

# Strategic insights for B2B commerce

Leveraging technology and customer engagement

COMMERCE  
VISION

REPORT BY **inside FMCG®**

# Foreword

Welcome to the Commerce Vision insights report, crafted for B2B companies aiming to navigate modern business operations' critical challenges and expectations. In today's rapidly evolving market, staying ahead of customer demands and competitive pressures is essential for success. This report offers an in-depth analysis of what your business customers genuinely value, focusing on operational efficiency, strategic growth, and competitive advantage.

Our survey of 90 representatives from various organisations reveals that customer engagement and cost management are pivotal in shaping business success and fostering long-term relationships. Every touchpoint, from initial interactions to final delivery and payment, plays a crucial role.

Moreover, our in-depth analysis has uncovered key strategies to help B2B companies enhance their approach to meeting their customers' diverse needs. For instance, leveraging technology such as online integrated ecommerce and sales order automation can provide efficiencies, a competitive edge, and elevated customer satisfaction.

Over the 30 years I have been involved in B2B commerce, the landscape has changed significantly. Competition is now global and not local. Cost-to-serve is increasingly coming into focus, putting further downward pressure on margins and the ability to grow and invest. More recently, card payments are playing a significant role in streamlining the order-to-cash process and reducing the friction in B2B commerce.

I invite you to delve into our report to discover comprehensive insights into the complex B2B commerce landscape, from tackling current challenges to anticipating future obstacles. Each stage presents unique opportunities to optimise performance, enhance customers' ecommerce experience, and build lasting loyalty.

Kind regards,

**Andrew Rogencamp**  
Chief Customer Officer  
Commerce Vision



To ensure the most relevant insights for B2B businesses, we engaged with over 250 senior executives to identify 90 key decision-makers and leaders in the B2B commerce space. By focusing on these leaders, we gathered in-depth perspectives that reflect the industry's current and future challenges.

This analysis contains responses from senior technology decision-makers across various industry sectors, such as Food Service, Hardware, Apparel, Automotive, Sporting Goods, and many more. The report illuminates the main pain points and critical factors influencing B2B operations today and expectations for tomorrow, offering actionable insights and practical solutions designed to elevate your strategy.

Through this report, you will discover how to:

- **Prioritise key operational challenges**
- **Anticipate and prepare for future business obstacles**
- **Leverage cutting-edge technology to secure a competitive edge**

Via this report, we aim to provide insights that will allow you and your business to plan for the future, improve customer experience and influence business performance.



The research surfaced the critical challenges and future expectations B2B businesses face, highlighting top pain points and strategic focus areas to enhance operations and secure a competitive advantage.

## #1

**Increased costs- to-serve, market conditions, and competition drive decisions**

B2B businesses are increasingly being challenged by a rising cost-to-serve, shifting market conditions, and heightened competition. To navigate these pressures, companies must rethink their cost-management strategies, embracing innovation and efficiency to sustain growth over the next 3-5 years.

## #2

**Prioritise efficient sales channels while optimising others**

eCommerce and email are the most efficient and effective sales channels, leading in order volume and revenue generation. While phone and field sales are the least efficient, they should be optimised to make more valuable channels. Prioritising channels can enhance overall sales performance and reduce resource consumption.

## #3

**Focus on acquiring new customers and increasing purchase frequency**

Acquiring new customers and increasing the frequency of purchases among existing ones are top priorities for B2B businesses in 2024. Companies must deliver seamless and engaging customer experiences from first touch to payment to maintain market share and drive growth.

## #4

**Invest in B2B ecommerce and sales order automation for an edge**

B2B ecommerce and sales order automation are critical technologies that are being invested in to drive competitive advantage. These tools streamline operations and reduce costs, positioning businesses to stand out in a crowded marketplace.

## #5

**Meet customer expectations with flexible payment options**

Customers now expect flexible payment options as part of their relationship with B2B businesses. Offering a variety of secure and user-friendly payment methods, particularly for online and account payments, is essential to meeting these expectations and driving customer satisfaction and loyalty.

