

The Two-Website Problem:

How Poor Integration and Accessibility Can Kill \$50,000 Online Orders



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Industrial Buyer Pulse

A quarterly research initiative capturing the evolving perspectives of industrial buyers across North America.



In Kula Partners' latest Industrial Buyer Pulse survey, we asked 263 industrial buyers across North America about how they research and engage with suppliers. Respondents included executives, managers, operations leaders, and procurement professionals; exactly the people who make or influence major purchasing decisions every day.

One of the most striking findings: a growing number of buyers are willing to place orders worth \$50,000 or more entirely online.

That kind of transaction doesn't happen without trust. It requires a seamless user experience, accessible design, and a consistent sense of reliability from the first click to the final confirmation screen. Yet many manufacturers unintentionally undermine that trust through disconnected, inaccessible, or poorly integrated e-commerce environments.

The Confidence Gap in B2B E-commerce

Industrial buyers aren't acting like consumers making impulse purchases. They're professionals spending company funds, accountable to budgets, timelines, and downstream operations. When they decide to place a large order online, they need absolute confidence that:

- The data is accurate and current
- Their order will integrate cleanly into their existing procurement workflows
- The digital experience reflects the same care and precision as the manufacturer's physical products

Unfortunately, too many B2B ecommerce implementations fall short. The culprit isn't a lack of technology—it's poor integration between the public-facing website and the ecommerce or ERP environment that powers transactions.



The “Two-Website” Problem

Many manufacturers maintain a polished, modern corporate website for brand and marketing purposes—but once a buyer wants to order, they’re shunted into a login-gated platform that feels like a completely different site.

The main site may be accessible, mobile-friendly, and clearly organized, but the ordering system—often built on a legacy ERP extension or hastily implemented ecommerce module—feels dated, clunky, and disconnected. Navigation changes, styling disappears, and accessibility compliance evaporates.

This disconnect introduces friction at exactly the wrong moment in the buying journey.

Usability breakdowns include:

- Loss of orientation: The buyer can’t easily return to reference product specs or documentation from within the portal.
- Inconsistent labelling and navigation: Terms, menu structures, and product categorization differ between environments.
- Accessibility regressions: Interactive tables, form fields, and pop-ups are often unreadable by screen readers or unusable via keyboard.
- Broken search: The site’s global search no longer works once a buyer enters the portal.

The message this sends is unintentional but damaging: digital maturity ends at the login screen.

Integration as a Trust Signal

A seamless transition between browsing and ordering isn’t just good UX—it’s a signal of operational reliability.

When a buyer logs into an e-commerce environment that feels like an extension of the main site, confidence grows. When the design, structure, and accessibility remain consistent, it communicates that the same level of care applied to your manufacturing processes extends to your digital operations as well.

Strong integration means:

- Shared navigation and branding: Buyers shouldn’t need to reorient themselves after login.
- Unified design systems: Colours, typography, and interaction patterns remain consistent across both environments.
- Single sign-on (SSO): Reduces friction and security risks by keeping buyers in the same authenticated session.
- Shared accessibility QA: Both environments meet the same accessibility and usability standards.

Modern headless approaches and middleware solutions make this possible. Platforms like BigCommerce B2B, Adobe Commerce, OroCommerce, or Shopify Plus can connect directly to ERP and CRM systems while maintaining a unified, accessible front end. Done right, buyers move from research to checkout without ever feeling like they’ve left your brand ecosystem.



Why Accessibility Must Extend Beyond the Marketing Site

Accessibility is often viewed as a compliance checklist for the marketing website alone. But true inclusion and *business value* comes from extending that same care across every system buyers touch.

When the e-commerce platform or ERP interface lacks accessible markup, the experience collapses for many users. Consider the procurement professional navigating by keyboard or using a screen reader: if they can't review line items or complete a checkout form independently, the transaction stops cold. This disconnect introduces friction at exactly the wrong moment in the buying journey.

Common accessibility failures inside ordering systems include:

- Missing form labels and focus indicators
- Dynamic elements (modals, dropdowns, product configurators) not announced by screen readers
- Poor colour contrast and illegible data tables
- Inaccessible PDFs for order confirmations or invoices

Beyond legal and ethical implications, these issues also increase operational risk. A missed field or misread quantity can result in costly order errors—something no procurement team or operations manager wants to explain.

Designing for Procurement, Not Consumers

Consumer e-commerce patterns, like simplified one-page checkouts, don't translate neatly to B2B. B2B buyers need additional functionality: multi-user accounts, saved carts, purchase order fields, approval workflows, and negotiated pricing.

Using off-the-shelf consumer checkout templates often strips away these critical features, forcing workarounds or manual follow-ups. The result: frustrated users, longer cycle times, and decreased confidence.

Instead, design for procurement usability and trust. That means:

- Clearly labelled PO and project reference fields
- The ability to save, share, and approve carts across teams
- Transparent pricing and lead-time visibility
- Accessible progress indicators that show what's complete and what's next

Manufacturers that build these experiences earn trust not only from individual buyers but from the organizations behind them. They become easier to buy from—and that's a massive differentiator.

Will Your Customers Trust Your Site with a \$50k Order?

Industrial buyers are ready to transact online at scale, but only with suppliers whose digital experiences match the quality of their products. Integration, accessibility, and usability are no longer optional enhancements; they are the foundations of digital trust.

When the marketing site, e-commerce platform, and ERP environment work together seamlessly, \$50K orders don't feel risky, they feel natural.

The question isn't if your customers will buy online. It's whether they'll trust your site enough to do it.

