Entering the World of Online Sales and Fueling Your E-Commerce Growth

Elevate your online sales to new heights.
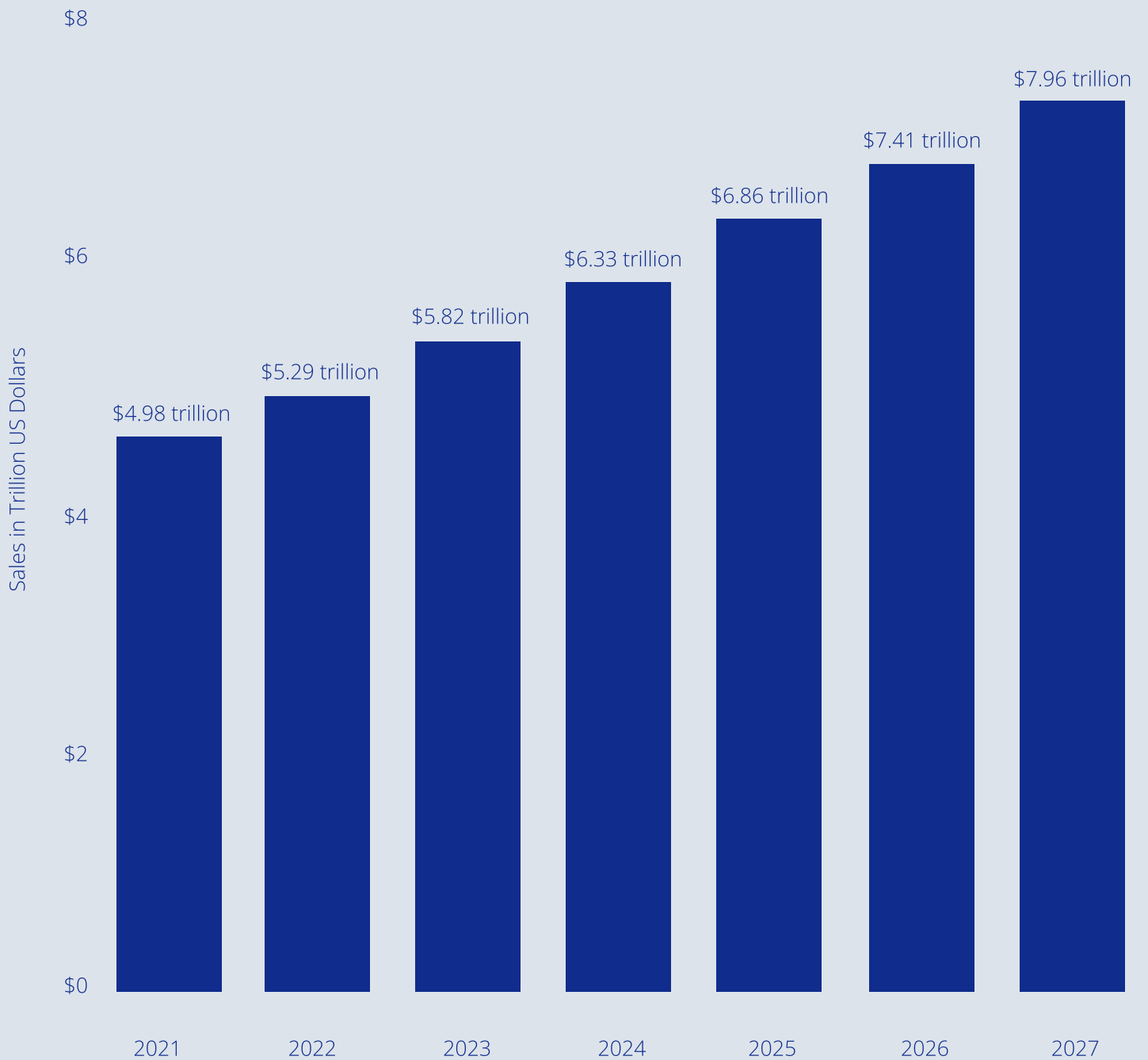
Purolator

Promises delivered®

Contents

E-commerce growth: Why online sales are essential to your business

Whether you are venturing into e-commerce for the first time or looking to level up your current operations, this ebook will help you better understand the world of e-commerce. More importantly, it will provide actionable insights and strategies to help you optimize your online sales and fuel your business growth.

The outlook for e-commerce is generally positive with significant and steady growth expected over the next few years. There are also many opportunities for businesses of various types and sizes. Whether you're a retailer selling directly to consumers or a wholesaler who sells to other businesses, there are plenty of opportunities available in the e-commerce space for you to leverage. Understanding what consumers want and optimizing your e-commerce logistics to meet their demands can help you seize growth opportunities in any industry, even in more specialized fields like healthcare, automotive and telecom. Fast and affordable shipping, easy returns and access to customer reviews top the list of consumer demands.

Here are a few key growth statistics that demonstrate the trajectory of the e-commerce industry:

Global Ecommerce Sales (2021 to 2027)

Sales in Trillion US Dollars

| Year	Sales
2021	$4.98 trillion
2022	$5.29 trillion
2023	$5.82 trillion
2024	$6.33 trillion
2025	$6.86 trillion
2026	$7.41 trillion
2027	$7.96 trillion

Source: eMarketer

What caused the rise of e-commerce?

