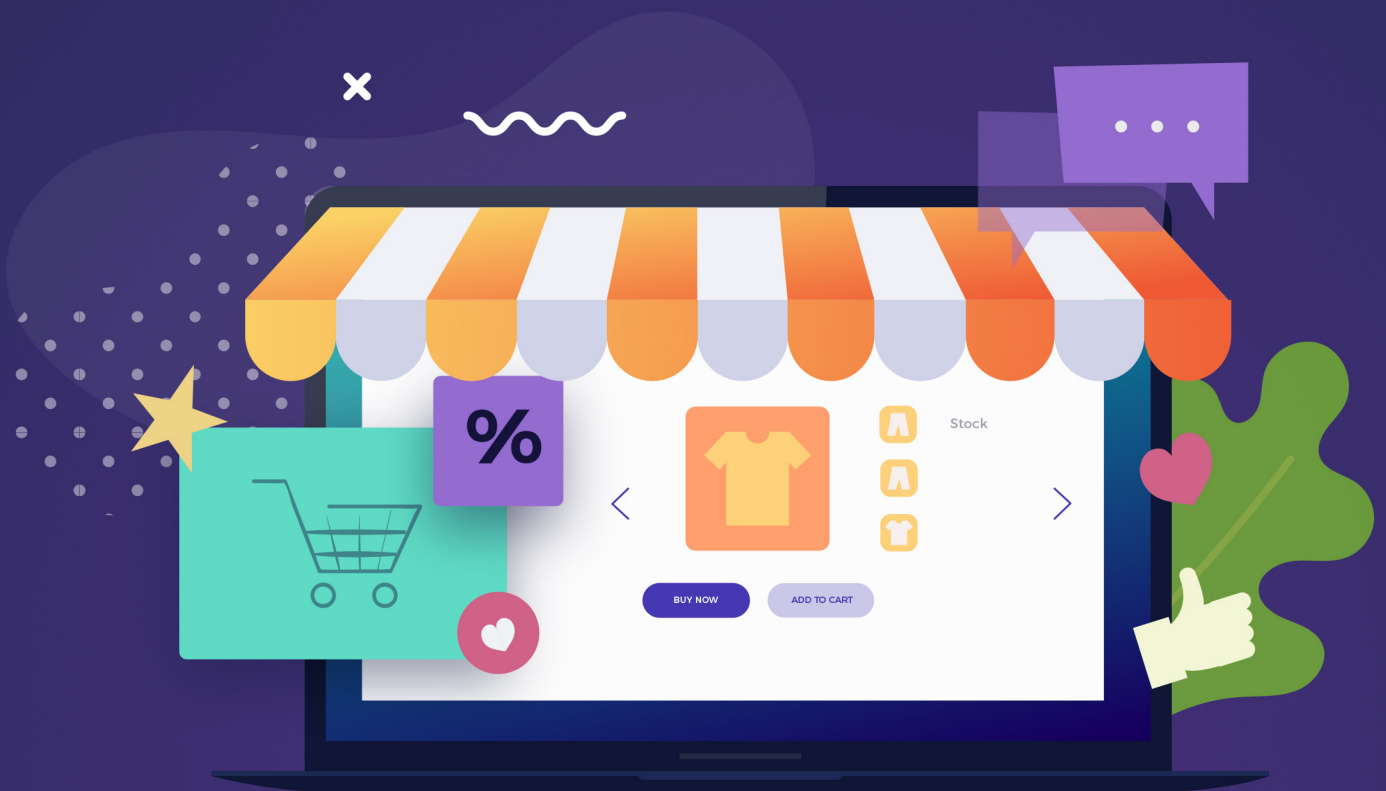




How to Save Time and Brainpower when Choosing Your Next E-commerce Tech Solution



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Chapter 1: Introduction





Technology is changing. Always. And as the e-commerce market pushes the boundaries of technology, it might feel like you're coming up with new and innovative solutions every other minute. Keeping up with it all can be daunting.

But failure to keep pace with changing technology is a fast route to becoming irrelevant. And because keeping on top of the game is a priority for every e-commerce manager and business owner, staying relevant matters.

This is particularly challenging for Small to Medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which [lag behind their larger counterparts when it comes to digital innovation](#). Larger companies have entire departments for innovation. Meanwhile in SMEs, resources are stretched more thinly. It often falls to a handful of mid- to upper-level managers to research and oversee the implementation of new technologies. But they have a packed schedule already, and often simply can't find the time to stay on top of it all. It's no wonder that so many companies fall behind.

