

ADK Group: Web Platform Guide

SELLING GOODS AND SERVICES EDITION

When your website's main purpose is to act as a digital storefront, there are several options for platform providers for you to consider: a dedicated E-Commerce platform, a Content Management System with an e-commerce plugin, or a Drag-&-Drop/Templated Web Builder using an e-commerce plug-in. As you look at the qualities below, there is no formula or decision tree that will help you determine the right answer. Its different for every website and organization. Use the guide to get a better understanding of the capabilities of each platform type and contact us for a more in-depth conversation to help you get to the right decision for you.

Platform Type Notes

GOODS OR SERVICES: Do you sell physical goods, service, or both?	
E-Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shopify and Magento have all-in-one website with shopping cart platforms
CMS + Plug-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• there are shopping cart plugins available for popular platforms like shopify and mindbody
Drag-&-Drop + Plug-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• there are shopping cart plugins available for popular platforms like shopify and mindbody
INVENTORY CONTROL: Do you already have an inventory management system in place?	
E-Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• if your inventory is currently managed through another system it may need to be migrated (although some e commerce systems have partnerships with specialized inventory management partners)
CMS + Plug-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• plug-ins + a separate website base are going to provide a higher degree of likelihood that you don't have to migrate your inventory management to a new system
Drag-&-Drop + Plug-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• plug-ins + a separate website base are going to provide a higher degree of likelihood that you don't have to migrate your inventory management to a new system
CUSTOMIZABILITY: How often do you plan to make changes to the existing content?	
E-Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• not optimized for significant design customizations or functionality outside of the shopping cart experience
CMS + Plug-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• has the most plugins for customizations• can change to source code to create unique customizations (both visual and functional)
Drag-&-Drop + Plug-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• can support many popular plugins other than just a shopping cart but source code cannot be changed for unique customizations

SCALABILITY: How will the functionality of your website need to scale over time?

E-Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• not designed to grow beyond the function of a shopping cart focused website
CMS + Plug-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• have the most plugins for added functionality• are the most widely know so (almost) any developer can implement customizations down the road
Drag-&-Drop + Plug-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• many popular customizations available via plugins• requires knowledge of provider's templating language in order to customize beyond the out-of-the-box template

DEVELOPER FRIENDLY: Who will be building the website?

E-Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• made for non-developers
CMS + Plug-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• best for developers with experience in PHP• can edit source code• most have large communities for support which make it easy for developers to get answers quickly
Drag-&-Drop + Plug-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• made for non developers but it helps to know some code• customizations can be made in HTML, CSS, and Liquid Templating• cannot edit source code• may need to consider outsourcing development to someone with specific platform experience if there are scaling needs

SPEED: How important is performance speed?

E-Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• fast if using an out-of-the-box template• adding and customizing inventory content requires the most time
CMS + Plug-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• fast if using an out-of-the-box template but customizations can add time• most have large communities for support which make it easy for developers to get answers quickly
Drag-&-Drop + Plug-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• fast if using an out-of-the-box template but customizations can add time

OWNERSHIP: Who possesses the master copy of your website?

E-Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• like leasing• you do not download your own instance so if your platform provider implements a major change to their service, you have no control over how that effects your website
CMS + Plug-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• like owning• changes from platform providers cannot effect your website because your instance is downloaded to a machine you own (rather than cloud based)
Drag-&-Drop + Plug-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• like leasing• you do not download your own instance so if your platform provider implements a major change to their service, you have no control over how that effects your website

MAINTAINABILITY: Who will be maintaining your website?

E-Commerce	• little maintenance necessary aside from inventory management
CMS + Plug-in	• requires manual updates every every 30-60 days but you can employ a third party service to automate this
Drag-&-Drop + Plug-in	• little maintenance necessary aside from inventory management

Confused what we mean by platform type (CMS, Drag & Drop, etc.)? **[Read more here](#)**. Check out **[similar guides](#)** for websites that have different purposes.

This guide was made in July, 2017 and the landscape is constantly changing. For the most relevant information, reach out to us to schedule a conversation about your website needs