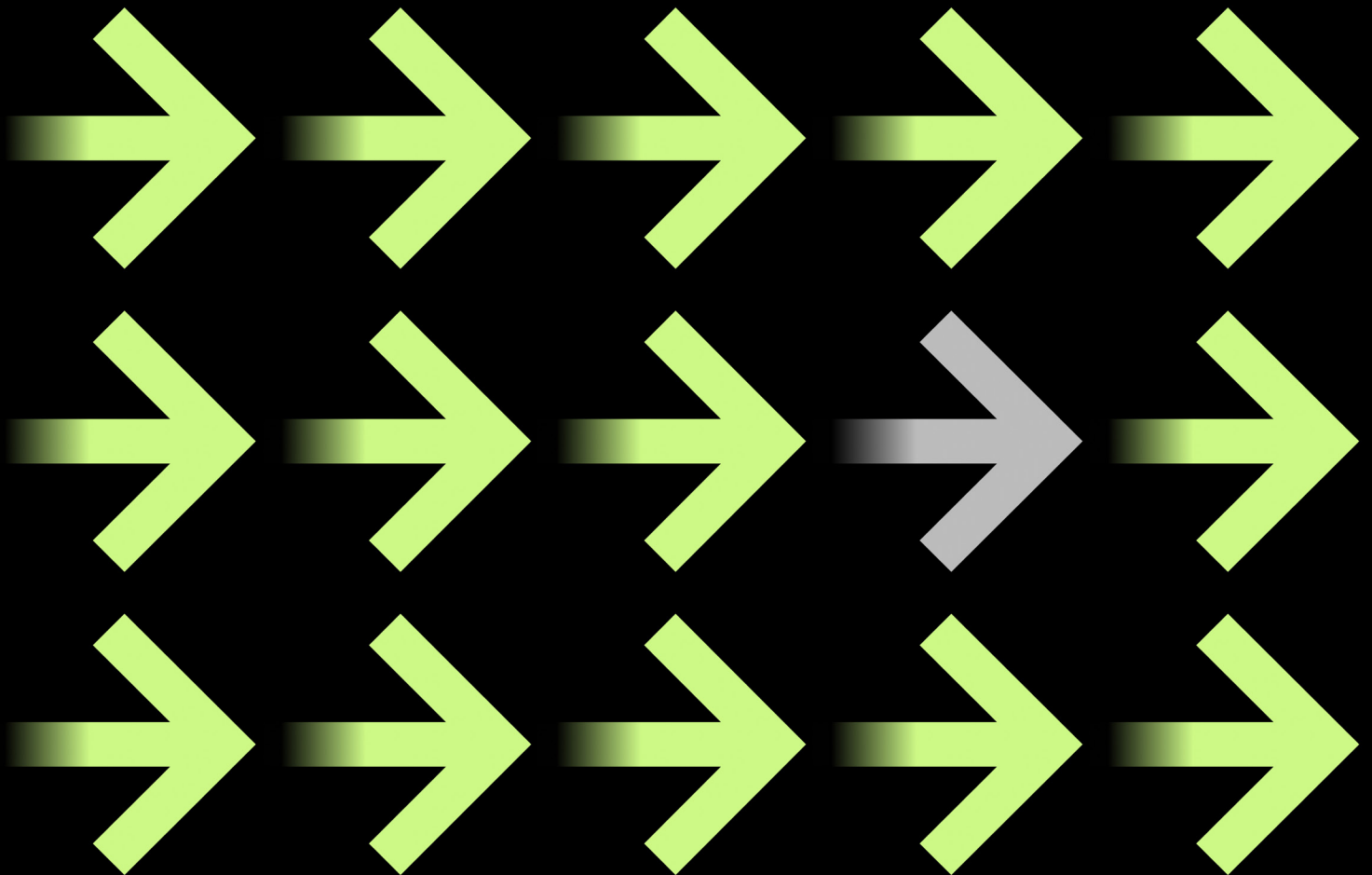




Custom platform to Shopify

A proven migration framework for
technical decision makers moving
from a custom platform to Shopify.



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Executive summary

As businesses grow, many find themselves at a crossroads with their custom commerce solutions. While these custom-built platforms have served their purpose, evolving customer expectations and increasing operational complexities often signal it's time for change. For success in modern commerce, that means a migration to a platform that combines enterprise-grade capabilities with the agility to innovate. A platform like Shopify.

In this guide, we'll address common concerns and assumptions to help you navigate the journey from your custom-built platform to Shopify. We'll explore why leading brands are making this transition, guide you through critical migration decisions, and outline key considerations for your strategy.

We'll also cover the fundamental differences between custom and Shopify architectures, including how Shopify's features map to your current capabilities and how its ecosystem of innovations can enhance your business—all while maintaining the control you need. Whether you're evaluating a potential migration or have already begun planning your transition, this guide will help you make informed decisions about your move to Shopify.

As your partner in this journey, Publicis Sapient brings deep expertise in digital business transformation. They help global organizations create and sustain competitive advantage through their SPEED capabilities: Strategy and Consulting, Product, Experience, Engineering, and Data. Their extensive experience across thousands of clients, combined with their deep understanding of Shopify, allows them to build digital storefronts that meet your specific business needs while delivering next-generation experiences to your customers.

The value of Shopify

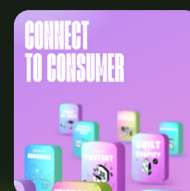
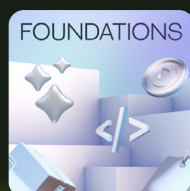
Organizations today face mounting pressure to deliver exceptional customer experiences at scale. Many businesses that previously had the insight and vision to build a custom commerce solution before the market could provide it are now constrained by that same custom platform. The innovative first step that had these brands at the vanguard of the industry has now become a barrier to growth, innovation, and competitiveness.