Can you relate to this? If so, then this ebook is for you. It's full of tips and advice to help you sift through the torrent of information and find the solution(s) that work for your business. By showing you where your focus should be, you'll learn how to make informed decisions without using up all of your brainpower and valuable time.

In Chapter 2, we'll introduce you to the SIP (Scope, Interest and Potential) system. It's designed to help you quickly assess the suitability of a solution for your business, saving you tons of time in the process. This set of three criteria will focus your attention on the things that really matter.

In Chapter 3, we'll go over some of the key areas of technological growth that you can utilize to grow your online store. We'll cover solutions that address both the back- and front-end aspects of business operations, so there's sure to be something that'll suit your own company's needs.

In Chapter 4, we've hand-selected solutions from a number of trusted companies for you to look through. Each one we've presented addresses some of the topics you'll learn about in this ebook.

And in Chapter 5, we'll present you with a handy solution of our own: Klevu Search. We'll show you how integrating powerful, AI-driven search in your e-commerce site can engage customers, help them through the sales funnel, and boost sales.

A note before we dive into the key ways you can stay up-to-date and grow your business. We use the term "solution" throughout this ebook, so let us first define it for you now. "Solution" is an idea, product, or service that's intended to help your business grow. It can be a broad theme, such as personalization – which we'll cover in Chapter 3 – or a specific application, like a piece of downloadable software.

We allow the term such wide definition in this ebook so that it can be applied to your individual business needs. This keeps the content relevant to you so, we hope, it helps you as much as possible.

Chapter 2: SIP – Scope, Interest and Potential





To stay ahead of the game, you need the right guidance. The right knowledge and tools can carry you to your goals. But with so many solutions to choose from, how do you know which trends will keep you on track?

To help you out, we've come up with a method you can use when vetting a potential solution. Just remember to SIP: Scope, Interest and Potential.

Before we dive into each part, we'll explain exactly what it's for. It's designed to be used in a range of different situations, and stages of decision making, whenever you find a solution that you think might work for your business.

Following these guidelines streamlines your decision making, and prevents you from making an unwise choice.

You can use it when:

You want to improve many areas of your business, but you have limited resources.

In this situation, you can use SIP to help you identify where your immediate focus should be. By helping you define your priorities, it helps guide you towards solution(s) that will tackle the most important obstacles and bring you the greatest benefits.

You want to compare two or more solutions.

SIP is very good at helping you weigh up the pros and cons of several solutions so you can decide which is the best fit for your ecommerce store.

You want to make better decisions for your business.

It can be helpful to have a checklist like SIP handy, so you know you're making an informed choice. There are lots of factors to consider when choosing a solution, many of them not in this list. What SIP does is take you away from those

details, towards some of the most important big-picture questions. When you're so busy running your business, it's easy to miss things. SIP can guide you towards a perspective you might not otherwise have seen.

So when vetting a potential tech solution, just remember to SIP ...

Now, let's start.

Scope

When assessing any solution, you first need to ask how big of an impact it will have on your business. This is the scope, and it can be approached differently depending on your goals. Generally, assessing a solution's scope is going to differ depending on whether it would address your front- or back-end business operations.

We suggest you start by calculating:

How many processes will be affected by this change?

This is an important first step, as it helps you acknowledge each area of your business that will benefit from a given solution.

You could go further and assign a level of importance to each process affected. We prefer to keep things simple with non-essential, necessary, and crucial, but you can use any labels you like. For example, you may prefer to identify how quickly you'd like to improve each process, on a scale from urgent to open-ended.

How many people will this solution help?

Your analysis during this step will be different depending on the type of project you're undertaking.

When you're analysing front-end solutions, you'll want to look at the amount of customers that will be impacted. Will this solution be beneficial to your entire customer base, or to a subset of them? If the latter, how big is this subset?

If you're aiming to bring in new customers, then you'll probably already have made efforts to understand the size and buying patterns of this type of shopper. Do you think this solution will help you achieve this growth? And is the available market big enough to give a significant boost to your sales?

For back-end solutions, you'll mainly be looking at the number of staff affected. A solution that promises to streamline your workflow might sound great on paper ... but if it impacts only one or two people you might be better spending your resources on a broader solution that you can release company-wide.

Will this solution help other companies you do business with?

