

4 Best Practices to **Design an Effective Ecommerce Website**

Introduction

The goal of a well-designed ecommerce website is to turn visitors into customers. But a critical component of this journey is how quickly and easily visitors can find, research, and compare the products you offer in order to make informed purchases.

This requires a customer-centric strategy. Your digital product catalog should do more than just **surface or publish the information on your back-end systems, like a PIM, directly to your website.** Design your commerce experiences to help customers make educated decisions, and your website will generate more frequent and higher-value sales.

In this guide, we'll go over 4 key ecommerce website design best practices that will help equip website visitors with the information they need to make a purchase.

01. **Design customer-centric product pages**
02. **Implement product navigation that facilitates finding and comparing**
03. **Tailor experiences with personalization**
04. **Test product bundles to maximize sales**

Why Design Your Product Catalog from a Customer-Centric Perspective?

When you design your product catalog in a way that makes it easy for customers to find the products they need, compare product information, and complete purchases, you'll reap the following benefits:



Increased sales. When customers can find relevant products or product information, they can buy sooner—and buy more. This also goes beyond searching within your website and applies to search engines with SEO.



Improved customer experiences. The ease with which customers can find, compare, and purchase products will set you apart from other businesses. A truly customer-centric website can become your differentiator, especially in highly commoditized markets.



Greater efficiency of internal teams. A customer-centric website shouldn't only benefit customers—it should also be easy for your internal teams to manage. With the right solutions, you can equip your team to manage and present products efficiently.

Product catalogs are critical to helping customers know and understand your products, and their design and implementation will impact your overall website's performance. So let's dive into 4 best practices to help you build a more effective and engaging website.





1. Design Customer-Centric Product Pages

Back-end systems like your PIMs or ERPs are designed for efficient and consistent storage, retrieval, and updating of product information. But the way your back-end systems present this data might not be ideal for most customers when deciding to make a purchase.

In order to design pages that revolve around what your customers want instead of what's easiest to surface from back-end systems, you'll need to:



Design the product page experience first. Regardless of what back-end systems you need to connect to, start by designing an experience that most benefits website visitors. Then fit the rest of the puzzle pieces accordingly. After all, your website's product pages are meant to be consumed primarily by your buyers, so their experience should take precedent.



Structure the information hierarchy according to customer preferences, independent of how it lives in your back-end systems. By prioritizing information that is most important to customers and designing in a way that makes it easy for them to scan through, you can help customers better understand your products and offerings.



Add the foundational content customers will be looking for, such as downloadable datasheets, product manuals, material safety data sheets, supporting software or drivers, and compliance information.



Enhance product information with additional information that might not exist in one of your back-end systems, such as:

- **Enriched visual assets**, including high-quality images, product videos and demos, and 360-degree views that allow customers to explore the product virtually. And with integration to AI tools, you can accelerate the creation of images and product descriptions.
- **Customer-submitted metadata.** Additional information such as reviews, ratings, comments, customer-submitted images, or even how-tos and questions can help customers better understand the products they're looking at and build trust with your business. Social proof is incredibly powerful; in fact, a study by Northwestern University found that displaying reviews can increase conversion rates by up to 270%.¹



Make it easy to see and add related products. A single product may be more beneficial when purchased with other related or complementary products. For example, a customer may be browsing a manufacturer's website to buy an automated conveyor belt system but see recommended related products like smart sensors or safety mechanisms that would enhance the purchase. Or a telco customer is looking for an enterprise internet plan and also sees recommended related services like an emergency backup satellite service or international roaming plans to support business travel.



Show inventory and shipping information to support purchasing decisions. Sometimes how much and how quickly a product is available is just as important as its core details:

- **Real-time inventory and shipping estimates** help customers know whether their purchase will arrive in time for their needs.
- **Providing price tiers** to show price reductions based on the quantity of the order helps customers with their purchasing strategy.
- **You can also offer subscription pricing** with discounts for recurring orders for convenience and to incentivize recurring business.

¹ How Online Reviews Influence Sales | Medill Spiegel Research Center



2. Implement Product Navigation That Facilitates Finding and Comparing

Being able to search, filter, and compare products helps customers narrow down and identify what they're looking for. Here are some ways to streamline this process:



Mirror real-life product browsing and comparison.

- **Shop by Diagram.** Shop by Diagram, or an exploding parts diagram, helps customers identify and find products visually. For example, a tractor or auto manufacturer may offer an interactive diagram of the engine so that customers can identify the exact piston ring, hose, filter, or bolt they need. And customers can add their vehicle to be sure they're getting exactly the right diagram for what they own. An interactive diagram allows customers to select the part and its quantity, then add it to their cart. This makes it easy to find the right component even if the product name or model number is not known.
- **Order by CSV.** Especially in a B2B context, it can take a long time for customers to look through all your products to place an order. Instead, customers should be able to import orders quickly through spreadsheets by simply denoting SKUs and quantity in CSV files.



