

Shopify vs Shopify Plus vs BigCommerce: Which Ecommerce Platform is Right for You?



Selecting the right ecommerce platform for your business isn't a decision you can make quickly. It takes a lot of thought, research and planning.

Plus, you're investing a significant amount of money and resources into setting up your online store. You want to get it right the first time to avoid the headache and expense of replatforming later down the road.

“Before you make your selection, make sure you understand what you need. A truly successful platforming initiative is not an exercise in meeting current needs. It's a strategy designed to position an organization to move into the future, minimizing risks while maximizing return.” — Chuck Cantrell, director, strategic commerce consulting at [LiveArea](#)

As you've been researching your options, you've more than likely come across BigCommerce and Shopify. Both are very popular — and for good reason. As [software-as-a-service \(SaaS\)](#) ecommerce platforms, they can significantly reduce your total cost of ownership (TOC) by handling [hosting](#), security and updates. Additionally, updates include new product launches, which means you don't have to spend the time and effort upgrading your platform to get access to new features.

However, there are some major differences between BigCommerce and [Shopify](#) that can affect your ability to build and grow your business — which is what we're reviewing today.

Let's start by diving deeper into the plans each company offers, and how they are priced for small, medium and large businesses.

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Platform Comparison: Shopify, Shopify Plus, and BigCommerce

Plus, Basic, Standard, Advanced — all the terminology and names are enough to make anyone's head spin. Especially, when the real question you want answered is: which plan is the right one for a business my size? So let's break it down.

1. Shopify Pricing.

Shopify structures their offerings very similarly. Shopify, sometimes called regular Shopify, is for small businesses while Shopify Plus is for medium- to large-sized businesses. However, Shopify puts the onus on you to determine which plan you need based on the features you want:

- Basic Shopify: \$39 per month
- Shopify: \$105 per month
- Advanced Shopify: \$399 per month

Shopify Plus pricing is a percentage of your revenue and goes up and down based on your sales with a minimum of \$2k per month. You also get access to Shopify Plus Academy as part of your subscription.

Now that we're speaking the same language, we can go beyond the sticker price tag to learn more about what you actually get with BigCommerce and Shopify.

2. BigCommerce Pricing.

BigCommerce has two main selections: Essentials and Enterprise. It's easy to determine which plan you need because the options are based on the features you want, as well as your online sales per year.

Ideal for small business, [Essentials has three pricing plans](#):

- Standard: up to \$50k per year, priced at \$39 per month.
- Plus: up to \$180k per year, priced at \$105 per month.
- Pro: up to \$400k per year, priced at \$399 per month.

On the other hand, Enterprise serves mid-market to enterprise-level companies with custom pricing based on your specific online business.

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No matter which option you choose, you get access to multiple resources to assist you in running your business, including monthly town halls for customers and Partners, Helpful Webinars and [a dedicated Product blog](#).

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Pricing

While each company offers an affordable ecommerce platform, BigCommerce and Shopify have different approaches to how they earn their revenue, which can significantly impact how you calculate [your monthly costs](#).

1. BigCommerce: Affordable.

There's only one core product BigCommerce offers: an ecommerce platform. For assistance with other services you might need, such as order management, shipping and social media marketing, BigCommerce works with thousands of industry-leading Agency Partners and [600 App Partners](#).

This gives you the freedom to run your business in a way that fits your budget. You're not pushed into using any proprietary software.

For example, you're free to use one of the 55+ payment gateway providers BigCommerce has partnered with so that you can negotiate the best rate possible on [credit card](#) fees.

2. Shopify and Shopify Plus: Affordable if you use Shopify Payments.

Shopify offers an ecommerce platform, as well as adjacent services, like payments, [shipping rates](#), point-of-sale and lending. And they offer these proprietary services with all of their plan options. However, this means you're somewhat limited on the providers you can choose for these services.

For example, if you want to use a different payment processor outside of Shopify Payments, they will charge you additional transaction fees of up to 2% of each sale.

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Shopify vs Shopify Plus vs BigCommerce: Functionality

Another way BigCommerce and Shopify differ is the functionality that comes out-of-the-box versus what you'll need from a third-party app.

1. Shopify and Shopify Plus: Over reliance on third-party apps.

The Shopify platform relies heavily on third-party apps. For instance, all Shopify plans have strict option and variant caps per product. So to achieve the 600 product variants that can be done on BigCommerce, you'll need a third-party app.

Shopify Plus offers a few additional apps to merchants, such as Shopify Flow, which is an automation workflow tool that helps you do things like hide products that are out of stock automatically.

Additionally, [filtering on Shopify is limited](#). While you can use their tagging system to enable basic filters, you run into problems when you need to show products with two values (i.e. faceted search).

Here's a very simplified example of how this works. Your customer is looking for pants. They want to see all the available blue pants and all the available black pants. Shopify's tagging system sees this as looking for pants that are a combination of blue and black, not pants that are either black or blue.

So if you want to enable searches for pants that are black or blue with Shopify Plus, you'll need an integration with a third-party app. Shopify has a separate app marketplace with Shopify Plus Partners that specialize in working with high volume merchants.