In terms of scope for back-end operations, this is at the wider end of the spectrum. A solution that helps any aspect of your B2B operations — from hiring a new point of contact to streamline your communication, to designing great invoices that make it easier for people to pay you — is going to bring you added benefits in return.

Interest

This step is all about assessing the level of interest in any given solution.

Like scope, the way interest is gauged depends on the type of solution you're assessing. But the end goal is the same. For each solution you look at, you want to know one of two things:

- Is there a demand for it?
- Can a demand be created?

We'll address each one in more detail, in turn.

If there's already a demand for a particular solution, then you need to assess what it looks like. Shoppers' expectations grow along with the capabilities of new technology, giving rise to a number of popular trends in the ecommerce world. You're undoubtedly aware of many of them. But it's always a good idea to stop and take note of how well a particular solution serves the changing expectations of customers.

Take personalization, for example. It's a big deal right now. But it's exactly because it's such a huge trend, that deciding on your own approach to it becomes tricky. There are simply so many ways to tackle personalization, and so many businesses offering a solution, that it's hard to know which way to go. The truth is, there is no **single** right way. But there is the right way for your business. So instead of following the crowd, you can make sure the solution you choose matches up with **your** customer's needs.

If you're aiming to change your back-end operations, then you're less likely to need to uncover existing demand. If you have good relationships with your teams and business

customers, they will probably tell you when their needs aren't being met. But searching for problems on your own certainly doesn't hurt, either. There may be areas for improvement that other people haven't spotted yet.

To find the best solutions for back-end operations, combine listening to employees and business customers with careful observation of the state of your business processes. Gathering and studying any related data helps too, especially in areas that aren't directly overseen by people. If you look closely, you'll find that demand sometimes comes from your business itself.

It's not uncommon to encounter resistance to change, either, even when the benefits are clear. Involving all involved parties in the decision can help ensure that the solution you choose will be the best fit for your business.

Potential

It's no coincidence that many new trends happen after technological improvements. Advances in computing, particularly in the area of AI and

machine learning, have unleashed the capabilities of all sorts of applications. Tech like AI is already so much a part of our lives, we can be sure it isn't going anywhere. But the prospects of its countless applications need more careful thought.

Assessing the promise of a technological application is all about predicting its suitability as a mid- to long-term solution. To do so thoroughly, find out:

- What is the current market share of this technology, and is it growing year on year?
- Are people talking about it? Ask market analysts, or visit tech websites, to find out whether experts believe it has legs.
- Is it scalable? Just because a technological trend will stick around doesn't necessarily mean it will suit your needs for its entire lifecycle. Make sure the solution can be scaled as your ecommerce company grows.

The final thing you need to ask yourself is how much risk you're willing to take to achieve results. Generally, when thinking about a new technological application, there's an increase

in risk if you decide to adopt it early in its life cycle. If you're generally an early adopter, this trade-off — a loss of certainty for the opportunity to position your brand as the first to offer cutting edge solutions — might be a strategy you're comfortable taking. However, there is a middle ground for the more risk averse. It's our recommendation that you always demonstrate some healthy caution, particularly if you're an SME with fewer resources to spend experimenting.

To offset some of the risk, look for each prospective vendor's track record of success, especially in helping companies with a similar profile to yours. It can be tempting to take advantage of free trials too, and while they're great in the short term, remember how much it could set you back if you commit and aren't happy with the results. It's better to do thorough research beforehand, making sure you know exactly how a particular solution is going to bring you results, before you test it out. Free trial periods should be seen as a bonus, and not the means of making a decision.

As we discussed at the beginning of this ebook, it's still a good idea to try and stay ahead of the curve. Caution is sensible, but hold back too long, and you'll fall behind. Stay current with a healthy balance, or get ahead of the pack with riskier cutting-edge solutions and mitigate some of the pitfalls with solid research. Either way will prevent you from falling behind.

Chapter 3: Ways to Get Ahead in 2019 and Beyond





As we mentioned in Chapter 1, keeping up with technology is no easy feat. To help you out, this chapter will cover the key areas that should be holding your attention. Most of the topics covered are making a splash in the e-commerce world, and with good reason. It's a very exciting time to be in business with tons of opportunities for the taking!

Personalization

Personalization is making enormous waves in the e-commerce sector. You've probably heard the buzz, but do you know all of its applications?