## #6

**Prepare for future challenges, including AI's growing role**

Businesses anticipate that AI will heavily influence future challenges, both seen and unseen. To stay ahead, companies must invest in AI capabilities, preparing to leverage this technology to enhance customer fulfilment and mitigate risks in an evolving market.

# Key operational challenges: Current and future perspectives

Our research has identified the primary challenges that businesses are facing and revealed which issues are likely to persist in the near future.

The economic landscape, characterised by persistent cost-to-serve challenges, challenging market conditions, and increased competition, continues to exert pressure on businesses. These economic drivers have created an environment where strategic agility, technology and operational efficiency are more critical than ever. As we look to the future, while some of these pressures are expected to ease – through a potential recovery in market conditions, for example – other challenges, like competition and staffing issues, are likely to remain or even intensify.

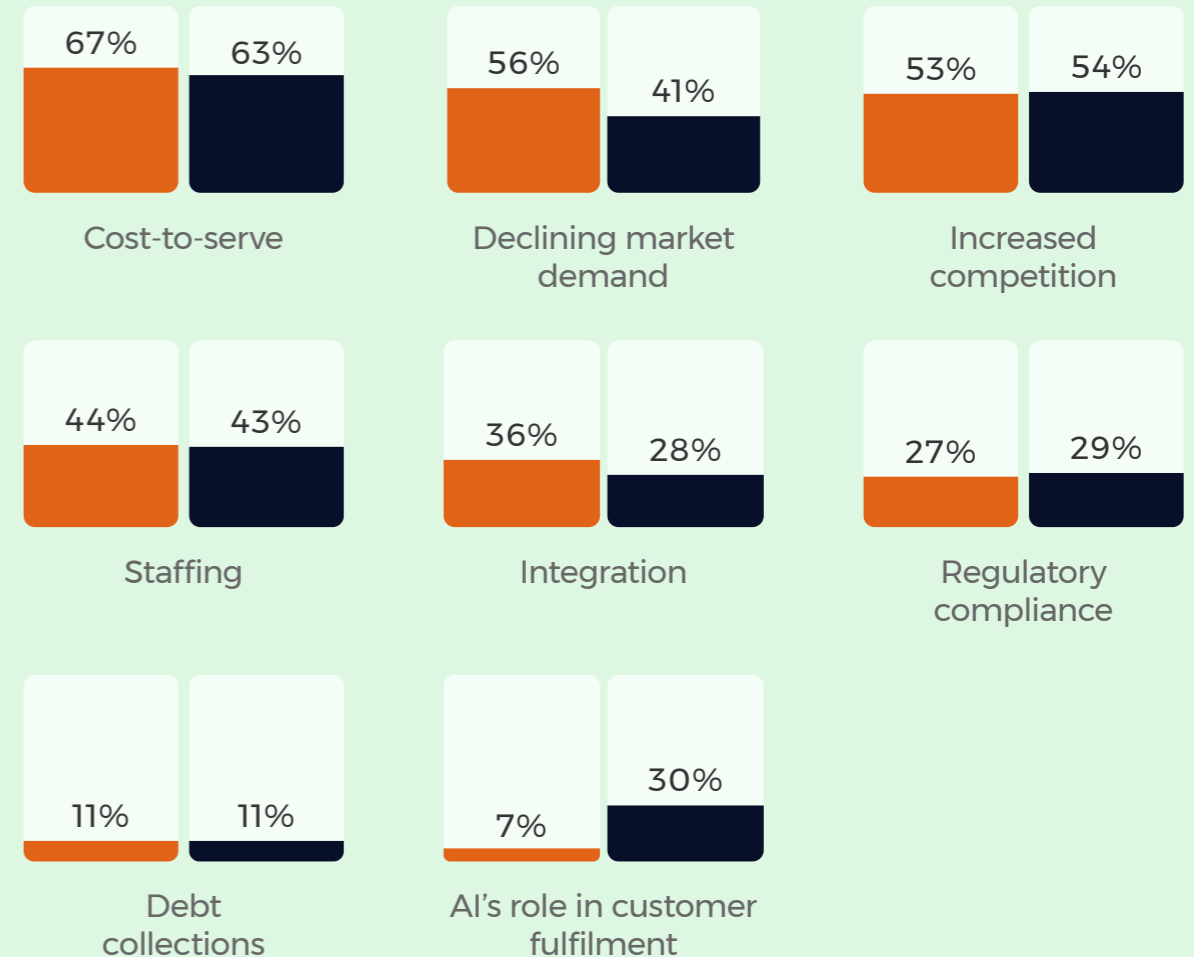
A projected **23%** increase in impact of AI on customer fulfilment.