In recent years, faster shipping options have made online shopping more convenient, fueling the growth of e-commerce. Notable e-commerce giants are able to build countless warehouses in strategic locations, consistently offer affordable next-day shipping and deliver a seemingly endless volume of products around the globe.

In addition to the convenience that e-commerce giants offer, an increased reliance on mobile devices is one of the biggest contributors to the rise in e-commerce purchases.

The key is to understand what fuels this growth, and to develop a strategy that will help your business thrive in the world of e-commerce while also protecting your business from e-commerce fraud. Additionally, the dominance of a few e-commerce giants doesn't mean that smaller businesses can't thrive by entering the e-commerce arena.
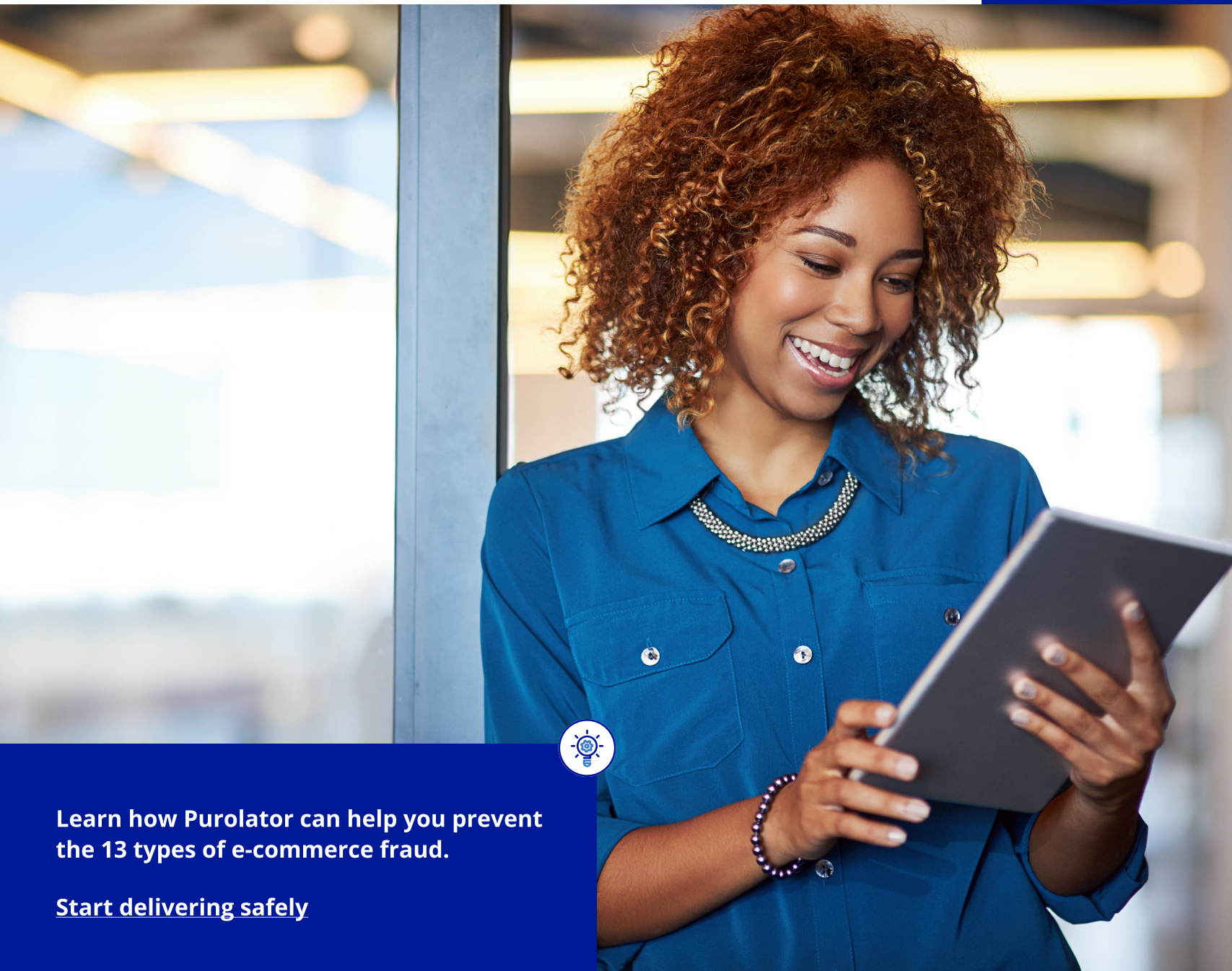
Learn how Purolator can help you prevent the 13 types of e-commerce fraud.

Start delivering safely

Twenty-three percent of retail purchases will be made online by 2027, so there is plenty of demand and room for small and medium-sized e-commerce businesses.

Smaller businesses can also reap many benefits from an e-commerce approach, including reduced overhead charges and expansion into previously unreachable markets.