When you total everything together, the out-of-the-box functionality of BigCommerce can save merchants roughly \$5,800 – \$30,000+ per year in app subscription costs, compared to Shopify.

2. BigCommerce: Many built-in features.

BigCommerce offers most of the features you'll need natively within the platform. For example, BigCommerce loves big catalogs, handling up to 600 SKUs per product with 250 options — and this applies to every plan on Essentials, as well as Enterprise.

Additionally, BigCommerce Enterprise offers an extensive set of advanced features that you won't find natively on Shopify Plus, such as:

- Custom fields

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- Manually specified prices in different currencies
- Ability to create wishlists
- A prebuilt integration with WordPress
- Multiple option display types

Also, BigCommerce Pro and Enterprise plans include faceted search so that your customers can filter products by options such as color, size and brand. With Enterprise, you also gain the ability to create filters from your custom product fields.

“BigCommerce API checked all the boxes in regards to multiple payment providers for checkout, reliability and product options. In addition, BigCommerce came with many more features out of the box than Shopify.” – Joe Friedman, omni-channel director of operations at Jildor Shoes

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Platform SEO

Both BigCommerce and Shopify provide SEO tools, such as editable page titles, descriptions and keywords, to help your online store rank in the SERPs (search engine results pages). However, they differ on the level of control you have to make changes, which can impact your ranking.

1. BigCommerce: Well-optimized website.

To ensure you're creating an [SEO-friendly website](#), BigCommerce organizes your products into categories and subcategories. This helps search engines like Google and Bing understand the structure and hierarchy of your website.

Additionally, the category/subcategory structure creates breadcrumbs that not only help with internal linking, but they also help customers find where they are on your website and how to navigate back to previous pages.

BigCommerce also gives you the ability to fully customize your URLs so that you can create the most user-friendly structure — which again helps with SEO.

Another feature that's particularly important for those with advanced SEO skills is the ability to edit your robot.txt file. With BigCommerce, you have the power to make the changes to tell search engines what pages you do and don't want crawled.

Best of all, BigCommerce makes these features available on all Essentials plans, as well as the Enterprise plan.

2. Shopify and Shopify Plus: No customizable URLs and no robot.txt edits.

Shopify has a very different approach to organizing products. Instead of categories and subcategories, products on both Shopify and Shopify Plus are grouped into collections.

From an SEO perspective, the drawback to collections is the lack of breadcrumbs. Because you aren't going multiple levels deep, there are no breadcrumb links to follow. The only way to add breadcrumbs to certain Shopify themes by editing code.

Additionally, Shopify adds /products, /collections, or /pages to your URLs and won't let you edit the structure to remove it. So while you can change the information that comes after, you can't fully customize your URLs.

Another thing you can't edit on Shopify's platform is the robot.txt file. If there is a page you want to hide from the search engines, once again you'll need to go into the backend and add code to

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the specific page.

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Platform Themes

When it comes to themes, BigCommerce and Shopify both do a great job of offering mobile-responsive templates. But there are a few key differences that we will explain in more detail.

1. BigCommerce: Easily edit themes with PageBuilder.

In the [BigCommerce theme marketplace](#), you'll find a wide selection of professionally designed themes, available to every customer on both Essentials and Enterprise.

Additionally, you can find themes that already include features like Google AMP that will improve your site's speed and performance.

No matter which theme you select, whether it's free or paid, you can customize it with [PageBuilder, BigCommerce's drag-and-drop visual editor](#). This means you don't need to know how to code if you want to change things like font colors and webpage layouts.

However, if you do want to make changes to your theme's code, you can use [BigCommerce's theme engine, Stencil](#), which allows you to make changes to every section of your site, including the checkout page.

2. Shopify and Shopify Plus: Many themes, but missing key features.

Shopify also offers numerous themes to merchants using either Shopify or Shopify Plus. You'll actually find more themes on Shopify than you will on BigCommerce, including free themes.

However, be careful because more doesn't always equal better. Some Shopify themes require third-party apps to achieve the same functionality BigCommerce themes include natively. For instance, if you want to use Google AMP, you'll need an app for that.

Similarly to BigCommerce, you can make simple changes to your theme using Shopify's theme editor. If you want to make additional customizations to the theme's code, you'll need to not only understand HTML and CSS, but also Shopify's templating language, Liquid.

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B2B Solutions

Now, we get to the biggest difference between BigCommerce and Shopify and Shopify Plus — B2B ecommerce capabilities.

1. BigCommerce: Ready for B2B ecommerce.

One huge advantage to BigCommerce is the ability to create [B2C experiences](#) for your B2B customers. In fact, BigCommerce includes native B2B functionality for merchants on Plus, Pro and Enterprise plans.

Using customer groups, your wholesale and retail customers can access the same domain, creating a seamless shopping and checkout experience. Additionally, because customers can only belong to a single customer group, you can give [wholesalers](#) access to specific product categories, customized price lists and bulk discounts.