Notably, the role of AI in customer fulfilment is expected to grow substantially, reflecting a shift towards more automated and data-driven processes. This transition highlights the need for businesses to address their current operational hurdles and anticipate and prepare for emerging trends that could reshape the competitive landscape.

## What are the top 3 challenges your business is currently facing?

Source: Inside FMCG x Commerce Vision market survey 2024

○ Current challenges      ● Future challenges (3-5 years)





With the increasing impact of AI on customer experience in the B2B business environment, AI should be explored to mitigate risk, enhance experience, and reduce transaction costs. Here are a few suggestions:

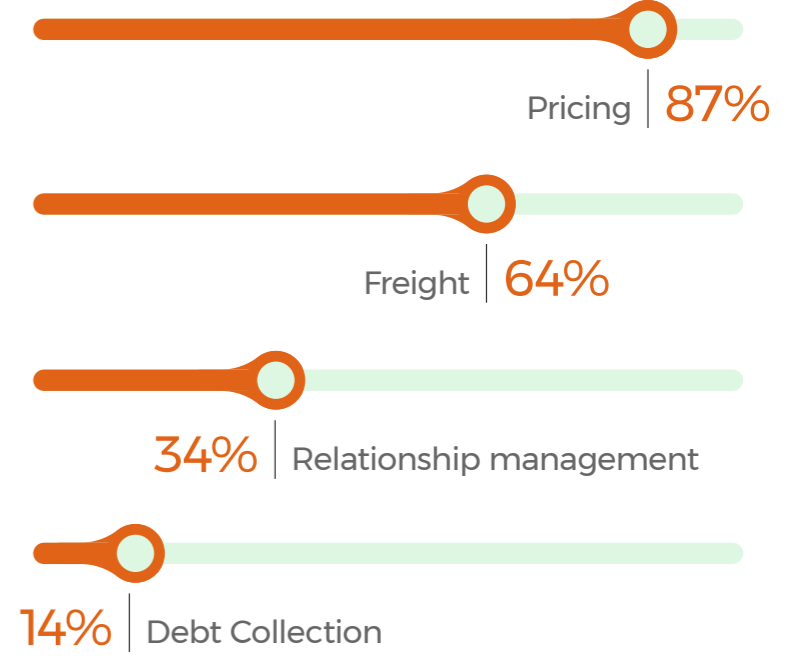
- Build capability**  
Invest in AI training and development
- Automate ordering and processing**  
Integrate AI into your customer fulfilment
- Personalise**  
Enhance customer experience by leveraging AI
- Predict and forecast**  
Leverage data analytics for decision making.

# Small customer challenges

Pricing and freight present challenges for organisations servicing small customers with purchases consistently below \$1000 a month. To enhance operational efficiency and reduce the impact of these challenges, businesses need to transform their customer-management strategies, adopting cost-saving processes that can support pricing and freight challenges. This could support the need to adapt to changing customer needs.

