



FUTURE-PROOF YOUR BUSINESS  
WITH FLEXIBLE ECOMMERCE:

# The Competitive Advantage of Open SaaS



# An Ecommerce Inflection Point



Ecommerce was growing fast in 2019, to be sure — online sales in the U.S. were **up 14.9% last year** — but the events of 2020 lit an accelerant.

This is further accelerated by the reduction of barriers to entry. More and more retailers, brands, founders and solopreneurs are setting up ecommerce shops, solving new problems and sparking creativity from necessity.

A **report from eMarketer forecasted** that:

**U.S. ecommerce retail spending would increase by 30% in 2020.**

That all-time high would also be the biggest share increase ever in a single year.

That's why it's so important to be ready for anything. While innovation pushes forward so fast that no one can predict exactly what's next, customer expectations are continuously on the rise. The bottom line is that, despite increased necessity for online shopping, the experience matters more than ever.

To compete on the crowded ecommerce playing field and respond to customers' rising (and shifting) expectations, you have to create frictionless convenience and a leading-edge experience to remain ahead of the curve — that pressing force of innovation pushing the industry forward.

Retailers have to build agility into their business plans, making the investments that will keep them on the leading edge of performance.

You'll need a flexible, scalable and reliable ecommerce platform to support you along the way. To take advantage of the growing opportunities in ecommerce and stay ahead of the competition, building an agile, future-proof business will be key to your long-term strategy.

# Flexibility, Scalability and Freedom of Choice

From personalization and a frictionless buyer's journey to real-time customer support and plenty of payment methods to choose from, the consumer's implicit demands keep the ecommerce landscape in a constant state of evolution.

That means you have to build your business for the future, whatever it brings. Choosing the right platform is an incredibly important piece of that foundation.

It wasn't that long ago that open source platforms were the be-all-end-all choice for businesses requiring flexibility. These platforms allow developers to alter the source code for nearly limitless customization — if your developers have the time to do it. But they'll likely be so bogged down in upgrades and security that they're not able to move quickly enough to take advantage of the customization power.



SaaS platforms remove the hosting, security and maintenance, but some can limit innovation. The level of innovation possible on a SaaS platform must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. When SaaS (Software-as-a-Service) platforms came on the scene, they were seen as a black box without room for much customization. The only way to guarantee your ability to customize was to adjust the source code.

However, times are changing. Today there are SaaS options that can provide the flexibility and freedom of choice you need, minus the backend headaches you don't.

Think of ecommerce as a city. The platform you choose is the house for your business. An open source platform is like a traditional, single-family home. The owner is responsible for everything, from the plumbing and electricity, to cabinet and fixture upgrades, to landscaping and HOA fees and a security system.

A SaaS platform is more like an apartment. Plumbing and electricity are included, and the place comes with standard furnishings like cabinets, countertops and bath fixtures — most not terribly impressive, but functional all the same. Some apartment complexes may let you paint your walls, but you'll be hard-pressed to get approvals to rip up the carpet and lay a parquet floor.

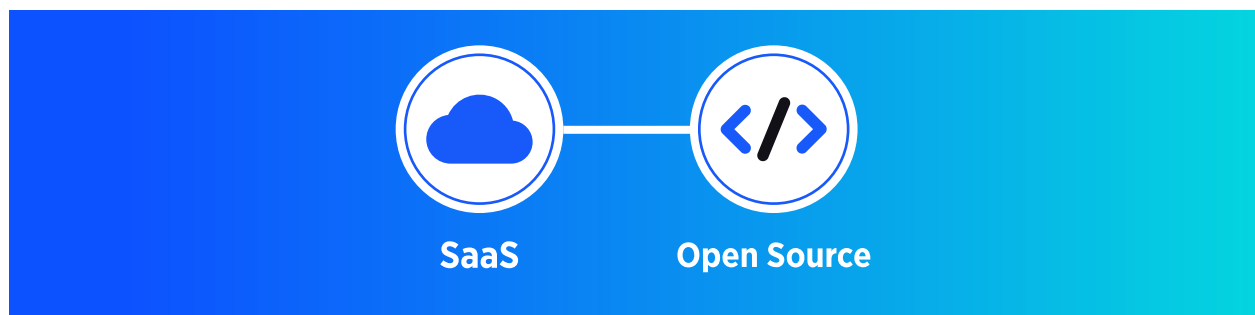
The open source option leaves the homeowner with a lot of liability, while the SaaS platform — at least, the traditional, closed versions — leaves you a renter with little option for making it your own.