In this ebook, we will explore the foundations of a strong e-commerce strategy by taking a closer look at the following topics:

- ✅ Starting out: Developing a strategy for e-commerce business success
- ✅ From budgets to new markets: seizing opportunities for e-commerce growth
- ✅ Updating your e-commerce experience to increase customer retention
- ✅ Future-proofing with the right partner and e-commerce growth strategies
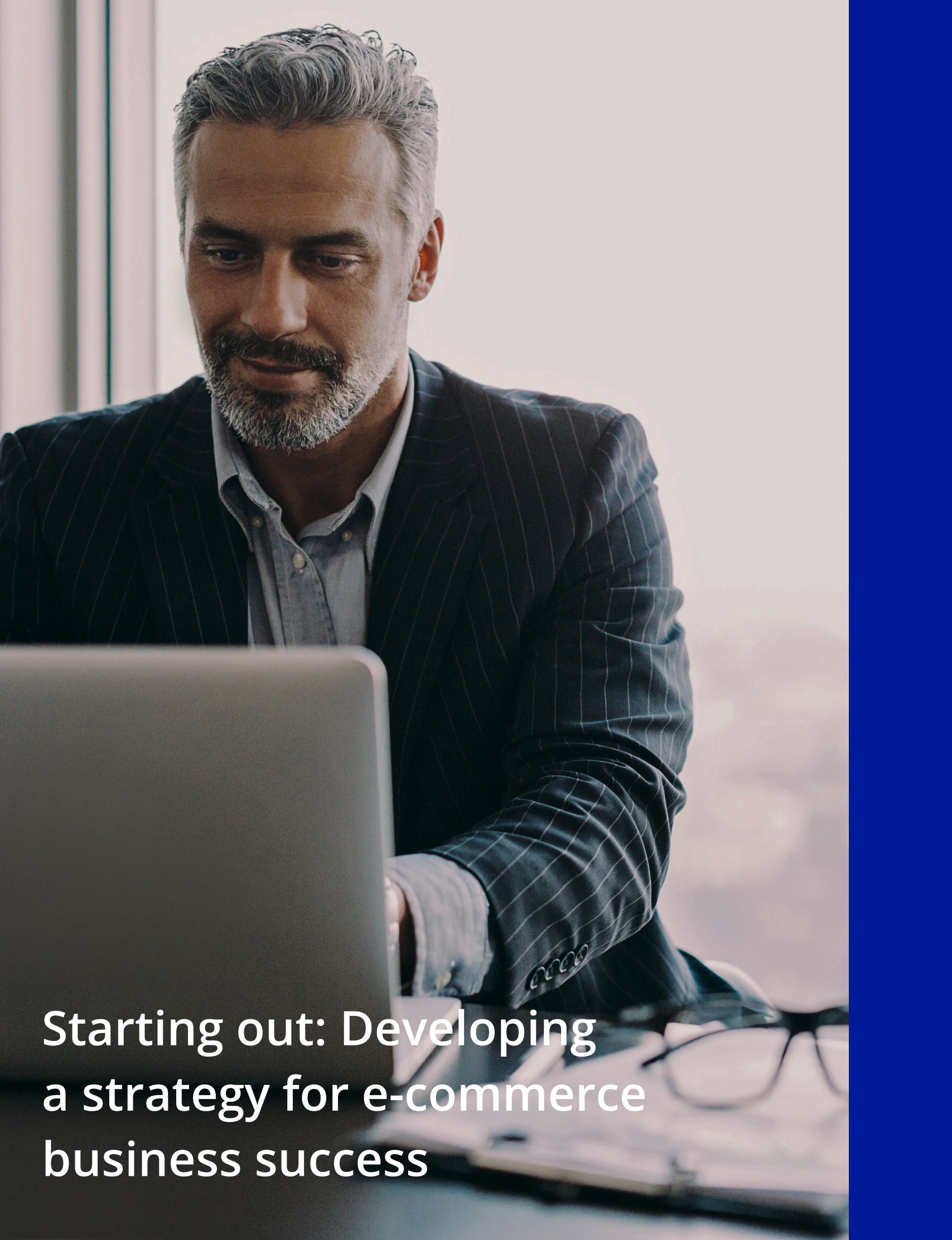
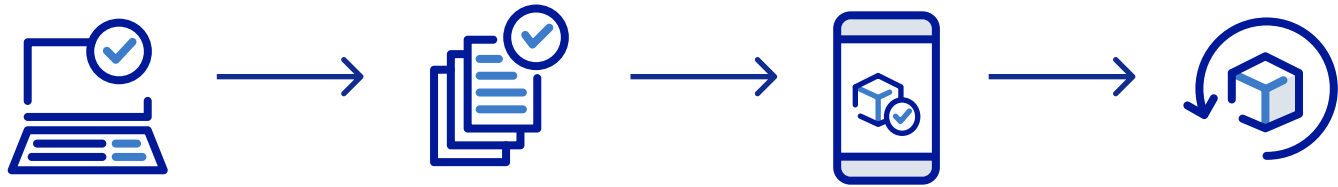# Starting out: Developing a strategy for e-commerce business success

A solid foundation will help you achieve e-commerce success while avoiding being overwhelmed. Your business plan and website are the backbone of your e-commerce strategy.

Understanding the four stages of e-commerce order fulfillment

Order receiving

Making sure products are in stock to fullfill the order.