The ecommerce industry is poised to reach a market size of \$21.22 trillion by 2030, and key to capturing this growth is sustained investment in research and development that drives technological innovation and competitive differentiation. In 2024, Shopify invested \$1.4 billion in R&D—40% of operating expenditure—while Publicis Sapient invested over \$300 million in Agentic AI over 2024. Industry leaders are innovating at a pace and scale that a siloed commerce solution cannot match. The build-versus-buy decision is more relevant in this landscape than ever. To stay competitive, businesses must follow a key principle:

“Buy for commodity, build for differentiation.”

Shopify offers the best of both worlds. The platform takes care of the commodity by providing a complete commerce operating system with best-in-class fundamentals. Its flexible architecture supports modern approaches—whether headless, composable, or hybrid—allowing businesses to integrate best-of-breed solutions and preserve valuable legacy services.”

— Jon Panella, Group Vice President, Global Commerce Lead, Publicis Sapient



This architectural flexibility, combined with extensibility and massive innovation, lets businesses focus on differentiation: investing their development resources toward creating truly unique customer experiences that set them apart.

Shopify understands the precepts holding businesses on their custom platforms: the solution was a labor of love and successfully accommodated unique business requirements. It offers an experience that customers know and love, as well as critical customizations that have been built over time. It gives developers freedom, control, and comfort to operate on a platform they're familiar with and often helped build. Shopify's flexible architecture ensures these valuable capabilities can be preserved and enhanced rather than replaced.

While these emotional and practical attachments to custom platforms are understandable, many businesses eventually reach a turning point where the risks of maintaining custom platforms begin to outweigh the benefits. Modern commerce demands both stability and adaptability—something that's increasingly difficult to achieve with monolithic, custom-built systems. Let's take a look at why brands choose to migrate from their custom platforms.

“Shopify always has a host of new little features. I log in and often see something that makes me say, ‘Oh, that’s great. We can definitely use that.’ That’s what I expected out of Shopify and I’m glad that’s been the case.”

— Sean Reyes, Founder & CEO, Shock Surplus

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Why brands migrate

Organizations that rely on custom-built commerce platforms can face escalating challenges that impact operational efficiency and growth. By not capitalizing on the hard work and expertise of the rest of the commerce industry, brands using custom platforms often lose out on innovation, optimized processes, and industry talent. The following are some other potential risks of staying on a custom platform:

Increasing technical debt and maintenance requirements

Legacy commerce platforms typically accumulate technical debt over time. What began as a streamlined solution gradually becomes unwieldy as developers layer on patches, workarounds, and feature additions to meet evolving business needs. This growing complexity requires increasingly specialized knowledge, making it difficult to maintain and enhance the system as team members change.

Forrester Research found that legacy systems still capture two-thirds of global tech spending, with many companies caught in a tech-debt spiral. This ongoing maintenance diverts resources from business growth and building a competitive advantage.

The majority of tech spend is going to maintain outdated systems



Widening innovation gap

Platforms built specifically for commerce—like Shopify—innovate at pace. Our sole focus on commerce, along with the crowd-sourced improvements of the ecosystem, combine to create a widening innovation gap between Shopify and other platforms. Given that it's generally more difficult for businesses with custom platforms to innovate as quickly, it can put them at a critical competitive disadvantage.

“At the core of our operating and development philosophy is this mission: to tackle complexity head-on and reduce it for our customers.”

→ [**READ THE FULL STORY**](#)



This focus on innovation and simplicity is why Shopify businesses benefit from continuous improvements without the overhead of developing these capabilities themselves.

Resource drain on internal teams

Custom commerce platforms require dedicated internal teams for maintenance, updates, and troubleshooting. This ongoing commitment diverts technical talent from strategic initiatives that could drive business growth. According to MoldStud, businesses that continue to rely on custom solutions face an average annual operational cost increase of 20% over time compared to those using ready-made options.

Platforms like Shopify mitigate this challenge by offering:

- Access to a larger talent pool—only custom specialists can work on custom platforms
- Accessible scalability for the solution and its components
- Minimal risk to efficiency and productivity when experimenting
- Expedited time to market with features, enhancements, and other improvements
- Experience with diverse brands from around the world—with millions of brands and businesses on the platform, Shopify is familiar with most use cases and prepared to address specific challenges

“Before Shopify, [there were a lot of] complexities by being a legacy, homegrown site. Our engineers had to either fix things they built themselves or engage with a third-party provider. By being on Shopify, we can consolidate our tech stack almost entirely.”

— YuJin Yong, VP of Digital, Daily Harvest

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Performance and scalability limitations

Custom platforms often struggle to scale efficiently during periods of high demand, like seasonal peaks or promotional events. These performance limitations can result in poor customer experiences, lost sales, and a damaged reputation.

For Fortune 1,000 companies,
downtime could cost as much
as \$1 million per hour

According to an [IDC survey](#)

In contrast, Shopify's infrastructure is designed to handle massive scale, processing billions of transactions annually with 99.9% uptime and less than 50 millisecond response time.* This reliability is backed by a global network of over 300 points of presence, ensuring fast and immersive storefronts worldwide.

In practice, Publicis Sapient's clients have observed a **90% reduction** in service desk requests after migrating to Shopify.

Support burden and knowledge management

As custom platforms mature, the original developers may leave the organization, taking critical knowledge with them. This creates a knowledge gap, making troubleshooting and enhancements increasingly difficult and risky. Organizations often depend on a small group of individuals who understand the system's intricacies, creating a significant business continuity risk.

Plus, custom platforms often lack comprehensive documentation and training materials, making knowledge transfer and onboarding new team members challenging and time-consuming.

Seven common considerations and solutions when migrating from a custom platform

Enterprise businesses transitioning from custom systems to Shopify will need to plan how to migrate their critical integrations and processes. Shopify has built their platform with solutions and features designed to mitigate these common migration considerations.

Here are some of the most common and important considerations for brands migrating from custom to Shopify, with commentary and guidance on how to identify, navigate, and solve them.