When most people think of personalization, they think about recommendations. This assumption makes sense, given the end goal. Broadly, the aim of personalization is to emulate the experience

of a great in-store encounter, online. And recommendations are a core part of that. But most people's understanding barely scratches the surface of what personalization can do.

Advanced AI technology is changing the ways that stores and customers interact, forever. A great personalized experience makes predictions that are based on far more data than previous purchases, or recently viewed items. AI is getting better at monitoring and predicting far more complex behaviour patterns. Simply put, targeted advertising is getting even more targeted – in ways that delight shoppers.

At Klevu, we use self-learning AI to streamline the conversion process. By tailoring search results and promotions to individual shoppers, we get them from the home page to the checkout with ease.

Personalization means connecting with your customers as individuals, too. For example it can be used to make sure customers are contacted via their preferred platform. Many shoppers who spend lots of time on their phone aren't interested in email. So why do companies keep

assuming every shopper wants to be on their mailing list? Which brings us to the following...

Omni-Channel Solutions

The idea behind omni-channel solutions is that you reach the customer wherever they are. Instead of operating through a website alone, businesses using an omni-channel strategy market and sell through a number of different channels including social media, email, instant messenger, or through a physical store. Crucially, the customer's experience is unified across multiple touchpoints and different channels.

This is beneficial for you and your customers. It offers a level of customer care that is still quite rare. Tech-savvy consumers are beginning to expect their favourite brands to be readily available to them, on their terms. They don't expect to be confined to a single channel, or to have a disjointed journey across channels. So making sure you're ahead of the pack could boost your brand's reputation, and your sales too.

Conversational Marketing

While this is often part of an omni-channel solution, it's such an exciting topic that it deserves its own mention. Like personalization, conversational marketing helps recreate that in-store experience online by using conversational feedback to drive shoppers through the sales funnel.

There's a big demand for it, too. [90% of shoppers want to communicate with businesses via Messenger \(but less than a third of businesses use it\)](#).

Chatbots are a popular and easy way to give shoppers more ways to interact with your brand. Customers love that they're informal while providing useful information that helps them make a purchase. They also love the convenience and speed offered by these kind of apps. And because the conversation can be automated, it's a great solution both for businesses with fewer resources, and larger organizations wishing to free up their workforce.

Mobile-Focused Solutions

People are turning to their phones more than ever to shop online. [Mobile sales grew by 55 percent in 2018](#), and are predicted to rise even further. So if your online store isn't prepared for this monumental shift, you leave lots of room for your competitors to take the lead.

One way you can cater to these rapidly changing shopping habits is by making the payment process as easy as possible. Shoppers don't want to spend ages completing forms. Making sure your sales channels support web payments means their details will be filled in automatically, helping them through the payment process as swiftly as possible.

Another important feature to include is the availability of different mobile payment options. Customers are increasingly turning to mobile apps, like Apple Pay, to make their purchases online. The growth of digital wallets is increasing, and is [expected to exceed \\$1 trillion by 2020](#).

Productivity Tools

Your storefront isn't the only part of your business that can be helped by AI-driven tools. Automation is becoming more and more sophisticated when it comes to back-end business processes. Rather than dispensing with teams of people, automated tools can take over tasks that are often mundane and repetitive, allowing your staff to focus on higher value projects that contribute to the bottom line.

Printed apparel and lifestyle brand Shelfies [saved thousands of dollars by automating](#) their fraud prevention and custom order fulfillment tools with Shopify Flow. Manually checking fulfillment for high-risk orders was costly and time consuming, so they implemented automation to take over those processes completely. No more staff to train, no more chargeback fees when high-risk orders aren't caught in time. Just an efficient workflow on autopilot, freeing up the workforce to focus on other projects.

Chapter 4: Our Recommended Solutions



At Klevu, we work with a lot of [trusted partners](#) from around the globe to create solutions that better serve our clients. In this chapter, we've selected a few for you to learn about. Each one addresses one or more of the trends we've covered in this ebook.



Nosto's personalization platform is powered by AI to learn what customers want, and show it to them. They have a high success rate, with [their customers seeing an average increase in revenue of 10-30%, with a 7x return on investment.](#)

And with the opportunity to personalize across every device and platform your customers use, Nosto can be used as part of a broader omni-channel strategy, too.



Vaimo are a full-service agency supporting online retailers and brands to reach success using cutting-edge omni-channel strategies. Each solution is tailored to the needs of the customer, for a bespoke experience that works for your brand. They have offices all around the world, too.



