

Cross-border eCommerce:

A checklist for international growth

Digital transformation projects are inherently complex — even more so when combined with cross-border eCommerce goals. This checklist provides the main steps in a global eCommerce expansion as a starting point for this journey.

Strategy and Assessment		
1. Define the cross-border strategy	2. Assess your current capabilities	3. Assess your technology ecosystem
<p>Getting your goals right from the beginning is the cornerstone of a successful international expansion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Define the vision and goals of a global expansion. <input type="checkbox"/> Shortlist countries/regions as potential expansion targets. <input type="checkbox"/> Research market growth, digital maturity, localization needs, logistics, regulatory requirements, international payments and currency conversion. <input type="checkbox"/> Select the countries/regions to expand into. <input type="checkbox"/> Collect expectations and ideas on how the company will handle cross-border operations, people and technology. 	<p>Assess what capabilities are required to bring your cross-border strategy to life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify local payment methods, including payment reconciliation and currency conversions. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate partnerships with third-party logistics or local carriers for distribution. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a product assortment and sourcing strategy. <input type="checkbox"/> Define a customer support strategy and outsourcing options. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify regulatory requirements relevant to your business. 	<p>Audit your current capabilities to determine what's working and what's not — and if you need a complete tech overhaul.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Map the existing tech ecosystem to common capabilities required in cross-border eCommerce, e.g., local payment methods and localized marketing. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate if the platform can scale and support multi-site/multi-language eCommerce. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate if the commerce platform is flexible enough to add and customize new features and touchpoints specific to locales. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify customizations, integrations and extensions not covered by the current platform. <input type="checkbox"/> Assess tech options and solutions to fill out potential gaps. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate partnerships with best-of-breed experts to plug into the ecosystem and deliver the missing capabilities.

Localization and Operations

4. Delve deeper into your selected markets

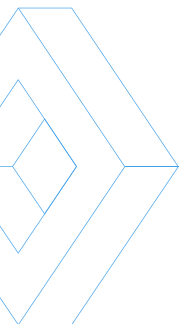
Now that you have a comprehensive strategy and tech assessment, become an expert in your chosen expansion targets. Also, evaluate how much to localize your brand, products, distribution channels and operations.

- Assess market maturity and demand for each country/region.
- Research the digital ecosystem and presence.
- Research international product restrictions and compliance guidelines.
- Dive deep into local customer purchasing behavior and expectations.
- Research local competitors and presence.
- Select the entry strategy for each country/region between marketplaces, B2B2C and D2C, or a mix of those.
- Define a pricing strategy, including tax regulations, distribution cost within the country and commission strategy with third-party partnerships.
- Identify locally relevant digital touchpoints and channels.

5. Define an operational model to build and run technology across countries

Set up your cross-border eCommerce operations and core responsibilities between local and centralized teams.

- Define clear ownership and responsibilities between local and centralized teams. For example, local teams can implement payment methods while centralized teams focus on building and scaling capabilities.
- Define a product-based software delivery model to build customer-centric digital capabilities.
- Iterate and build incremental value-added features for local customers, if required.



Rollout and Improvements

6. Define the rollout strategy

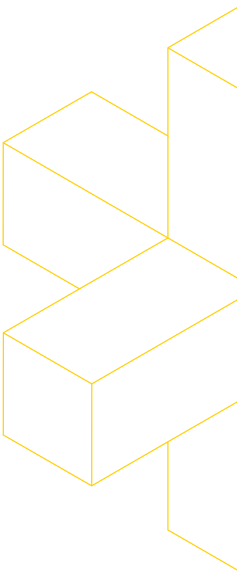
Plan your rollout step-by-step, selecting one locale as the starting point with an MVP (minimum viable product) approach.

- Establish a repeatable framework-based process to launch and scale to new markets.
- Select the first market as the rollout pilot.
- Build the core foundational platform to scale for additional volumes.
- Map and extend capabilities to support localized offerings.
- Align business processes and set up with centralized vis-à-vis market teams.
- Compile lessons learned before moving on to the next locale.

7. Measure, improve, adapt

The key to long-term success in cross-border eCommerce is to improve and adapt continuously.

- Define KPIs and measure metrics constantly against goals.
- Collect customer feedback and incorporate it into your key journeys.
- Iterate and experiment often, adapting fast to ever-evolving customers' expectations.



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The inventor of headless commerce, commercetools is an innovative technology disruptor that has established itself as an industry-leading eCommerce software provider. Today, some of the world's most iconic brands and growth-focused businesses trust commercetools' powerful, flexible, scalable solutions to support their ever-evolving digital commerce needs. As the visionaries leading the modern MACH (Microservices-based, API-first, Cloud-native and Headless) architecture movement, commercetools provides customers with the agility to innovate and iterate on the fly, merge on and off-line channels, drive higher revenue, and future proof their eCommerce business.

Based in Munich, Germany, with offices in Europe, Asia, and the United States, commercetools is singularly focused on leading a future of limitless commerce possibilities.

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