Consideration

01

Accommodating for complex product catalogs

Having a streamlined and unified catalog that centralizes data in a single place across all channels, platforms, and systems will drive operational efficiency, improve customer experience, and decrease time to market.

Shopify provides tools to unify the product catalog, but it is helpful to understand how to simplify a product catalog so that the tools available will be more effective.

Some best practices to consider:

- Shopify provides tools to unify the product catalog, but it is helpful to understand how to simplify a product catalog so that the tools available will be more effective.
- Use a PIM system to centralize, organize, and enrich product data. This makes your catalog scalable, accurate, and easier to manage across channels, regions, and teams.
- Set clear data governance rules to ensure consistency and accountability.
- Create a standardized product taxonomy with a logical hierarchical structure.

- Use automation and dynamic logic to bulk import/export, validate and sync data. Eliminate unnecessary data, reduce redundancy and rationalize SKUs.
- Standardize product titles, descriptions, and images. Optimize content and assets for clarity and quality.
- Involve stakeholders to align catalog structure with business goals and customer needs.

The tools Shopify offers to help unify the product catalog include:



Flexible product structuring:

Shopify enables customizable product attributes, including variants, metafields, and custom attributes, allowing a catalog structure that fits unique business needs.



Robust PIM/ERP integration:

Prebuilt connectors and GraphQL APIs facilitate integration with existing PIM and ERP systems, ensuring real-time updates and synchronization across various channels and fulfillment partners.



Automated migration tools:

Shopify and their partners offer specialized migration tools and services to streamline the transition of product data from legacy systems. These tools and services include code libraries that convert legacy codebases into more modern languages consumable by GraphQL APIs, third-party migration apps, and Shopify's migration support program, which offers dedicated support experts to enterprise brands migrating to Shopify.

**SEO-friendly structure:**

Shopify automatically generates SEO-optimized URLs, metadata structures, and product information, maintaining and potentially improving search visibility during migration. There are also custom data mapping solutions available to preserve existing SEO structures, URLs, and metadata.

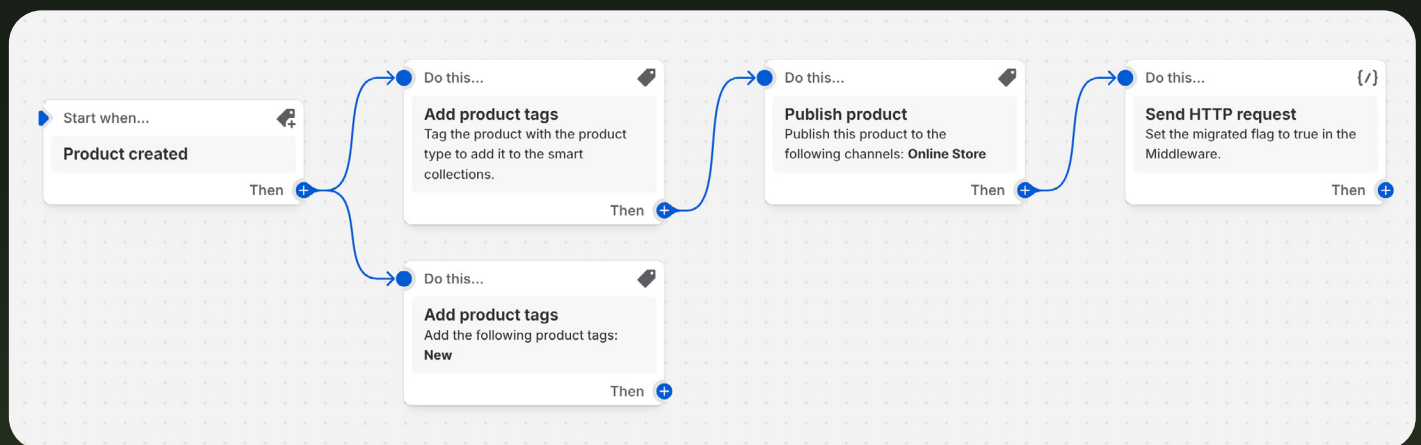
**Shopify Flow automation:**

Once the data migration is completed, Shopify Flow allows for automated catalog management workflows, reducing manual intervention and ensuring consistency across product updates.

**Scalable infrastructure:**

Shopify's platform provides robust infrastructure for large and high-SKU businesses, ensuring performance remains strong even with complex catalogs.

Example Shopify Flow Automation



Consideration

02

Integrating with legacy systems

The complications presented by legacy integrations can hamstring a team's ability to modernize any system.

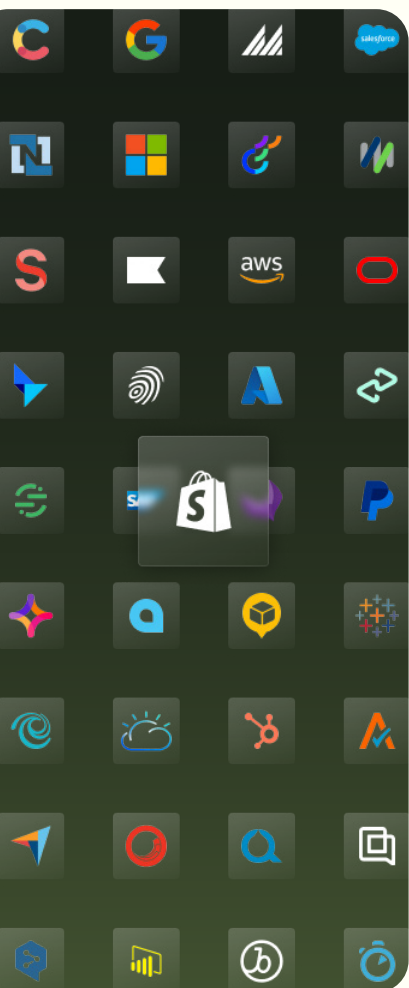
Shopify addresses this by offering:**A highly flexible API-forward architecture**

Shopify's comprehensive API structure supports diverse integration approaches, allowing for phased migration and coexistence with legacy systems during transition. This modular API-based integration framework replaces point-to-point legacy connections. The goal of integrating legacy systems is to have data and systems using APIs that can be consumed by Shopify's APIs, which use GraphQL, and there are multiple ways Shopify assists merchants in making that transition.