Order processing

Verifying the order data is accurate such as the delivery address.

Order fulfilment

Packing products and preparing them for shipment.

Order returns

Returning products back to the seller or manufacturer.

Your business plan: Create or amend your business plan to include your e-commerce strategy. This is an effective way to ensure consistent branding, budget adherence and exceptional customer experiences.

In general, a comprehensive business plan should include financial, marketing and operations plans. It should also include a market analysis complete with competitive and market size analyses. A detailed plan will prime your business for success even in highly competitive industries.

Your website: Your e-commerce website must be mobile-friendly, user-friendly and optimized to boost traffic. Incorporate best practices for on-page and off-page SEO, including high-quality backlinks and optimized product pages. Does SEO still matter? The answer is a resounding yes. These statistics show just how powerful traditional SEO remains:

- Around 33% of e-commerce website traffic comes from organic search (Source: Wolfgang Gang)
- Nearly 70% of consumers still use the search bar on online retailer websites. (Source: Nosto)
- Organic search remains one of the most effective marketing strategies for brands in terms of ROI. (Source: Semrush)

As you develop or update your website, ensure that the design is responsive and that all elements are mobile-friendly. The importance of mobile-friendliness cannot be overstated. A poor user experience on mobile can negatively affect your revenue.

The average cart abandonment rate for mobile e-commerce is around

85.65%

(Source: OptinMonster)

It takes

8-10 touch points

across all online B2B channels for business customers to make a purchase.

(Source: Shopify)

Your website also requires high-quality product pages with all the details customers need to make their final purchasing decisions.

- About **88% of consumers** say detailed product pages are critical to making purchasing decisions. (Source: OptinMonster)

When it comes to showing the value of your products, traditional advertisements are often ineffective. Instead, customer reviews can help highlight your company's trustworthiness, especially for first-time customers.

- Performance Marketing World discovered that **84% of millennials** do not believe what they hear or see in conventional advertisements. (Source: Search Engine Journal)
- A BrightLocal survey revealed that **49% of consumers** place the same value on reviews as they would personal recommendations from family or friends. (Source: Search Engine Journal)

Most importantly, your website and e-commerce systems need to be integrated with your shipping solutions. Regardless of how detailed your product pages are, if you can't deliver products on time then that's bound to affect customer reviews. But what does integrated shipping mean?

When your customer purchases an item online, that purchase is automatically confirmed and scheduled for delivery.

As the shipment is prepared, packaged and sent out for delivery, the customer will receive tracking and shipping updates along the way.

Not only does technology integration save time by automating these processes on your end, it also helps build trust in your brand as customers associate your online store with fast and accurate deliveries. For more information, check out Purolator's shipping integration solutions which are available across a variety of top-ecommerce platforms.

From budgets to new markets: seizing opportunities for e-commerce growth

Expanding into new countries and regions is a proven way to grow your e-commerce business. However, you need an informed approach that leverages data analytics and marketing strategies to effectively reach new markets. After all, a survey found that 66% B2B buyers believe that order fulfillment and tracking have become more challenging. Finding the right shipping partner who can get your products to new markets while still maintaining reliable tracking and delivery standards is now a top priority.

Whether you're ramping up your existing e-commerce supply chain logistics strategies or opening an online store for the first time, remember to consider startup and ongoing expenses. These include website design and development, inventory management, marketing, operational costs, payment processing, expansion into new markets and more.

Here's what you should consider in terms of budget as you fuel your e-commerce growth:

Reach markets in new regions

Expanding your business internationally is an excellent growth opportunity. But how do you keep costs down? By partnering with a shipping provider that has cross-border expertise.

We understand that not all small and medium-sized businesses are ready or equipped to venture across borders alone. In these cases, a shipping provider with a wide-reaching network is ideal. For example, Purolator's network reaches 100% of Canadian postal codes meaning you can offer reliable delivery to customers even in remote and rural areas.

Purolator also has an expansive network in the U.S. and internationally so you can grow your customer base even further.

Remember, your online store can reach potential customers who wouldn't have physical access to your products otherwise. Working with an effective partner will enable you to leverage these opportunities by providing an exceptional experience for customers in entirely new regions and countries.

Purolator has what you need to start shipping from Canada to the U.S.

Check the list

Approach marketing as a vital part of e-commerce growth

Be sure to develop a comprehensive digital marketing strategy that includes email marketing, SEO and PPC advertising if needed. To save time and avoid overwhelm, seek out a solution that automates your marketing campaigns. This will eliminate the need for you to manually follow up with customers or determine who to target with promotions.

The promotions you offer are a crucial part of customer retention. Although offering discounts may sound unappealing from a business perspective, studies show that well-timed and targeted promotions actually increase sales and reduce cart abandonment.

36%

of Canadian consumers would switch to a competing brand for the right promotional offer. Meanwhile, 30% of U.S. consumers and 27% of global consumers would do the same. (Source: PwC)

Cart abandonment follow-up emails have an average 45% open rate.

21%

of those opens result in click-throughs. (Source: OptinMonster)

Use data analysis to better serve and retain customers

Customer data is invaluable in the fast-paced world of e-commerce. One of the biggest advantages of online purchases is the data you can glean about customers' preferences and habits. Leverage user behaviour reports, trends and web analytics to:
- Gain a deeper understanding of what resonates with your customers.
- Identify which pages garner the most traffic.
- See where you're winning conversions.

