrepancy between “Sales Skills” and “Solution Potential” of a vendor.
- Review industry independent reviews. Is the solution positioned in competitive portfolios?
- Is the solution certified by SAP? This will be a good indication for the vendor’s dedication to this product.
- Are there any “Live” stores that you can evaluate. This should be the best indication, because you can see “live” what you may get. Did the “live” stores require programming?
- Are there any implementations in your specific industry?
- Is a clear benefit analysis with before and after scenario available? This points to the fact that the solution provider has a structured approach.

--Regional Coverage

It is interesting to note that it is often overlooked to consider language specific requirements for localized implementations. The ideal eCommerce solution would make it simple to adjust to regional requirements. Therefore the regional coverage has a “functional” aspect. Considering the very nature of eCommerce with a potential worldwide audience this aspect could play an important role when eCommerce solutions reach a mature level where overlooked features like this become

an essential factor. The future eCommerce system would not only allow you to publish stores easily and present relevant content dynamically for users, but also would identify the location of a current site visitor and determine the geographic and cultural framework including products, currency, warehouse locations, and availability. These “regional” aspects are clearly functional and can contribute to an efficient integrated eCommerce solution.

An important non-functional aspect is “support”. Basically you need to determine if your preferred eCommerce vendor has support capacities at your geographic location.

--eCommerce Key Feature ROI

Features are important. However features can add complexity. The main requirements should be matched with the core feature set available in the evaluated solution. We would like to highlight that this criteria is crucial. Providing the “right” features helps customers understand the potential of their solution. It is better to provide features that inspire customers based on a standard solution rather than offering them to implement “based on their requirements”. Don’t misunderstand this as disregarding the detailed customer requirements. A solution provider should address the most common requirements and then also “connect the dots” to release synergy effects. For example integrating Newsletter functionality is not an immediate obvious function. However with integration this functionality can leverage your real-time data to the next level.

It is also important to note that it does not make sense to go “feature hunting”. The less and more precise features the better. Therefore in this white paper we evaluate what we call the eCommerce essentials. We don’t advocate adding new features, but rather keep it simple and add features only if their integration adds significant synergy. The following features are the essentials we identified when analyzing eCommerce functional completeness:

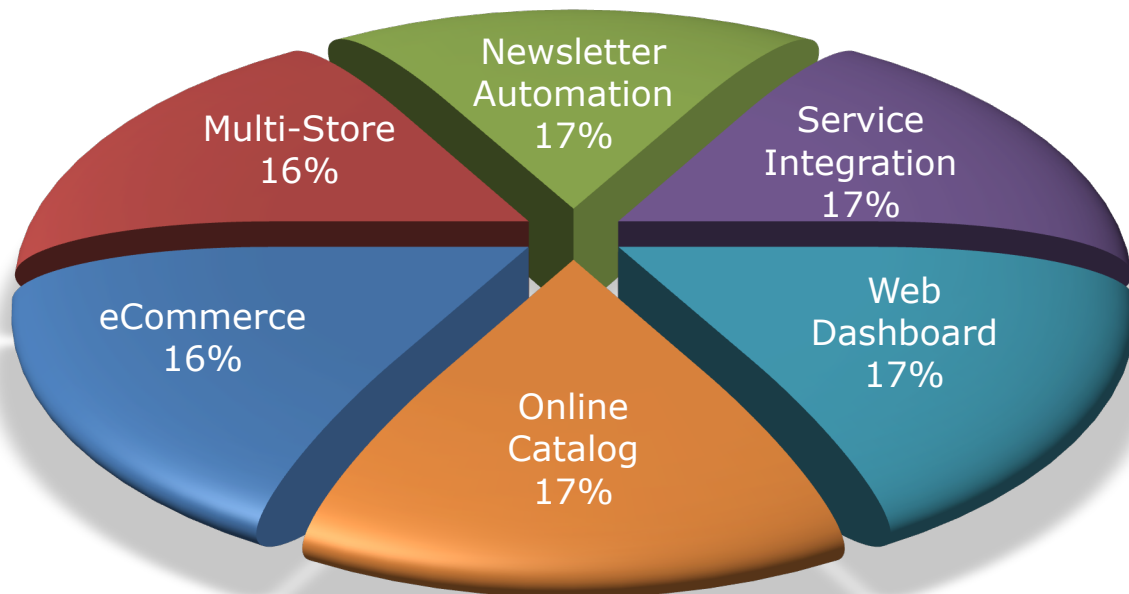
- eCommerce End-to-End Process
- Multi-Store Capability
- Online Catalog
- Web Dashboard
- Service Integration
- Newsletter Automation