Shopify offers code libraries that allow legacy systems to input much of their data housed in outdated code languages. That code library will assist in translating data written in a legacy language into a more modern code, typically Ruby, Remix, or Node.js, which can then be consumed by the GraphQL APIs used by Shopify.

Prebuilt connectors

The Shopify App Store includes hundreds of prebuilt integrations for common enterprise systems, reducing development effort and accelerating implementation. This includes middleware solutions for major ERP, CRM, and order management system (OMS) providers (such as MuleSoft, Boomi, Celigo, etc.). Some of the prebuilt integrations include: Netsuite, Microsoft 365, Akeneo, Salsify, Salesforce CRM, Hubspot, Cahoot WMS, Klaviyo, Yotpo, Avalra, Shipper HQ,



Gorgias, Zendesk, and more. This is not a comprehensive list, but it hints at the extent of the prebuilt integrations ready to streamline integration and get storefronts up and running.

Custom development framework

For unique integration requirements and proprietary legacy systems, Shopify provides development tools, documentation, and support to create custom connections. Some of these tools include webhooks, an event bridge, and Shopify Functions, which is a custom back-end logic for checkout, discounts, and order routing when third-party apps are present.

Data transformation capabilities

Shopify's platform includes tools for transforming and normalizing data from disparate systems, ensuring consistency across the commerce ecosystem and aligning old data structures with Shopify. Some of these tools include Matrixify, and an API Mesh, which normalizes large amounts of data from disparate systems before integrating it with Shopify.

Scalable infrastructure

Shopify's cloud-based architecture scales automatically to handle integration requirements, from low-volume batch processes to high-throughput real-time connections, providing enhanced security and performance improvements.

Systems requiring integration planning

Specific systems will need to be accounted for in the migration process as they require planning to minimize disruption. Some systems have prebuilt integrations to Shopify, while others will need a custom integration plan. The specifics will have to be established on a case-by-case basis. The following is general information about which systems will need to be streamlined when migrating to Shopify.

Load-bearing or custom-developed systems will need to be streamlined and consolidated for a Shopify migration if they aren't able to be integrated into Shopify with a prebuilt integration.

Systems that often need to be re-evaluated when migrating off a custom platform include:

- 01 PIM**
Mapping existing product data structures to Shopify's product architecture, including variants, collections, and custom attributes.
- 02 OMS/ERP**
Establishing bidirectional connections between Shopify and order management or ERP systems to ensure accurate inventory, fulfillment, and financial data. This often requires decoupling from tightly integrated legacy systems.
- 03 Warehousing and logistics**
Integrating Shopify with warehouse management and logistics systems to streamline fulfillment operations and provide accurate delivery information to customers.
- 04 Fulfillment workflows**
Fulfillment flows can be accomplished through native Shopify features like Shopify Markets or various API connections. If fulfillment logic is especially complex, custom development or external apps could be required.
- 05 Customer data and marketing**
Connecting customer relationship management and marketing platforms to create a unified view of the customer and enable personalized communications.
- 06 Promotion management**
Rethinking and rebuilding how promotions are triggered is likely required, as Shopify has a structured and API-driven promotions engine that is extensible and able to be largely handled through native Shopify capabilities like Shopify Functions.

Systems that touch products and catalogs will need to be decoupled and restructured to align with Shopify's modular and API-forward architecture, which will improve scalability and future flexibility.

Consideration

03

Enhancing personalization and customer experience

Legacy custom platforms typically struggle to offer modern recommendations and lag behind industry best practices because of their often fragmented and disconnected systems. This limitation can significantly impact conversion rates and average order value.

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YOUR
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BUNDLE POWDER COATED

BUNDLE LASER BLANKS

BUNDLE SUBLIMATION

BUNDLE STAINLESS STEEL

Shopify brings personalization capabilities up to speed by offering:

Native AI-powered recommendations

Shopify includes built-in product recommendation tools through Shopify Magic, Search & Discovery, AI-Powered Smart Search, and Shopify Flow that use artificial intelligence to deliver personalized suggestions, tap into first-party data, and increase conversions.

Custom personalization logic

Organizations can implement sophisticated strategies using Shopify Functions to create tailored customer experiences.

Third-party product recommendations and upsells

Integration with specialized apps like Nosto and Rebuy enhances the ability to present relevant products to customers.

Marketing personalization

Tools like Shopify Audiences, Klaviyo, and Omnisend allow for targeted marketing based on customer behavior and preferences.

“Our website [experience] is absolutely seamless. It is easy for the customer. It was easy for us to make. It is easy for us to make changes on the website... We just go in and make a huge difference. We’ve seen crazy revenue jumps. The power of Shopify.”

— John Modi, Chief Imagination Officer, MakerFlo

→ **[READ THE FULL STORY](#)**

Consideration

04

Improving speed to market and cost efficiency

Migrating to Shopify unlocks significant opportunities to improve time to market and total cost of ownership (TCO). Independent research commissioned by Shopify found that “Shopify’s TCO is up to 36% better than its competitors,” with platform costs 30% lower, operating costs 23% lower, and implementation costs 49% lower on average across the board.[†]

Shopify’s TCO is up to **36% better** than its competitors’.