Unlock e-commerce success with proven strategies for retailers.

Get started
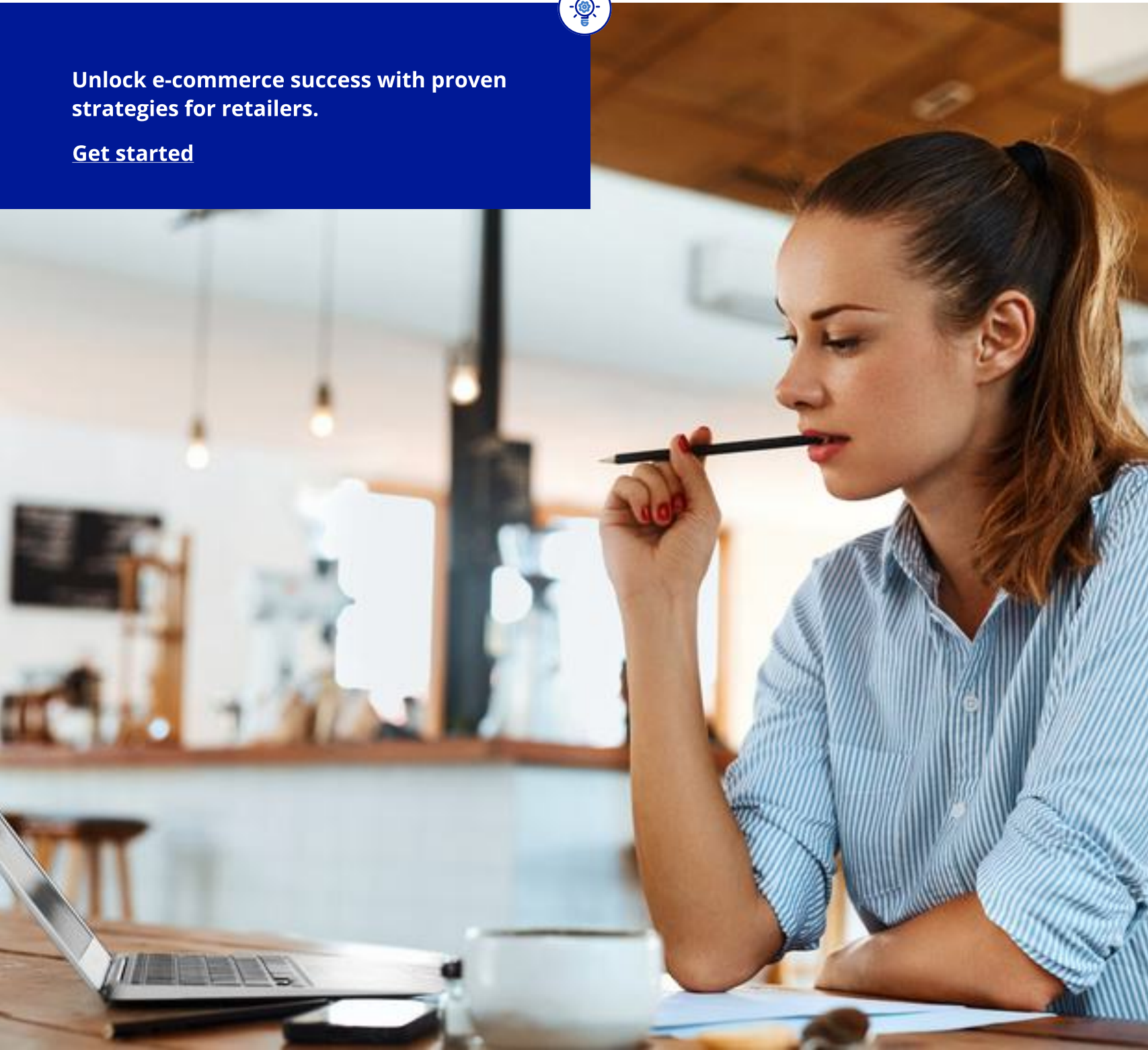
Updating your e-commerce experience to increase customer retention