Top areas in terms of the challenges they present for organisations in servicing small customers:

Source: Inside FMCG x Commerce Vision market survey 2024



# Optimising sales channels: eCommerce and email lead the way, while phone sales and in-field strategies need a revamp

The analysis of sales channels reveals insights into their efficiency and effectiveness, providing a clear direction for strategic improvements. eCommerce and email channels, which emerge as the highest performers, are characterised by high order volume and revenue generation, with a medium level of resource requirement. This makes them effective and efficient, indicating that these channels should be prioritised and continuously enhanced to maximise sales performance and maintain operational efficiency.

Conversely, phone sales are identified as the least effective channel, marked by high time consumption and low revenue generation. Despite this inefficiency, phone sales remain a necessary channel. However, consideration should be given to transitioning customers from phone sales to more

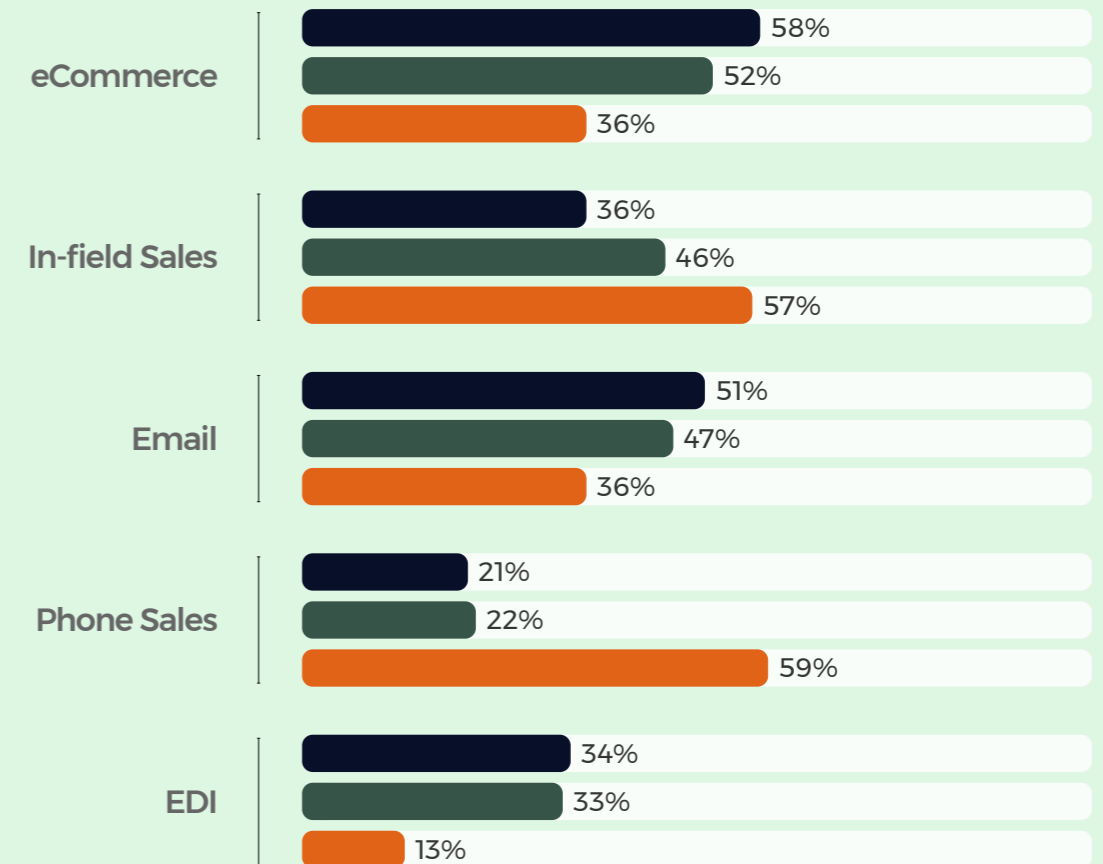
efficient channels, such as eCommerce and email, which can further enhance overall efficiency.