Open SaaS, however — the BigCommerce approach to SaaS — gives you a more condo-style of living. You get plumbing, electricity, and a security system built in, with the freedom to make the inside all your own. Move, add or remove components. Change appearances and functionality. As long as it's structurally sound, it's all yours.

## The Open SaaS Approach

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BigCommerce marries the best of both open source and SaaS through a modular approach to ecommerce. Retailers can assemble the components that support the range of their customers' unique needs to deliver exceptional shopping experiences.



By combining the freedom and flexibility of open source software with the convenience, security and reliability of a SaaS platform — often at a lower total cost of ownership — brands can reach customers where they are, and respond quickly to fluctuations in the market and changing customer expectations.

This is what it's like to have the best of both worlds.

**“You don’t have to choose between the things you love about open source’s control over customization, and the low maintenance security and stability of SaaS. Open SaaS gives you as much of the best of each as possible.”**

NATE STEWART, VP OF PLATFORM STRATEGY, [BIGCOMMERCE](#)

Open SaaS is all about enabling unique shopping experiences across a broad spectrum of complexity. You can go to market and start selling quickly with out-of-the-box tools — but you don’t have to stop (or start) there. BigCommerce gives you the flexibility to deliver more complex, growth-driving customer experiences without having to replatform.

Instead of getting locked into a specific vendor’s software suite or being limited to their out-of-the-box functionality, in an open system you can connect individual pieces like building blocks of an architecture that work for your business. BigCommerce makes it easy to extend built-in functionality of the platform through integration with hundreds of apps and partners, so you can meet your customers where they are and build the shopping experience you’ve envisioned.

Some retailers have an in-house development team to customize on top of the platform’s stable framework. [Digital agencies](#) are a great alternative to those without internal developers. Still others, looking for the ultimate in customization, choose a headless commerce approach.

Opting for a headless commerce strategy gives you the opportunity to use popular content management systems like [WordPress](#) and [Drupal](#), digital experience platforms like [Adobe Experience Manager](#), progressive web apps (PWAs), or even your custom-built solution. You can also use headless commerce to power multiple storefronts, or even power commerce experiences through IoT devices and more.

# How BigCommerce Merchants Found Success with Open SaaS

Innovation isn't going to slow down. It's going to keep compounding — and we may even see more breakthroughs in the world of online shopping. That's why flexibility is critical.

With Open SaaS, you can deliver anything from a simple, beautiful storefront to a complex suite of integrated sales channels across multiple countries and/or devices.



Establishing the right infrastructure means choosing a platform that makes it easy to launch and supports nearly limitless growth and innovation into the future. Even if your needs today can be met by traditional SaaS, you can choose BigCommerce knowing that you won't need to migrate to a new platform for more functionality later.

The future-proof ecommerce technology stack is flexible, scalable and gives you freedom of choice, so you can keep up with an ever-changing, uncertain environment, and grow at the speed of your business — without worrying about security, servers or software upgrades.

When your developers aren't spinning their wheels on ground-floor maintenance of software or servers, they can spend more time developing the innovative experiences you need to compete in today's ecommerce landscape.

# Atlanta Light Bulbs Connects its Back-Office

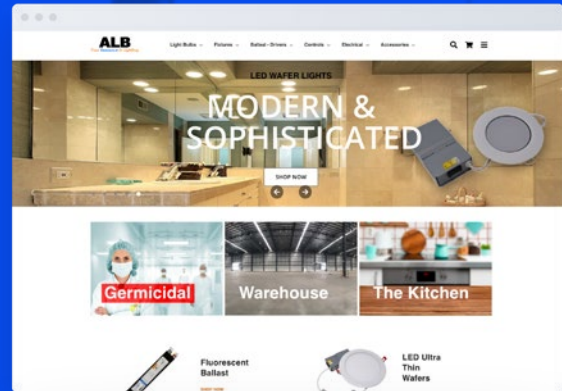
Like many B2B brands, **Atlanta Light Bulbs** rely heavily on their enterprise resource planning solution: “We use Epicor Prophet 21 as our ERP system. It’s a big beast of a distribution software. It is the brain of the whole company, and the only system we use,” said the brand’s CEO Doug Root.

This freedom of choice can have a huge impact on not just efficiency, but also your growth potential. When you integrate all your back-office systems, data can flow seamlessly through them, giving you valuable business and customer insights to optimize your operations.



Atlanta Light Bulbs  
manages 8,700 products  
in BigCommerce.