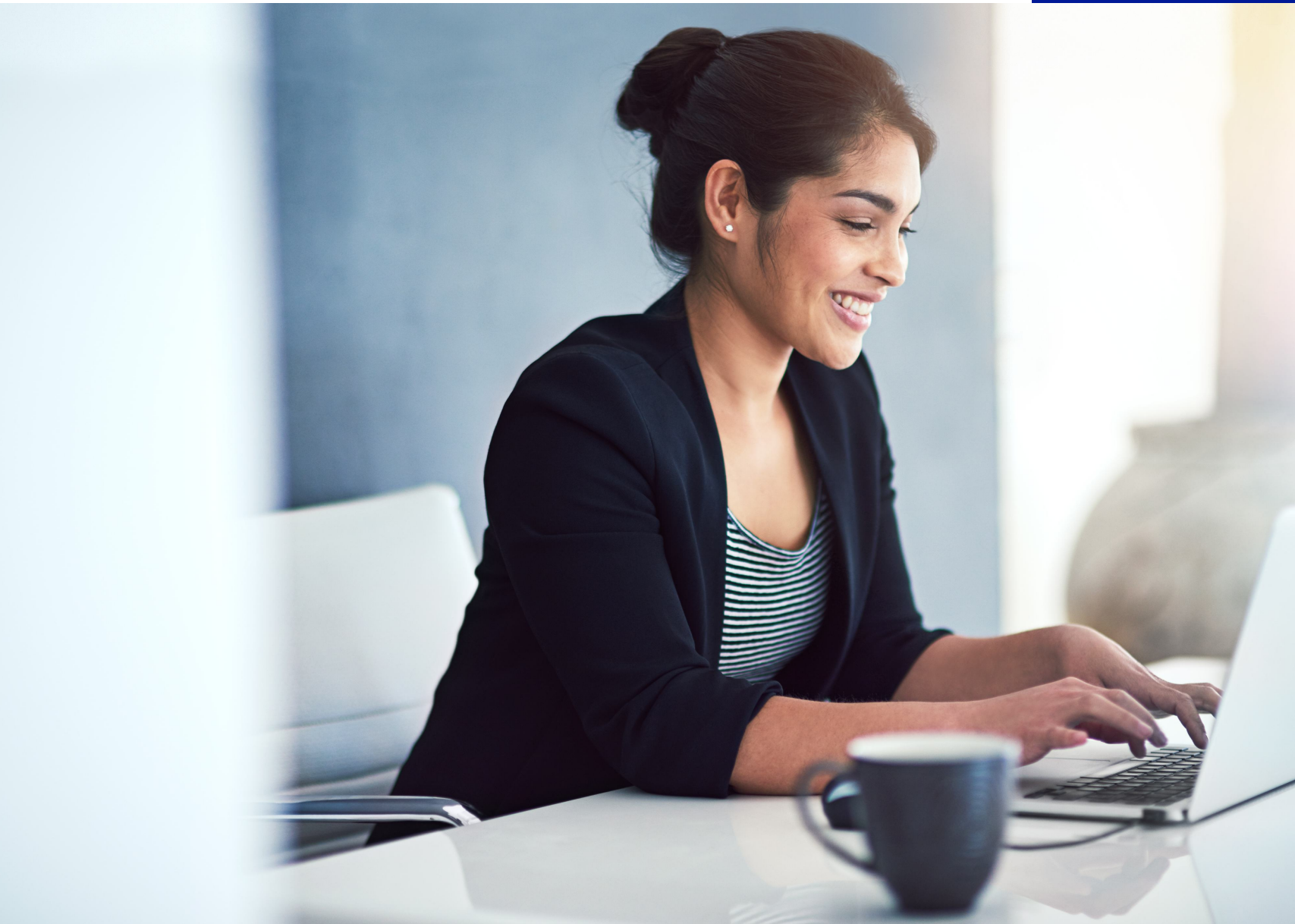With the rise of online sales, consumers demand more convenience, personalized experiences and overall seamless transactions. It's why 55% of B2B e-commerce market leaders are more likely to deploy competitive sales technology to meet customer demands. However, there is a gap between customers' expectations and what e-commerce businesses are delivering.

According to a 2023 Deloitte Digital survey, although around 80% of businesses selling online believe customers are "impressed by the online shopping experiences they provide," less than half of consumers are actually satisfied.

Satisfy customer expectations with Purolator Your Way, a fully personalized and convenient e-commerce delivery experience.

Subscribe now

Your business can meet and even exceed changing consumer expectations with these strategic approaches:

Leverage data analytics

Keep customers engaged

Provide seamless returns

Leverage data analytics. This will allow you to make more informed business decisions, giving your company a competitive edge. Use data analytics to examine browsing behaviour, purchase history and more, so you can provide a more personalized shopping experience. This will enhance the customer journey and keep customers returning to your store in the future.

You should consider using data analytics, especially around consumer behaviour, to effectively segment your customers. For example, Northmill, a financial services company, increased their conversion rate by an impressive 30% using customer segmentation strategies. Segmentation empowers your business to communicate with customers in a more targeted and personalized way.

Keep customers engaged: In addition to the standard confirmation emails with receipts and shipping information, you can also send follow-up emails to ensure customers are satisfied with their purchases.

Offer incentives like discounts or online store credit in exchange for customer reviews, which can help bring down your return rates.

As your customer base grows, consider an automated marketing solution that proactively sends targeted communications to follow up with active customers or re-engage customers who haven't placed an order in a while.

Provide seamless returns: Returns are one of the most significant challenges e-commerce businesses face. This is because consumers return 17.6% of online purchases compared to just 10.02% of purchases from brick-and-mortar stores, according to the National Retail Federation.

In the face of so many returns, your reverse logistics process must be seamless from the customer's perspective. An inconvenient or unclear returns policy can discourage around 80% of potential customers from making a purchase in the first place. A well-thought-out reverse logistics process benefits both you and your customer by getting products back on your shelves sooner and giving customers a positive experience that encourages them to purchase from your business again.