35% better

than Salesforce Commerce Cloud

29% better

than Adobe Commerce (Magento)

36% better

than WooCommerce

31% better

than BigCommerce

Shopify has the best total cost of ownership

30% lower
platform costs

23% lower
operation costs

49% lower
implementation costs

To understand where the biggest opportunities for transformation are, consider these audits and internal evaluations that may provide insight into choices that could lower TCO:

- Map all systems in the current commerce solution and identify redundancies.
- Identify the most expensive custom components or legacy integrations to maintain.
- Calculate spend on cloud infrastructure, monitoring, and DevOps, then compare that to a fully managed SaaS platform or other, more prebuilt option.
- Quantify how much internal time is spent on platform maintenance, bug fixing, patching, upgrades, and so on.
- Identify how long it takes to launch new features.
- Review how many custom workflows, features, and APIs are custom and assess how much of that could be replaced by off-the-shelf platform capabilities or more efficient integrations.
- Determine the cost of traffic scaling or peak demand handling.
- Measure cost per transaction or order.

Once you've identified the biggest opportunities to improve cost efficiency for your organization, consider how Shopify can expedite time to market and provide valuable TCO benefits.

Reduce IT dependencies

Use Shopify's business-friendly tools to empower non-technical teams to make updates and launch new initiatives without IT bottlenecks, accelerating speed to market. Moving away from legacy test scripts means IT no longer has to be involved in pushing all content or updates. Other ways Shopify can reduce IT dependency and lower TCO include:

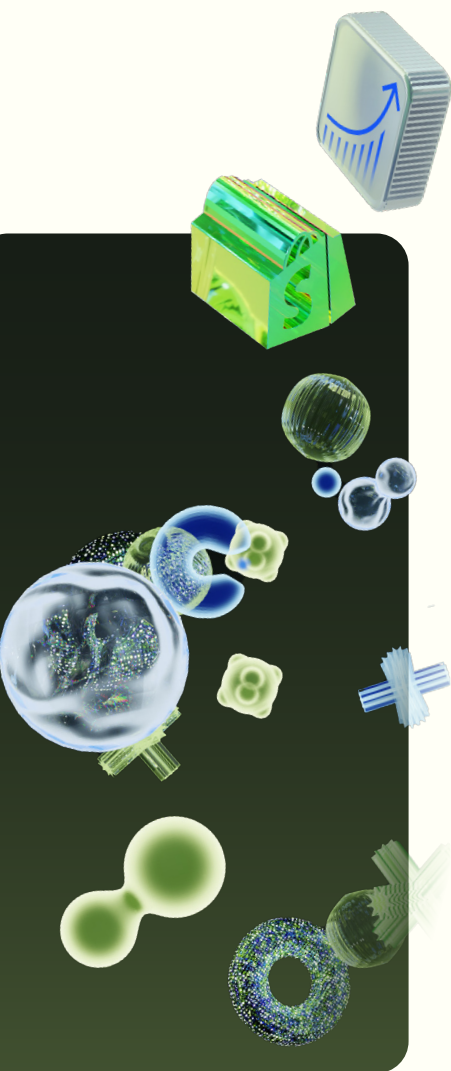
- Fully managed infrastructure reduces reliance on DevOps, cloud engineers, and IT infrastructure teams.
- Automatic software updates, patches, and maintenance reduce the time developers spend on upkeep.

- Shopify's native functionality and app ecosystem reduce the likelihood of custom development and integrations.
- High platform availability and auto-scaling reduce or remove the need for IT to monitor load balancing or traffic volume

Resource reallocation

Organizations can reallocate technical resources to differentiating initiatives by transitioning routine commerce operations to Shopify. Budget previously allocated to maintenance and upkeep can go to customer experience optimization programs, new features, or other business-specific implementations. The high-skilled workforce previously tied up with maintenance is freed to drive revenue through initiatives like:

- Shifting from break/fix support and maintenance to customer experience improvements like optimizing UX, search functionality, site navigation, conversion funnels, or the implementation of A/B testing and other customer behavior feedback loops
- Launching new channels like an app, a marketplace, or expanding internationally
- Developing loyalty, subscription, or other retention-driving programs
- Integrating marketing platforms like a CDP for better customer segmentation
- Creating custom dashboards or reporting tools to automate business use of analytics
- Moving from a reactive security model to a proactive one by building risk mitigation policies instead of managing security infrastructure
- Testing new UX ideas or new feature rollouts using low-code Shopify tools or apps
- Reskilling legacy devs into modern code language experts and building a long-term technology roadmap



Future-proofing

Moving from a custom platform to Shopify represents a fundamental shift in how your business approaches technological advancement and innovation. While custom platforms offer complete control, they often require significant resources to maintain and upgrade, potentially limiting your ability to keep pace with rapidly evolving commerce technology. Transitioning to Shopify means adapting to a different model of technological evolution—one where updates, infrastructure, and innovations are managed by the platform rather than internal teams. This shift has significant implications for your organization's operations, development resources, and strategic planning. As you evaluate the transition, consider the outcomes of such a move:

- Adapt internal processes to Shopify's release cycle rather than controlling update timing.
- Shift from managing custom infrastructure to using Shopify's scalable architecture.
- Transition from separate channel management systems to a unified admin interface across all sales channels.
- Move from custom AI development to using platform-provided tools like Shopify Magic and Flow.
- Trade building custom integrations for using an established partner and app ecosystem.
- Replace custom analytics with built-in dashboard reporting and trend analysis.



Consideration

05

Solution security

While custom platforms can be, and often are, secure systems, the burden of that security falls entirely on the IT team and corresponding business units. By moving to an enterprise platform like Shopify, the burden of security shifts to the platform's infrastructure. Shopify handles key aspects of compliance like data encryption, infrastructure security, audits, and more so businesses don't have to.

Other key security implications of migration to Shopify include:**PCI DSS compliance**

Shopify is PCI DSS Level 1 compliant, which provides secure payment processing. Whereas a custom platform would require manual security updates, potentially containing user error or oversight, Shopify provides regular automatic updates that help to ensure compliance with industry standards.