Refine search.

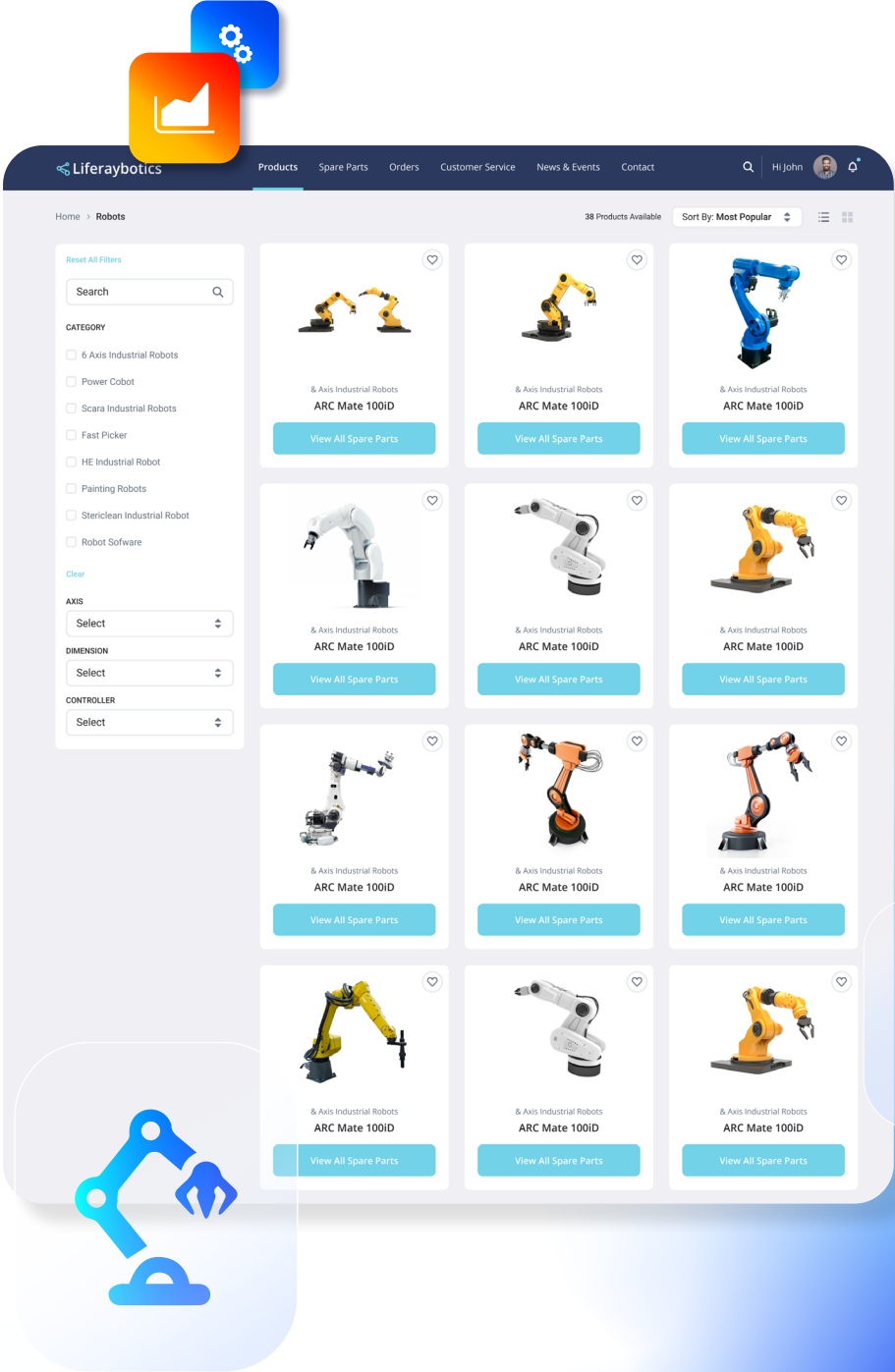
- **Faceted Navigation.** This is a user-friendly system that allows visitors to filter and refine product listings and search results based on multiple attributes or facets. For example, a website visitor might search for motors that have 110V or 220V with a 1HP power rating.

Especially for complex catalogs with technical specs and multiple product variations, faceted navigation can help customers quickly find what they need.

- **Natural Language and AI-Powered Search.** Better understand what your customers are looking for by leveraging Natural Language Processing (NLP) and AI to understand the intent and context of their searches. Let’s say a UK-based user searched for “boot” or “bonnet.” Though your content may not explicitly contain these terms, through NLP and AI, this user would get search results related to “trunk” and “hood” because the tools understood the user’s context.



Compare products side by side. Enable customers to easily analyze the differences between products, including detailed product information such as dimensions, price, or warranties.