What an ideal reverse logistics process looks like

Start → End customer → Return shipment → Collection → Inspection → Recycle, repair and refurbish → Distribution

Thankfully, there are many ways to improve e-commerce websites to reduce returns in the first place. A PwC survey asked consumers what would make them less likely to return items. With these statistics in mind, you can update your website and shipping practices to reduce returns:

- 42% of surveyed consumers said more accurate and detailed product descriptions
- 33% cited customer reviews
- 32% wanted better packaging to prevent damage during shipping

In addition to ensuring customers find everything they need on your website to make an informed purchasing decision, you'll need to work with an experienced shipping provider to make sure products arrive in one piece. This is particularly the case for last-mile delivery, the final step in the delivery process, which is becoming increasingly crucial for e-commerce businesses.
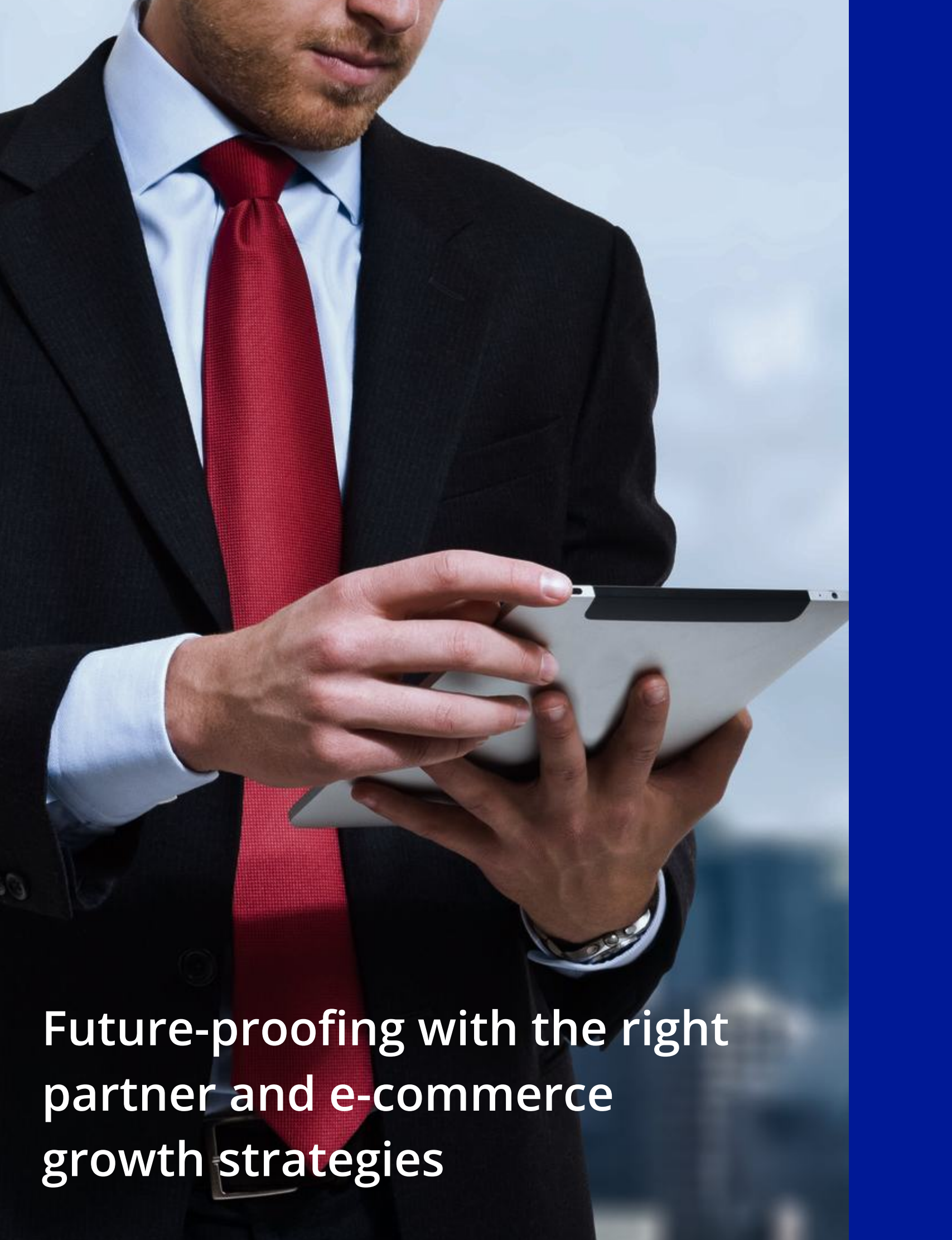
Future-proofing with the right partner and e-commerce growth strategies

Staying ahead of trends and changes in customer behaviour is crucial to e-commerce success. And it doesn't have to be overwhelming, even as the world of e-commerce continues to evolve.

Regardless of whether you're running a retail business or an industrial, medical or telecom wholesaler, partnering with an expert shipping provider who offers exceptional e-commerce solutions allows you to focus on other aspects of your business, while your customers continue to receive fast, efficient and cost-effective deliveries. That's where a partnership with Purolator enters the picture.