Secure hosting

Shopify's cloud-based, secure infrastructure has built-in security redundancy and DDoS protection. Compared to a custom platform's frequently self-managed hosting, the enterprise infrastructure of Shopify's hosting provides improved security and allows resources to be reallocated to other valuable initiatives.

Built-in fraud protection

Shopify has AI-powered fraud detection native in Shopify Payments. Machine learning models detect fraudulent orders and flag transactions with risk indicators. Shopify Flow and Shopify Protect cover fraud through automated workflows, offer protection against fraudulent chargebacks, and support reimbursement payments to eligible merchants.

Third-party AI fraud protection apps

There are multiple vetted, enterprise-grade third-party fraud detection apps available in Shopify's app store, including NoFraud, Signifyd, Forter, and Kount.

Consideration

06

Change management

Migrating to a new solution, work process, and IT model is a big and intimidating change on an organizational level, not to mention potentially fear-inducing for individual employees. Shopify's structured support protocols and flexible migration strategies make the shift less intimidating and more predictable for IT teams, business users, and executive stakeholders alike.

Some of the strategies and tools available to ease the transition include:

Dedicated enterprise support teams

Shopify solutions engineers and account managers guide enterprises through the transition, ensuring technological alignment with business needs while IT, marketing, and operations teams work through training and onboarding to get comfortable with the Shopify ecosystem.

The business's choice in system integrator (SI) is important because the implementation team will help executive stakeholders understand the value of their investment and align big-picture business goals with their new storefront's capabilities.

API-first approach to IT integration

Shopify's GraphQL APIs can help IT teams to implement a gradual transition strategy, reducing the risks associated with a complete system overhaul. By using prebuilt integrations for critical, data-intensive systems like ERPs, CRMs, and PIMs, organizations can maintain essential back-end logic and workflows throughout the migration process.

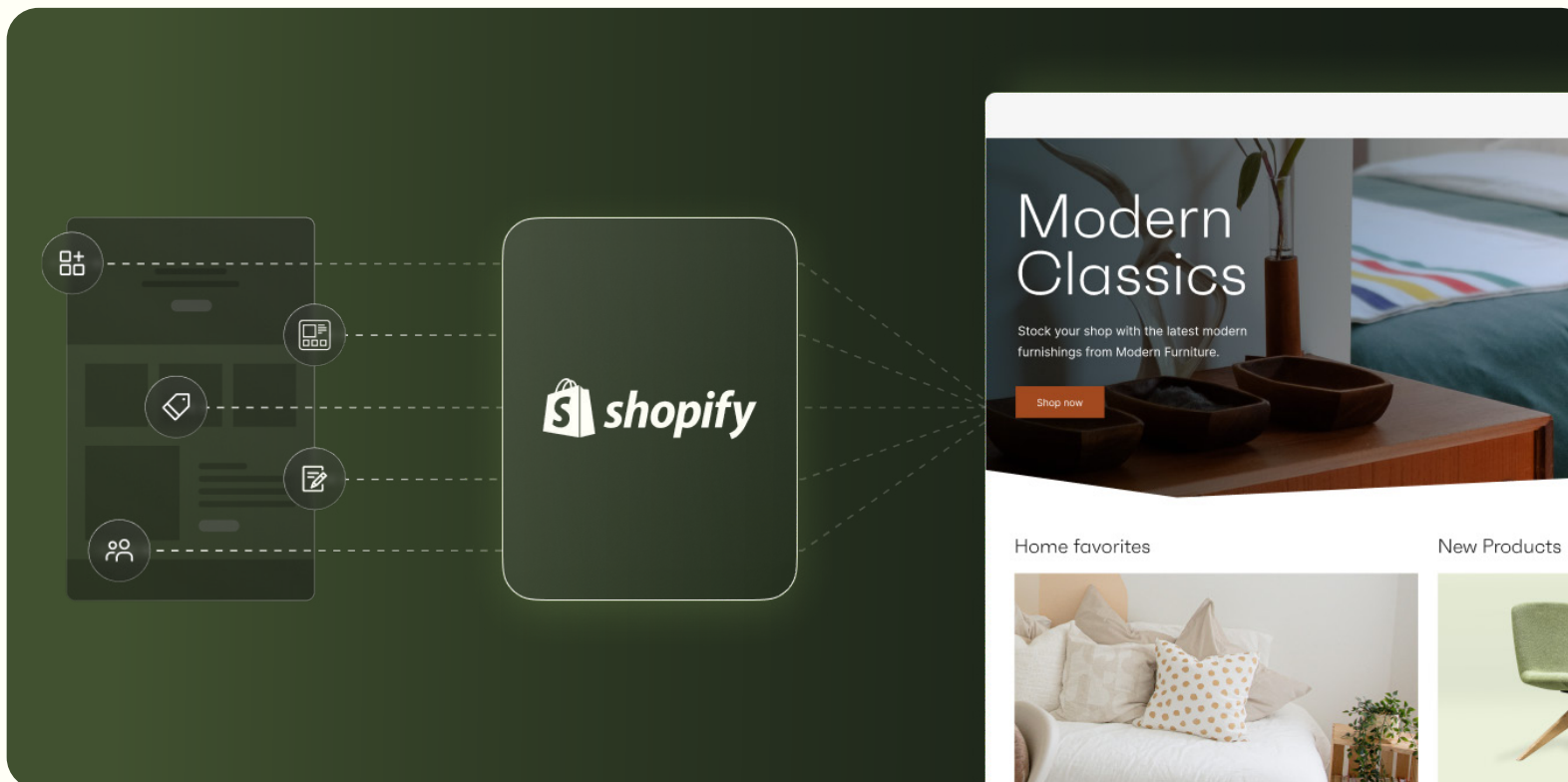
Teams should also consider headless options, such as Shopify's Hydrogen architecture, which offers the flexibility to preserve existing front-end experiences while taking advantage of Shopify's back-end capabilities. This approach provides another incremental step toward full migration, helping ensure teams are properly prepared to make the change.