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**“It’s incredibly  
important that all  
the systems we use  
with our ERP work  
really well with  
BigCommerce —  
and they do.”**

DOUG ROOT, CEO



# Burrow Chooses Headless

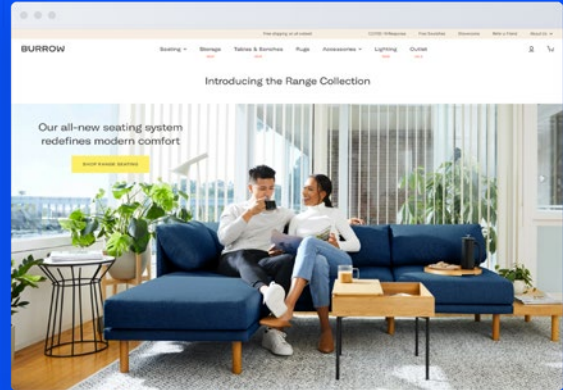
DTC furniture company **Burrow** had a similar need for a highly customized shopping experience. After some research, they found that other ecommerce platforms were too inflexible to leave room for creativity or strategic growth.



**With BigCommerce, Burrow was able to build their site using a headless commerce architecture.**

Headless expands the limits of your existing ecommerce platform. Because it decouples the front- and back-ends, it enables transactions in any number of different contexts. With full control over your front-end(s), whether it's a CMS, DXP, PWA or custom-built solution, you can be more responsive to changing customer and market expectations. "Along with operational functions, being headless has empowered us creatively as well; we use a headless CMS to drive modernization of our platform and to create a great digital experience across multiple channels," Chopra said.

After launching their site on BigCommerce, Burrow increased their conversion rate by 30% in just two months.



**“The other platforms we spoke to didn’t invest nearly as much time into coming up with a framework or solution that would work for our business, but instead tried to fit our business into their framework.”**

**KABEER CHOPRA,**  
CO-FOUNDER



# UPLIFT Desk Enables Product Customization

It can be easy to go ‘round and ‘round in your head trying to define “innovation.” At its simplest, innovation is finding a new way to meet your customers’ needs — and you need a platform that can support that.

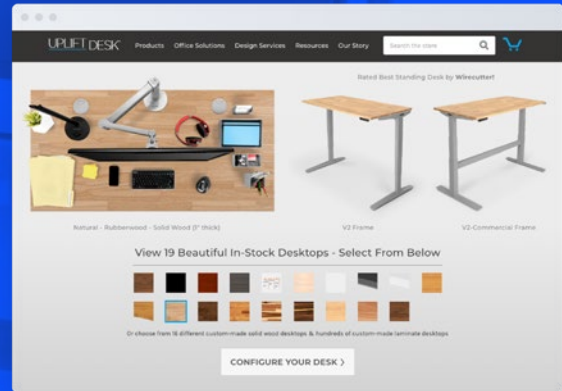
**UPLIFT Desk** knows that the right office desk is personal to their customers. The flexibility of BigCommerce enabled the UPLIFT team to build their own custom solution right on top of the platform that “lets customers essentially see their desk being built virtually on their screens,” according to the team.



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BigCommerce enables UPLIFT Desk to deliver a highly differentiated shopping experience to their customers.

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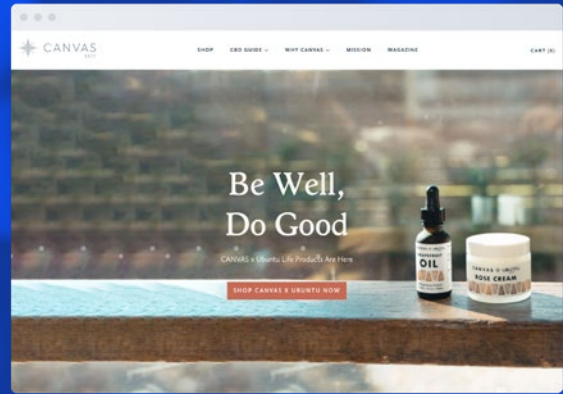
**“Since launching the Desk Builder feature, we’ve seen a significant uptick in orders when compared to the prior period.”**

**BRIAN GENCHUR,**  
MARKETING AND PR  
DIRECTOR

# Canvas 1839 Builds a PWA

eMarketer forecasted mobile commerce **would reach 44%** of the total U.S. ecommerce market by the end of 2020. PWAs are rising in popularity because they deliver app-like performance across devices. Creating a PWA means your site will be optimized for mobile performance and blazing fast, everywhere.