How Purolator can provide efficient shipping for your e-commerce business
Whether you're scaling up your e-commerce operations or venturing into online sales for the first time, we're here to help. With Purolator, you can meet customer expectations with fast shipping options that include precise tracking, integrated technology solutions that help your e-commerce logistics stay ahead of the competition, cross-border reach, an easier returns process and a last-mile delivery experience that's tailored to their needs.

Faster and more convenient shipping solutions

Choose from a selection of reliable delivery services that meet the growing customer demand for faster shipping, while servicing 100% of Canadian postal codes.

- **LTL and TL freight:** Purolator is ranked #1 in Canada for billing accuracy and performance among Canadian freight providers. If you're shipping on pallets, then you can trust our freight services to deliver your goods with high on-time performance and easy tracking.

- **Next-day and expedited deliveries:** Purolator Express® offers guaranteed next-day delivery to any location in Canada and is even faster than major competitors. Experience Canada's fastest next-day delivery service along with reliable in-transit tracking and multiple delivery times available to meet your service level needs. If you're looking for a more economic option, then try Purolator Ground®, which will still deliver your packages a whole day faster than the competition.

- **Mission Critical:** If you need to fulfill an urgent delivery as soon as possible, no matter where they are in the world, you can leverage our fastest shipping solution. Purolator Mission Critical has best-in-class tracking visibility and 24-hour access to our Mission Critical specialists to ensure your delivery arrives at its destination on time.

Reduce e-commerce fraud with a reliable closed-loop network
To reduce the risk of e-commerce fraud or lost deliveries, you can trust in Purolator's closed loop network. We use 97% of our own assets, which means your shipments will have minimal third-party contact with no hand-offs and brokering. Additionally, get peace of mind knowing that all your ground shipments are protected as our trucks have the Transported Asset Protection Association (TAPA) Level 1 Trucking Security Requirements (TSR) certification.

Optimize shipping with the latest technology

To keep up with the changing demands of e-commerce customers, you'll need a shipper who stays competitive with the latest technology solutions. With Purolator E-Ship® Web Services, you can easily integrate our services to your e-commerce store. We use route optimization to determine the shortest way to quickly get your deliveries to retail stores or directly to customers. Additionally, our National Hub shows our commitment to staying at the cutting edge of technology. With world-class automation features, our hub is designed to scale with demand and get even more packages to their destinations quickly, safely and reliably.

Reach new markets across borders

Whether you need to ship or receive items internationally, you can leverage our cross-border delivery expertise to grow your business into new markets. Take the hassle out of cross-border shipments with customs documentation support with Purolator Trade Assistant, which can help you make a complex filing process a lot faster and easier. Focus on expanding your business or tapping into foreign markets while we provide you with the support you need to get shipments across the border smoothly.

Easy returns management

With Purolator, we can help you streamline your reverse logistics process with sustainable shipping solutions to deliver a positive returns experience for your customers.

- **Label free returns**: Customers no longer have to worry about printing return labels at home. They can use a QR code to print labels at a nearby Purolator drop-off location instead.
- **Package free returns:** For quick and sustainable returns, we offer package free return orders where no label, bag or box is needed.
- **Shipping locations and access points:** Provide your customers with convenient and secure parcel lockers, drop boxes, kiosks and mobile quick stops so they can easily pick up or drop off packages at their own convenience.

Ace the last mile with personalized deliveries

Purolator Your Way offers a wide variety of personalization options for the ultimate last-mile delivery experience. Whether you're delivering to businesses or directly to consumers, your customers gain total visibility into the shipping journey, clear next steps for missed deliveries and fully customizable delivery preferences. The service comes with security measures such as remote signature release and photo proof of delivery. By providing photographic confirmation that a package has arrived at the correct destination, you can build customer trust in your brand while improving delivery accuracy.

Key features of Purolator Your Way for businesses

Total visibility of shipment journey	Clear next steps for missed delivery	Photo proof of delivery	No app download required	Customizable delivery preferences	Remote signature release*

*Remote signature release is not available for shipments requiring signature by an adult or the intended recipient (such as alcohol, cannabis, certain types of pharmaceuticals/narcotics, etc. or other DG regulated items).

For an example of Purolator Your Way in action, learn how Purolator helped Clearly succeed in e-commerce with personalized evening and weekend deliveries. Our experts helped Clearly:

- Deliver more than 50,000 orders to customers during the evenings and over the weekends
- Improve customer experience with more convenient and reliable delivery times
- Provide customers with easy and convenient tracking options

Learn how Purolator can enhance your e-commerce logistics in our case study.

See the case study

The rise of e-commerce presents a wealth of opportunities for businesses of all types and sizes, providing a digital avenue for further growth and expansion. As we've explored, understanding the e-commerce landscape and adapting to changing customer expectations are crucial for leveraging those opportunities effectively. By incorporating strategies for optimizing online sales, enhancing customer experiences, streamlining returns and utilizing advanced technology, you can position your business for success in this dynamic market.

Instead of trying to tackle those challenges on your own, partner with a reliable shipping provider like Purolator so you can easily offer solutions that address everything from easy returns management to personalized last-mile deliveries with the latest technology. With the right logistics tools and shipping integration strategies in place, your business can navigate the evolving e-commerce landscape with confidence, reach new markets and thrive in the digital age.

Discover how Purolator can help you excel in e-commerce.

Contact an expert

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