User-friendly admin experience

Shopify's UI makes it easier for non-technical teams (marketing, sales, customer service) to adopt the platform without specialized training. It also allows for quick adoption, reducing downtime and frustration.

Gradual rollout and phased migration

Brands should migrate in phases (starting with one region or business unit) rather than all at once. Publicis Sapient has extensive experience with this approach, affirming that it minimizes risk, ensures smoother adoption, and provides time for user feedback and adjustments. See the sample migration plan later in this guide for more detailed recommendations.



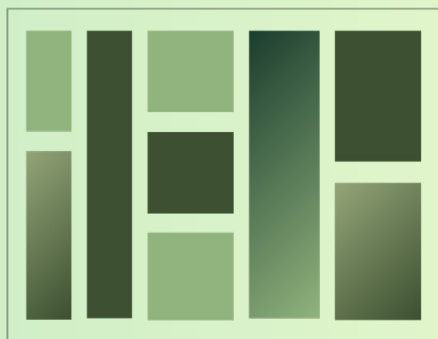
Consideration

07

Architecture options

Shopify supports multiple architectural approaches, giving organizations the flexibility to implement the solution that best meets their needs:

Full-stack



For rapid speed to market, use everything together. Built to convert, our commerce solutions are extensible and customizable through APIs, partners, and applications.

Headless



For build and front-end flexibility create bespoke storefront through Shopify's headless API layer. Host anywhere and deploy in hours using the React-based headless stack.

Component-based



For ultimate control and customization, choose just what you need. Design your ideal stack with any mix of Shopify's modular commerce capabilities and the platforms and service you rely on.

Full-stack approach

For organizations seeking a comprehensive solution, Shopify provides an all-in-one platform that handles everything from storefront to back-office operations.

Best for brands that:

- Are in a high-growth phase and are prioritizing speed to market. With the high level of control over UX, the world-class checkout, and the scalability, Shopify is good at helping businesses grow.
- Are expanding into omnichannel selling. Shopify POS is integrated into social channels and centralizes inventory, analytics, and fulfillment.
- Utilize subscription or loyalty functionality heavily. Integrations with solutions like Yotpo, Recharge, and Loop drive customer LTV and customer retention.
- Want to expand internationally but don't require full autonomy in every region

Might not be a fit for brands that:

- Have complex catalogs or require intensive back-end integrations. The platform can handle these requirements but will need to be customized to do so.
- Require a headless architecture or heavily customized CMS for their content needs.
- Operate in multiple regions or countries all with distinct workflows or product catalogs.

Headless architecture

For businesses requiring maximum customization of the front-end experience, Shopify's headless commerce capabilities allow for custom storefronts while tapping into Shopify's robust back-end services.

Best for brands that:

- Place extra emphasis on front-end components and a differentiated customer experience
- Are global brands with established international presence, and complex payments settlement requirements
- Are considering a move to a fully composable, or component-based architecture. Headless can act as an efficient on-ramp to an even more modular solution.

Might not be a fit for brands that:

- Are in a hurry to launch their storefront. Headless often takes longer to build and test than an OOTB Shopify storefront.
- Require numerous apps for their solution. Apps can be integrated into a headless solution, but it will require development and testing time. A high number of apps being integrated into a headless solution creates complexity.
- Have limited customization needs. Shopify is a robust OOTB platform — it is important to identify what needs can and can't be met by the platform natively before choosing to build a headless architecture.

Component-based integration

Organizations can selectively integrate Shopify components with existing systems, creating a hybrid approach that balances custom and standardized elements.

This flexibility ensures that Shopify can adapt to an organization's current needs while supporting its future evolution.

Best for brands that:

- Want to blend speed, flexibility, and control without committing to headless or fully custom
- Want to empower their marketing teams and use modern CMS that is intuitive and powerful
- Are looking to empower their customers to discover products with a reinvigorated site search and merchandising option
- Need granular analytics or personalization options
- Have specialized or specific loyalty or reward programs
- Require custom shipping logic or checkout flow

Might not be a fit for brands that:

- Don't have a specific pain point to solve
 - The power of this method is that brands can solve the majority of their issues with Shopify native functions, and then plug in components to solve the few areas they need help optimizing.
- Want an all-in-one, completely centralized UI and admin experience

Sample migration plan for transitioning to Shopify

Successful migration from a custom platform to Shopify requires a structured approach that addresses technical, operational, and organizational considerations. Publicis Sapient and Shopify have implemented enterprise migrations countless times and are practiced at structuring the process in ways that ease pressure on the migrating team.

Objectives and goals

- Seamless transition from the current custom commerce system to Shopify for enterprise
- Zero downtime and data loss
- Build a scalable, user-friendly, and easily manageable system for admin efficiency
- Ensure integrations, workflows, and user experience are maintained or improved

Migration phases and timeline

Phase 1: Discovery, planning, and data migration (Weeks 1–5)

- ☐ Assess current system architecture, data models, and dependencies

- ☐ Identify key stakeholders and align on requirements

- ☐ Define success metrics and key milestones

- ☐ Conduct risk assessment and mitigation planning

- ☐ Extract, clean, and transform product, customer, order, and content data

- ☐ Map data structures to Shopify schema

- ☐ Perform initial data import and validation

- ☐ Set up automated sync for live data until cutover

Phase 2: Platform configuration, development, and testing (Weeks 6–17)

- ☐ Configure Shopify settings, including tax, shipping, and payments

- ☐ Implement storefront design (custom themes or prebuilt Shopify themes)

- ☐ Set up required integrations (ERP, CRM, third-party apps, analytics)

- ☐ Perform security and compliance checks

☐ Conduct iterative testing throughout development to ensure stability

☐ Validate data integrity and migration success

☐ Perform user acceptance testing (UAT) with key stakeholders

☐ Optimize site performance and resolve any issues

Phase 3: Training and go-live preparation (Week 18)

☐ Provide training for internal teams on Shopify admin and workflows

☐ Finalize content, SEO redirects, and launch checklist

☐ Set up monitoring tools for post-launch support

☐ Tools such as Hotjar, GA4, Ahrefs, and Gorgias will be monitored by SME experts to gauge performance of analytics, SEO, support calls, SEO, and more during and after the migration process.