In-field sales consume a lot of time, presenting an opportunity for optimisation. By encouraging clients to switch to email and eCommerce and deploying technology solutions such as mobile sales apps and CRM tools, businesses can reduce the time in-field sales consume and increase productivity.

Finally, EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) is noted for its low order traffic and revenue generation but is not time-consuming, making it a low-maintenance supplementary channel. Businesses can leverage EDI so that it fits naturally into their operations without dedicating excessive resources to it.

## Leading sales channels

Source: Inside FMCG x Commerce Vision market survey 2024



● Leads the number of orders you take per month

● Leads the revenue generated per month

● Leads the time-consumption for business



## Strategies to enhance customer payment experience and adoption

Most businesses accept card payments for online orders, making this method the leader in payment acceptance. Slightly more than half also accept card payments for account payments. However, 17% of businesses do not accept card payments at all. This highlights a significant reliance on card payments for online transactions, with a substantial portion also utilising this method for account payments and phone sale orders.

**In which ways does your organisation accept card payments from business customers?**

*Source: Inside FMCG x Commerce Vision market survey 2024*





# Key expectations across B2B operations

In 2024, do you expect the level of competition  
in your business-to-business operations to?

Source: Inside FMCG x Commerce Vision market survey 2024

38%

Stay around  
the same

57%

Increase

5%

Decrease



# Driving purchase frequency and customer acquisition

In 2024, B2B businesses are emphasising two key areas: increasing the frequency of purchases among existing customers and driving customer acquisition. These priorities underscore the drive to maximise revenue from the current customer base while expanding market reach and increasing share.

Balancing customer retention and developing new target markets are central to B2B strategies. These areas present opportunities for businesses to solidify their market position by nurturing loyalty and exploring untapped markets.

Developing new verticals (23%) and leveraging Customer Data Platforms (19%) are lower priorities. This indicates that while innovation and data-driven strategies are on the radar, businesses may view these areas as longer-term opportunities, rather than immediate priorities.

Overall, the key insight is that B2B companies are focused on optimising and expanding their existing customer relationships. This presents a clear opportunity to drive sustained growth through targeted customer engagement, management strategies, and thoughtful market expansion.

In 2024, which 3 of the following will be the most important to your business-to-business operations?

Source: Inside FMCG x Commerce Vision market survey 2024



# Prioritising investment in B2B eCommerce and automation for competitive edge

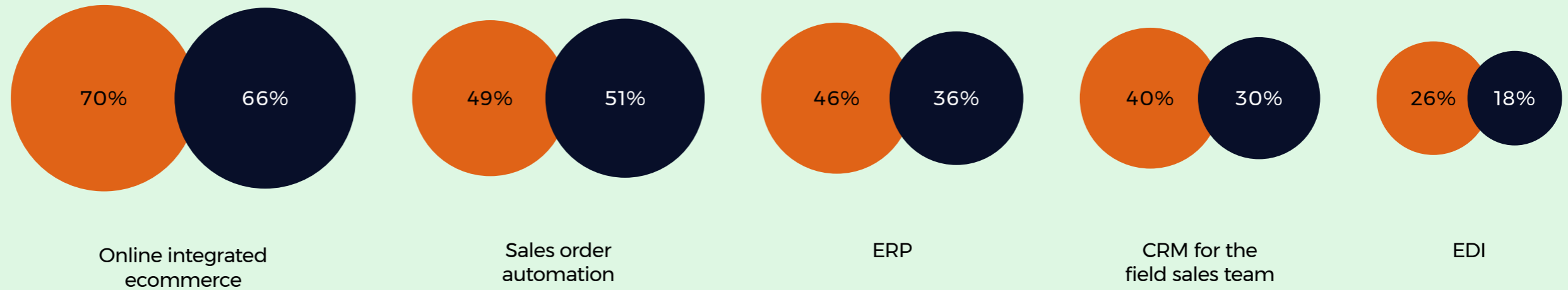
Investing in specific B2B technologies and processes promises potential for gaining a competitive edge. The data reveals that businesses are prioritising spending on online integrated ecommerce (70% spending increase) and sales order automation (49% spending increase), recognising these areas as key drivers of competitive advantage, with 66% and 51% of respondents, respectively, identifying these technologies as crucial to their success.