“With estimates for B2B ecommerce transactions only continuing to grow, we need a platform that makes it quick and easy to offer digital B2B functionality to clients. BigCommerce offers several of those functions out of the box and pre-built apps to fill the rest. We’re confident in having BigCommerce as part of our services.” — David Alpern, marketing division director at Endertech.com

2. Shopify: No B2B or wholesale options.

As of now, Shopify doesn’t include a B2B or wholesale experience for any store owners. To get access to a separate wholesale channel, you’ll need to upgrade to Shopify Plus.

However, there are workarounds that you can implement to sell products B2B, such as:

- Creating discount codes and sending them to your wholesale customers
- Downloading a wholesale app to help with invoices
- Opening another Shopify clone store, so you have one website for retail customers and a different website for wholesale customers

3. Shopify Plus: Limited support for wholesale.

While you can offer a B2B experience on Shopify Plus, you’ll need to create a separate wholesale storefront that’s on a subdomain. Here you can customize pricing and product lists, and customers only see what’s assigned to them since they have a separate login and password.

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However, there are some limitations:

- You can't integrate your wholesale channel with external systems or third-party apps
- You can only display prices that include tax.
- You're very limited in the design since you can only modify the logo, accent color and background image.

If you're looking for a true [B2B experience](#), Shopify recommends that you add an expansion store — which is basically just an additional [ecommerce store](#). However, you'll probably still need additional apps to offer things like bulk pricing since B2B features are only on the wholesale channel, which lives on the subdomain.

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Sales Channels

We've reviewed the area with the biggest differences, now let's look at the area where each of the platforms are most similar: multi-channel sales.

1. BigCommerce: Omni-channel sales made easy.

BigCommerce helps you create an [omni-channel experience](#) by making your products available in places other than your online storefront (frontend) — and these sales channels are available no matter which plan you're on. With BigCommerce Channel Manager, you can easily sell on:

- eBay
- Amazon
- Instagram
- Facebook
- Pinterest
- Anywhere you can add HTML with buy buttons

BigCommerce also enables you to [sell and advertise your products on Google Shopping](#) with the free Google Shopping by Sales & Orders App. Plus, you can use the [Square point of sale \(POS\) app](#) or your preferred POS system to connect your online store to your [brick-and-mortar](#) business.

2. Shopify and Shopify Plus: Multi-channel sales options.

In addition to your online store, Shopify and Shopify Plus merchants can sell their products on several channels, including:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Amazon
- Messenger
- Buy buttons that connect with Shopify

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Shopify also has their own POS to unify your online business with in-person sales. Additionally, you can visit the Shopify [Apps Store](#) to find free and paid apps that will help you sell on Google Shopping cart.

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Should You Use Shopify, Shopify Plus, or BigCommerce?

So which ecommerce platform should you choose? Here's the too long didn't read summary of each option.

1. BigCommerce: Small and large stores.

If you're looking to grow your ecommerce business, BigCommerce is a platform that scales with you. BigCommerce offers plans for everyone, from high-volume small businesses to large B2B enterprises.

Additionally, BigCommerce's extensive native functionality saves you money and time since you're not managing so many third-party applications.

You also have the freedom to choose your preferred payment gateway, additional control over SEO, and the ability to edit your ecommerce store's design with PageBuilder.

Plus, depending on the plan you select, you can give your wholesale customers a complete B2C ecommerce website experience.

With 24/7 live agent support, a robust Help Center, and a large ecosystem of Agency and Tech Partners, you get all the additional support you need to run your business.

2. Shopify: Stores just getting online.

Shopify is a good option for small ecommerce businesses that don't need very many features and just want to launch an online store quickly.

No one can deny that Shopify offers one of the most easy-to-use ecommerce platforms on the market. With more free and premium themes and an intuitive theme editor, you can create a unique storefront with your branding.

If you prefer to use more third-party apps to add functionality, Shopify has a very expansive app store with thousands of options you can choose from. However, be careful to evaluate just how many apps you'll need because the costs can add up.

Speaking of costs, make sure you're satisfied with the payment options that you can offer customers with Shopify Payments. Because if you want to use a different payment gateway, you'll have to pay additional transaction fees. Additionally, you should verify that you're not a high-risk business that's excluded from using Shopify Payments and that it's available in your country.

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Also, take into account that products are categorized into collections and how the rigid URL structure could impact your SEO.

3. Shopify Plus: Not yet ready for large stores.

As we stated in the beginning, replatforming can be expensive and time consuming. So, if you're currently a Shopify customer and you're happy, but you want additional features, it might be worth upgrading to Shopify Plus.

However, if you're truly an enterprise business that's on a platform like Magento, Shopify Plus might not be the best option since you won't get the same flexibility for customizations.

For instance, if you are selling internationally, you can't manually change the prices for that country's currency. And while you can create a wholesale channel for B2B customers, there's certain restrictions that limit your capabilities.

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Conclusion

It's not always easy to evaluate new technologies, especially if you've never opened an online store before. With so many choices, it's easy to get confused or overwhelmed.

However, we hope this guide has helped you gain a better understanding of the differences between BigCommerce, Shopify and Shopify Plus so that you can make an informed decision on which platform is best for your online store.

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