☐ Conduct final pre-launch testing and validation

☐ Prepare cutover plan and rollback procedures

☐ Cutovers can be complex and are prone to error. Some tips to ensure a smooth cutover are:

☐ Planning phase

☐ Define readiness criteria (What is launching Day 1?
What is MVP scope?)

☐ Choose cutover strategy

☐ Data prep

☐ Clean and map data

☐ Confirm Shopify compatibility for major systems

☐ Testing phase

☐ Test critical paths

☐ QA edge cases

☐ Readiness phase

☐ Lock product and content updates to avoid conflicts

☐ Go-live day

☐ Final data switch

☐ Final data switch

☐ Watch for checkout errors or 404s

☐ Post-cutover monitoring

☐ Track site performance (conversion rate, bounce rate, etc.)

☐ Monitor customer service tickets

Phase 4: Go-live and post-migration support (Weeks 19–20)

- ☐ Execute final data sync and switch to Shopify

- ☐ Monitor site performance and address any issues in real time

- ☐ Provide hypercare support for the first two weeks

- ☐ Begin transition to normal operations and continuous improvement

- ☐ Review performance and optimize post-launch

Key risks and mitigation

- ☐ Data loss or corruption → Perform multiple test migrations and backups

- ☐ Downtime issues → Plan migration during low-traffic periods

- ☐ SEO and URL structure changes → Implement proper 301 redirects and maintain metadata

- ☐ User adoption challenges → Conduct thorough training and provide documentation

Post-migration support

Organizational readiness and team structure: Define clear roles and responsibilities for managing and optimizing the Shopify platform, ensuring appropriate skills and resources are available. Often in custom platforms, IT has disproportionate control of the long-term roadmap and day-to-day operations. Migrating to Shopify means that business users and IT must work together. Publicis Sapient will help you decide what IT needs to deploy and what functions can be handled by business users. This delineation increases the efficiency and effectiveness of the solution.

Capability building: Develop internal expertise in Shopify operations, customization, and optimization to maximize platform value and reduce dependency on external resources. Publicis Sapient upscales innovation capability—because of the huge stable of clients belonging to both Publicis Sapient and Shopify, their experience brings clients new ideas and possibilities they might not think of otherwise.

Performance measurement: Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) that reflect the unified commerce approach, focusing on customer lifetime value, digital maturity, and return on interaction rather than traditional channel-specific metrics. Many custom platforms have been existing in a vacuum, being measured against niche business metrics. By entering the broader commerce ecosystem, businesses now have access to industry-standard KPIs, knowledge to measure KPIs, experience putting that data into action, and an ability to benchmark performance against competitors.

Roadmap alignment: Stay informed about Shopify's product roadmap and align internal initiatives to leverage upcoming platform capabilities, ensuring continued innovation and competitive advantage. As a global solutions integrator, Publicis Sapient gives clients visibility into Shopify's future roadmap, allowing businesses to make decisions with the future in mind.

Ecosystem leverage: Build relationships with Shopify partners and app developers to extend platform capabilities and address specialized needs without custom development. Power of One gives businesses access to the entire arsenal of Publicis Sapient and Groupe expertise: a global consultancy with experience in nearly every vertical throughout global markets available to businesses that work with us.

“Shopify enabled us to migrate our website, the ERP, and the warehouse management system at the same time. The fact that we were able to do it at all was a testament to Shopify’s technology and infrastructure.”

— Adrian Miramontes, CFO, Boston Proper

→ [**READ THE FULL STORY**](#)

Shopify and Publicis Sapient— your migration partners

Switching from a custom-built commerce solution to Shopify means trading technical debt for competitive advantage. While it's true that custom-built commerce solutions once offered those same competitive advantages, today they're increasingly adding technical debt—difficult to scale, costly to maintain, and slow to adapt to modern commerce innovation.

In this guide, we've outlined how Shopify can deliver equivalent functionality while eliminating that operational overhead. The approach is straightforward: buy for commodity, build for differentiation. From managing growing technical debt to unlocking speed, scalability, and flexibility, the benefits of Shopify's robust platform and extensive partner ecosystem is clear: it empowers brands to move fast, integrate extensively, and deliver world-class experiences without the weight of infrastructure ownership.

Combined with Publicis Sapient's migration expertise and clear understanding of what brands need—gained from thousands of commerce transformations—you have both the technical platform and proven implementation methodology to execute successfully.

This migration path is well-established and supported. Whether you're just beginning to evaluate Shopify or are actively planning your move, the combination of Shopify's platform capabilities and Publicis Sapient's implementation experience provides a clear route from custom complexity to platform efficiency.

Some next steps to start the migration process:

- **Evaluate internal alignment:** Bring cross-functional stakeholders into early discussions (engineering, marketing, ops).
- **Audit your current stack:** Inventory legacy systems, pain points, and platform dependencies.
- **Schedule a platform consultation:** Engage with Shopify and Publicis Sapient to scope your ideal future state.
- **Begin defining success metrics:** Establish benchmarks now so you can measure post-migration ROI clearly.

Get in touch

Connect with Shopify to learn more about the platform, and contact Publicis Sapient to begin the audit of your current solution—and the discovery of your future storefront.

CONTACT SHOPIFY

CONTACT PUBLICIS SAPIENT

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*Uptime as a platform, calculated for all major Shopify services, in all geographic regions, for the past 90 days.

*According to research commissioned by Shopify and conducted November 2023 to February 2024 by a leading independent consulting firm to study TCO across major platforms in North America.

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