3. Tailor Experiences with Personalization

According to Statista, 63% of marketers claimed that they saw an increase in conversion rates due to personalization.²

One of the most direct ways to increase conversions and sales is through product recommendations. Robust tools with ML models can automatically recommend other products based on the product a customer is currently viewing. Common types of product recommendations include:



Content-based product recommendations that push products similar to the product currently being viewed. This is based on product data such as name, description, and specifications.



“You may also like” recommendations that are based on the customer’s purchase history.



“Also-bought” recommendations offer products that are frequently purchased with the currently viewed product.



User personalization recommendations based on the purchase history of similar customers. The ML model uses the purchase history of customers who bought the same products to extract an implicit connection between products. The model then generates and stores predictions for each user.



Context-aware product recommendations based on products in similar categories and the purchase history of similar customers.

With the right data, you can also tailor the entire website to deliver very personalized user experiences. This allows you to dynamically change page layout and content based on the user who is viewing the site. For example, a travel website has identified that a website visitor is located in Canada, so they display special offers to more tropical vacation spots, like Hawaii.

² Top personalization benefits U.S. 2020 | Statista

4. Test Product Bundles to Maximize Sales

A study by McKinsey shows that cross-selling and category-penetration techniques increase sales by 20% and profits by 30%.³ One such strategy is product bundling. By grouping products together in a bundle, customers can easily purchase everything they need at once, typically at a lower price. Customers feel like they're getting more value out of their purchase and streamlining the purchasing process. Take a computer distributor, for instance. The distributor might offer a bundle that includes a computer, external monitor, keyboard, and mouse.

You can leverage bundles as an opportunity to test and see which combination of products would be more aligned to customer preferences and trigger more purchases. However, to accomplish this, you'll need a level of agility to create, test, and edit bundles according to customer preferences. But creating product bundles with different SKUs, separate inventory numbers, and official information is cumbersome and slow, especially when products in the bundle have information spread across different back-end systems.

The key lies in a robust digital experience layer that can give your team the ability to create and edit bundles that don't themselves need to be created as "official" products. You'll still use products that have information stored in their respective back-end systems. But because the bundles exist in the digital experience layer, you can easily create, test, and update product bundles according to buyer behavior.

Let's continue with the previous example. Say the computer distributor wants to see if a bundle with insurance would be appealing to customers. After adding insurance to their existing bundle, they find the number of people actually purchasing the bundle decreases, and instead, customers buy the other products separately. With a digital experience layer, the distributor can quickly modify the bundle to better reflect customer needs.

³ Targeted online marketing programs boost customer conversion rates | McKinsey & Company

Effective Digital Product Catalog Websites Need CMS, Commerce, and Personalization Capabilities

So what tool or technology can help you implement these best practices in order to deliver a truly customer-centric experience? You'll need to be able to bring together CMS, commerce, and personalization capabilities.

Although pure commerce technologies can provide product, order, and inventory management capabilities, these tools usually lack the robust site-building and personalization capabilities that are needed to truly deliver customer-centric web experiences. You need a tool that can bring all three together:

Content Management Capabilities	Commerce Capabilities	Personalization Capabilities
• Create and manage product pages using a visual builder • Enrich product information with better descriptions, images, videos, etc. • Integrate with AI tools to quickly generate content and images	• Fulfill orders faster with increased accuracy using product, ordering, and inventory management capabilities • Support multi-store, multi-catalog business models • Apply discounts, promotions, and custom pricing • For B2B organizations, enable bulk ordering and purchasing through CSV upload	• Tailor experiences using customer data • Recommend relevant content and search results • Recommend complementary products to encourage upsell and cross-sell

What can bring these three together? A digital experience platform (DXP)

A DXP is a complete platform that provides these three capabilities, and more, to build websites. But what sets DXPs apart is their strong integration capabilities to connect with existing legacy systems, back-end technologies, and third-party tools. This is critical in order to surface product information from existing ERPs, PIMs, inventory management systems, or warehouse management systems onto a robust digital layer. By consolidating this information, you not only ensure that the most accurate, updated information is provided to customers but you also increase efficiency for your teams. This is because updates made through the digital layer are automatically reflected in all connected back-end systems, reducing the time spent on manual updates.

Additionally, the most powerful DXPs are able to serve customers even after purchase. You can continually serve and grow your customers by using a DXP to build aftersales portals or customer portals.

See how Liferay DXP supports the entire customer journey. Start by exploring the [Commerce Fact Sheet](#) to learn how our platform's native commerce capabilities streamline purchasing. Then, [dive into this ebook](#) to discover how a DXP can also modernize your web presence, enhance security, and enable self-service.





Liferay helps organizations build for the future by enabling them to create, manage, and scale powerful solutions on the world's most flexible Digital Experience Platform (DXP). Trusted globally by over a thousand companies spanning multiple industries, Liferay's open-source DXP facilitates the development of marketing and commerce websites, customer portals, intranets, and more. Learn how we can use technology to change the world together at liferay.com.

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