Marketing automation platform Dotdigital helps businesses connect with their customers. They use automated emails and multi-channel messaging programs to get the right marketing campaigns in front of the right shoppers.

While it's a marketing tool, its heavy use of automation also makes Dotdigital a powerful productivity tool, freeing up time (and money) for you and your teams to spend on other projects.

Brightpearl

Retail operations platform Brightpearl provides businesses with powerful tools for order fulfillment, inventory planning, warehouse management and more. By automating these back-office processes, you can significantly reduce the resources needed to run them.



For Magento users looking for an omni-channel solution, Redbox Digital offers a suite of services to help grow your brand. From strategy to design and development, they work collaboratively to create a bespoke plan tailored to your needs.



The people at Northern are passionate about helping e-commerce businesses create meaningful omni-channel experiences for shoppers. Using immersive marketing campaigns, Northern helps your business build connections with your customers, driving growth and boosting sales.

Chapter 5: Introducing Klevu





At Klevu, we help businesses increase their conversion rate by delivering an amazing search experience on their online store. A combination of advanced AI and machine learning provides personalized, tailored search results for your shoppers. It comes with useful features such as real-time search results as you type, and Smart Category Navigation to help users find what they're looking for, fast. For a full list of features, [click here](#).

In this chapter, we'll explore how Klevu's online search is a simple and effective solution for your e-commerce store. It has an extensive scope, meets a growing interest in the market, and it's future-proof, too.

A Solution for Everyone

Klevu's scope is broad. Because it's a core part of your site's user experience (UX), it will impact a big subset of your user base. In fact, it transforms the entire customer journey to one that is, above all else, completely convenient and catered to the individual.

And Klevu can help streamline your back-end operations, too. Because shoppers can search for anything they want, including non-product data, they can find useful information or FAQs in a single search. When customers can easily find the answers they need, fewer resources need to go towards customer service.

We designed Klevu to be easy to set up and maintain, reducing the strain on all the teams that use it, too.

In all, Klevu helps a large portion of your customers and many of your teams — and by improving the sales funnel, it'll give you a nice ROI too.

Customers Want Better Search

Everyone who shops online knows the struggle. The majority of website search engines out there just don't cut it. Think about times you look for something specific ... how often do you feel like search bars simply don't understand what you want?

Consumers feel the same way.

Search with Klevu is a different experience altogether. Our search engine uses a combination of highly-tuned tools to get to the heart of what your customers want, and thanks to machine learning technology, it gets better and better. The more shoppers use your site's search, the cleverer it becomes at predicting what they want to see, and putting that content in front of them.

It's Future-Proof

Search tech has a great track record of solid improvement ever since its inception — it's forward focused, and as we aim to stay at the cutting edge of technology, Klevu is leading the charge. This year, we've added voice search to give consumers even more ways to find the products they'll love.

We've been ramping up our personalization features, too. By increasing the functionality of our personalization tools, we can measure and utilize more aspects of shopping behaviour than any of our competitors. Together with over 3000 online stores and developers that have put their faith in us, we are creating a hyper-personalized, super-accurate, rich shopping experience for consumers.

Search is truly one of the best ways to bring a personalized experience to your customers. A recent study found personalization in search results generated the highest number of conversions. [39% of marketers reported a 'major uplift' as a result, and only 7% reported no impact,](#) so it's a low risk solution that is still ahead of the curve.

Chapter 6: Summary and Conclusion



In this ebook, we've presented exciting ways you can stay current or get ahead in 2019 and beyond. We've also introduced you to the SIP (Scope, Interest and Potential) system, which you can use to assess the viability of any solution you encounter, now or in the future.

By focusing on key trends and keeping your attention on what's important, incorporating new technology into your business doesn't need to be a monumental task. In fact, to keep up with what's going on in the e-commerce tech sector, we recommend a little and often approach.

Set aside half an hour a week, or a couple hours a month, and learn about how e-commerce

technology is progressing. Perhaps you can find only 5 minutes a day to spare? Use it for this. The knowledge you'll gain is invaluable, and will help you in your mission to guide your business towards growth.

It's not just the responsibility of e-commerce managers and business owners, either. By encouraging your teams to actively learn about advances in tech, you can get them excited by the possibilities for your business AND foster a culture that encourages the sharing of ideas. It's a win-win.

To learn more about what Klevu search can do for your business, why not [book a live demo](#)



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