We gave each of the above key features a neutral ROI weight. You can change this based on your specific requirements. Each key feature is evaluated against the success factors. Using this concept you can assess eCommerce offerings and position them against your requirements.

The success factors for each criteria are:





- Real-Time
- Custom/Standard
- Completeness
- Track Record
- Regional Coverage

Weighted Feature ROI



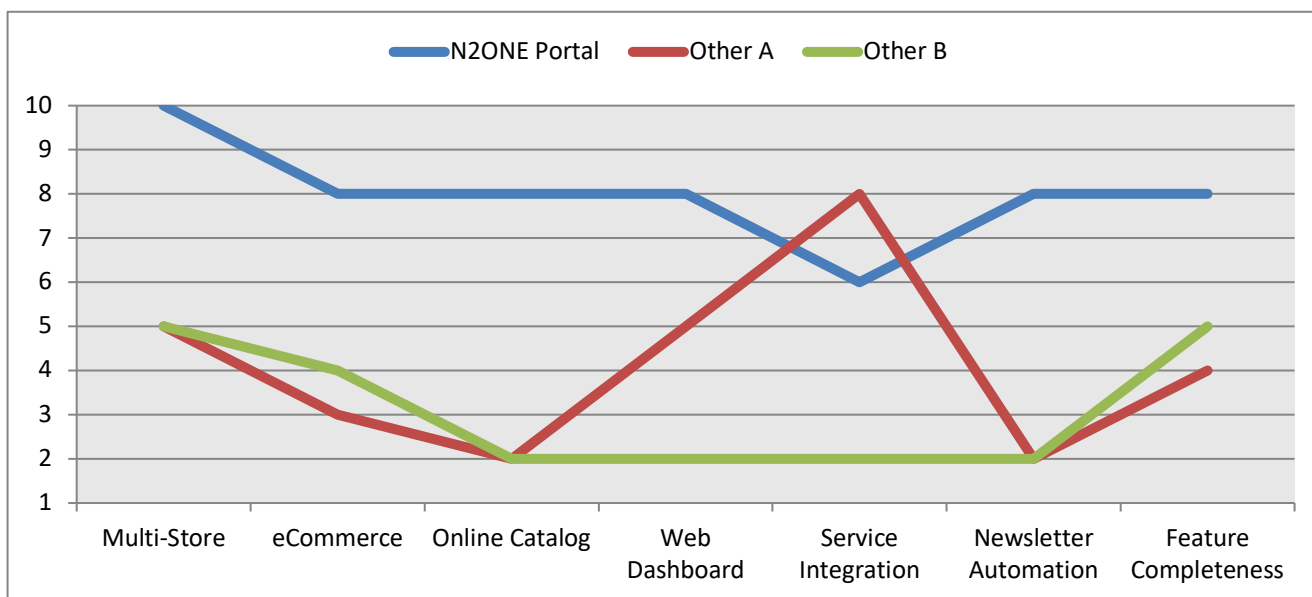
Vendor Evaluation

When evaluating vendors and their eCommerce solutions use the following criteria to evaluate:

-  Does the vendor have a solution or a “programming toolset”? The approach “We can do anything you like” does not suffice. Based on our analysis a standard functionality must be available for customers.
-  What is the history of the solution? How many owners and developer hands did the solution go through? Changing code and software with a history of more than one owner is not easy. Customers for such solutions will end up getting marketing updates with marginal value.
-  Is the solution designed for SAP Business ONE or did the vendor “modify” an existing implementation that was designed for another platform?
-  Be careful of vendors promising that their solution helps you “Keep your Data Synchronized”. You should have your data in Real-Time, which does not require synchronization.
- Does the solution provide real-time information and preserve the “Business Momentum”?