CBD company **Canvas 1839** chose to build a headless site using a progressive web app (PWA) so their developers could build the engaging frontend experience, while marketers could easily build and manage the content-heavy pages — all fully integrated to the rest of the website.



**“We felt more confident that we’d be able to meet whatever challenge they threw at us using tools like **Gatsby**, **React**, and GraphQL than we did constraining ourselves to platform-specific tooling that caters to a traditional ecommerce experience.”**

**COREY WARD**, SENIOR WEB DEVELOPER



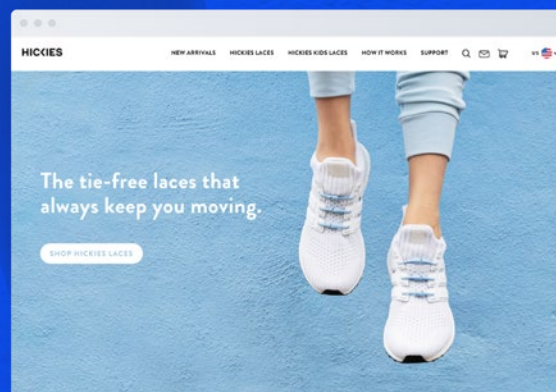
# Hickies Grows Out of Shopify

“We needed something that would help us grow, and started looking outwards. Something that was semi-managed but also had more developer-friendly features, international capabilities, and room for growth and scalability.”

JONATHAN SEGEV, DIRECTOR OF TECHNOLOGY

Segev continued, “One of the big reasons we were looking at BigCommerce was its ability to integrate various payment gateways.”

Meeting your customers where they are is critical to continued growth. **Hickies** did that through adding payment methods; Molton Brown did it by expanding into new international locations.

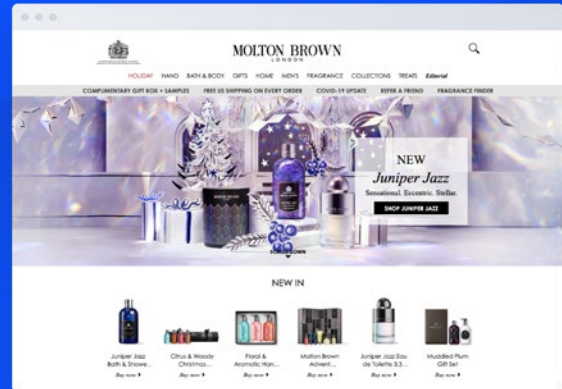




# Molton Brown Grows Into New Countries

International fragrance brand Molton Brown has ecommerce channels in major markets like the U.S., UK and Japan — and ambitious international growth targets. Working with Inviqa, Molton Brown determined it needed a central platform from which to **quickly and easily launch and scale** lean ecommerce solutions across distributor markets.

And that central platform needed the flexibility to scale at the speed of business growth. International partners needed to be able to get to market quickly, with the freedom to meet the essential requirements in their individual markets.



Despite the impacts of COVID-19, Molton Brown's focus on digital acceleration and international ecommerce has delivered an **81% year-on-year increase** in online sales.

**We're trying to build our ecommerce platforms with partners that instill a sense of trustworthiness and have brand synergies with Molton Brown. That's why we're working with the BigCommerce platform and **Inviqa** as our digital experience agency."**

MARK JOHNSON, GLOBAL PRESIDENT

# The Ecommerce Opportunity Has Never Been Greater

Ecommerce growth has been strong in recent years, but the impacts of COVID-19 have made that growth rate surge in 2020. Ecommerce retail sales are **forecast to rise by 30%** by the time it's all said and done.

eMarketer principal analyst Andrew Lipsman was **quoted in a recent TechCrunch article** as saying, “Everything we’re seeing with e-commerce is unprecedented, with growth rates expected to surpass anything we’ve seen since the Great Recession.”

But the competition, too, keeps growing.

In fact, that competition is a force pushing innovation forward, making it more necessary than ever for your business to be ready for anything.

No one truly knows what the future holds in terms of ecommerce trends and technology, but what is evident is that adaptability is key. Brands and retailers have to ensure they’re staying nimble and making the investments that support their online business’ performance, marketing and logistics.

BigCommerce set out to be an easy-to-use, all-in-one platform — but today, it’s more than that. It’s a way to turn what were once impossible-to-create experiences into ecommerce realities.

Our innovative Open SaaS philosophy helps merchants to mitigate risks by ensuring that our platform can adapt with the times and scale with its users, so you won’t have to replatform as you grow.

With the possibilities of Open SaaS, you have the freedom to make the ecommerce experience your own — whatever you decide to create.