In a highly competitive market, prioritising investments in online integrated ecommerce and sales order automation is essential for B2B companies looking to secure a stronger market position and deliver superior customer experiences.

**70%**  
of companies are looking to increase investment in B2B ecommerce in the next 12 months

## Key services for 2024

Source: Inside FMCG x Commerce Vision market survey 2024



○ Annual spend on service increase

● Potential to give competitive advantage

# Unlocking revenue potential: The critical role of high-spending customers and strategies to boost lower-tier contributions

The analysis of customer spend and revenue distribution reveals insights into the revenue dynamics of B2B businesses. High-spending customers, spending over \$10,000 monthly, often represent a smaller segment of the customer base but contribute significantly to overall revenue. In many cases, these customers are responsible for a substantial share of a company's revenue, often far exceeding their proportional representation within the customer base.

Conversely, customers with monthly spending of less than \$1,000 make up a more significant portion of the customer base but contribute less to total revenue individually. However, a meaningful opportunity exists to optimise this segment by encouraging these customers to switch to credit cards and online payments. Simplifying the transaction process for these smaller accounts can increase their transaction values and purchase frequency.

Businesses should strategically focus on retaining and nurturing high-value customers by providing enhanced customer experiences and superior service levels. At the same time, the potential for increasing revenue from mid-tier customers, who spend between \$1,000 and \$10,000 monthly, should not be overlooked. These customers represent a significant segment and can be encouraged to increase their spending through loyalty programs, targeted marketing, and personalised service.

For customers spending less than \$1,000 monthly, strategies should aim to boost their transaction values and frequency. This can involve simplifying their purchasing process, cross-selling, or using targeted marketing campaigns. By shifting these customers to credit card payments, businesses can streamline operations, reduce transaction friction, and ultimately drive incremental revenue growth. Although these customers contribute less individually, their large numbers mean that even small increases in spending can substantially impact the business's overall revenue.



# Turning insights into action

The voice of the customer is clear – 90 respondents have had their say and you know what they have and expect. But what are the next steps?

**#1**

**Embrace technology and innovation to manage costs and stay competitive**

Implement technology and innovative solutions to reduce cost-to-serve, adapt to shifting market conditions, and gain a competitive edge.

**# 2**

**Prioritise customer acquisition and engagement**

Focus on enhancing the customer experience to attract new customers and increase the frequency of purchases among existing customers, driving growth in a competitive landscape.

**#3**

**Invest in B2B ecommerce and sales order automation.**

Allocate resources to integrated B2B ecommerce platforms and sales order automation to streamline operations, reduce costs, and strengthen market position.

**#4**

**Optimise and prioritise sales channels**

Evaluate and optimise sales channels, focusing on enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of ecommerce and email while improving less efficient channels like phone and field sales.

**#5**

**Expand flexible payment options**

Offer a variety of secure and user-friendly payment methods, including credit-card payments, to meet customer expectations and enhance the user experience.

**#6**

**Prepare for the impact of AI**

Invest in AI capabilities to stay ahead of industry trends, mitigate risks, and enhance customer fulfilment in an evolving market.

# COMMERCE VISION

## Simplify B2B Commerce

At Commerce Vision, our mission is to simplify B2B commerce for our customers.

Our comprehensive solutions include:

- **CV ecommerce**: An all-in-one B2B ecommerce platform
- **Opmetrix**: Mobile merchandising and field CRM
- **Lucy**: Purchase Order Automation

Our suite of fully integrated digital commerce solutions is designed to handle B2B complexities while delivering a seamless customer experience.

It's why businesses that partner with us, stay with us.

[Learn more](#)