Vendor Score Chart based on Key Criteria

The following chart is a sample visual representation that shows how different eCommerce solutions for SAP Business ONE measure up against the identified success factors. Each key feature is evaluated against the success factors. As you can see the N2ONE Portal shows high ratings for each key feature. Each component from Multi-Store, eCommerce, Online Catalog, Web Dashboard, Service, Newsletter Automation is integrated in Real-Time and designed for end to end processes that preserve the “Business Momentum”. In addition no Add-Ons are required to implement the functionality. All other eCommerce solutions even require Add-Ons for basic checkout functionality.



SYPT – Simple Yet Powerful Test

What is SYPT?

The Newton Cradle nicely shows the power of kinetics. It also shows the importance of integrated processes that transfer data seamlessly in Real-Time. But what if there is a dis-connect? It's easy to see that the cycle is broken and the process does not work anymore. Therefore we would like to utilize the Newton Cradle as a tool to evaluate that the key process components are in place and comply with SYPT criteria namely “Feature Completeness” and “Ease of Use”. For example if the following criteria are met the SYPT will get high scores:



- No programming required to customize
- Little consulting help needed
- End-to-End Automation without additional Add-Ons

The “Simple Yet Powerful Test – SYPT” ultimately puts the solution to the test and qualifies if it delivers a good combination of features, ease-of-use and the capability to “manage growth”. Matching the customer resources with the final solution with respect to usability and manageability is important. SAP Business ONE customers can range from 1-2 employee companies with an eCommerce solution that may grow to 80 employees with various locations and warehouses.

Matching the requirements with minimal or without programming is key. If programming is required, it must be ensured that it does not affect the “supportability”.

The “Simple Yet Powerful – SYPT” test evaluates each “eCommerce Key Feature” using the “Success Factors” criteria. In addition, each eCommerce key feature is judged based on its “ease-of-use” and usability considering the potential target audience of SAP Business ONE customers. Using this method, we can make sure that a feature can deliver business benefits for customers without the costly need for continued consulting help. Real-Time integration of all the key features and ease of use will guarantee success. In order to visually represent these requirements, we have color coded each key feature. We then utilize the Newton Cradle concept to evaluate if a solution is capable of “preserving the business momentum”. For example if a key feature is not implemented then the “end-to-end” process is broken. Essentially this would result in the fact that the momentum is not preserved.

Please refer to the following website for more information about the Newton Cradle.

<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~scidemos/NewtonianMechanics/NewtonsCradle/NewtonsCradle.html>



Note: Red indicates that a feature is either not implemented, requires additional add-ons, requires manual synchronization or is too complex to handle and thereby does not pass the Simple Yet Powerful Test.

Other SAP eCommerce solution (vendor undisclosed)

There are disconnected key components. The momentum is lost.



N2ONE Portal designed for SAP Business ONE

The solution preserves the business momentum. All key features are integrates in real-time.



N2ONE recommendation “Don’t be the boiling Frog”

When throwing a frog into boiling water it will jump out immediately. However if you heat the water gradually it will not perceive the danger and will be cooked to death.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boiling_frog)

How does this apply to eCommerce for SAP Business ONE?

Expanding your business using web technologies and tools is a common goal for most businesses today. With new web related technologies emerging frequently, those “tools” often lead to operational “Islands”. The absence of a solution for common challenges leads to “creative solutions”. Over time businesses get tangled up with complex technologies and consulting. That’s where the “Boiling Frog” comes into play. If you don’t pay close attention your business solution becomes a jungle of applications that require “synchronization” and other unnecessary clutter. We are suggesting that businesses re-evaluate their solutions based on the success factors in this white paper.

What’s Next: Watch Stores Live and compare

Register at www.n2oneportal.com and get updated SYPT charts and vendor score charts. You can get access to the growing number of demos that help you evaluate solutions. All registered members qualify to win a Newton Cradle for their desk.