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Comparing Magento, Drupal Commerce, and Shopify for Drupal

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When it comes to eCommerce for Drupal, there is no single, one-size-fits-all solution. Nor should there be. While the array of eCommerce options that work with a Drupal site can seem overwhelming, in truth there are options for organizations of any size, on any budget.

This eBook shares information about three different eCommerce systems that are popular with Drupal: Magento, Drupal Commerce, and Shopify. It discusses the strengths and weaknesses of each platform when used with Drupal, and shares insight on what problems it solves for digital organizations.

What is Drupal?

Drupal is an open-source CMS, and is free to use. It's maintained by a community of volunteers and sponsored contributors, and comes out-of-the-box with numerous modules and integrations. Drupal powers some of the world's largest and most complex websites, and is an excellent choice for organizations that want a solution that offers seamless and complex integrations.

On its own, Drupal isn't set up for eCommerce. However, it's a powerful platform for storytelling, content management, and site governance. When Drupal is integrated with eCommerce software it can make for a compelling shopping experience. Three of the most popular eCommerce platforms for Drupal are Magento, a large, open-source eCommerce platform with paid licensing options; Drupal Commerce, a suite of eCommerce modules to create a shopping platform using native Drupal APIs; and Shopify, a proprietary, subscription based eCommerce platform for online stores and retail point-of-sale (POS) systems.

What is Magento?

Magento is an enterprise eCommerce software that offers both free (open source) and proprietary licensing models. Magento Inc., and its enterprise platform, Magento Commerce, was recently acquired by Adobe, but Magento Open Source remains free to install on an OS license.

For organizations looking for a platform rich in powerful commerce tools, Magento is an industry standard. For shops ranging in size from a single employee operation to a massive B2B supplies and services company, Magento is excellent at managing orders, inventories, warehouses, and all other aspects of a feature filled eCommerce system.

Though it is a very powerful platform, Magento can lack in flexibility and create a large technical overhead in terms of resources required to build and maintain a Magento site. While Magento does ship with a native Rest API, integration with external systems (such as bridging product catalogs with proprietary POS systems) can be challenging and time consuming.

There are three different versions of Magento:

CMS	Magento Open Source	Magento Commerce	Magento Commerce Cloud
Licensing cost?	Free (open source)	Beginning at $22,000 annually	Beginning at $40,000 annually
Hosting included?	No	No - allows organizations to host on their own infrastructure	Yes
Cost of extensions?	$	$$	$$
Content management functionality	Limited	Drag-and-drop page builder with Bluefoot CMS	Drag-and-drop page builder with Bluefoot CMS

Magento supports very advanced eCommerce functionality that would otherwise be costly and difficult to implement, and the extensions offered through the Magento Marketplace—Magento's extension store—provide custom functionality to fit almost every need, such as syncing order and customer data to Quickbooks for accounting, or implementing a rule-based product promotion system.

It's important to note that there's no direct upgrade path for extensions from Magento Open Source to either of the paid versions of the software. This means that extensions will need to be re-purchased—and the enterprise extensions are always more costly than their open source counterparts.

When should an organization use Magento?

- If your core business model requires end-to-end control and configuration of your eCommerce workflow

- Managing a warehouse with lots of inventory and SKUs that requires an advanced shipping fulfillment process (inventory management, purchase orders, dropshipping, etc)

- If you want to keep most (if not all) of the functionality in-house without requiring 3rd party systems or subscriptions

- If you're focused on having a powerful ecommerce platform and are less worried about publishing media content

What are the drawbacks to Magento?

- Magento plays best with large inventories and systems. If you're running a smaller shop, Magento may be overkill

- Magento can integrate with Drupal, but the process can be costly, depending on how many specialty features and integrations you need

- If you need to utilize Magento as a Point-of-sale, there are few options available, and mobile payments options will be limited

What is Drupal Commerce?

Drupal Commerce (also called Commerce 2) is Drupal's native eCommerce system, which means that it's a suite of eCommerce modules that developers can easily install on top of a Drupal platform. It's a great option when an organization is building a commerce site from the ground up, and because it's a Drupal distribution, it means that it can be built and managed by a single team. Drupal Commerce doesn't focus as much on what comes out of the box, but what you can build with it.

In comparison to Magento, Drupal Commerce offers fewer advanced commerce management features. However, its code base is as extensible as Drupal itself, and organizations can install any free Drupal modules they want on their Drupal Commerce site. It's an excellent choice for organizations that want to have a highly integrated CMS and eCommerce platform. Installing Drupal Commerce comes in two forms:

1. Starting a project using an installation profile called Commerce Kickstart that creates a preconfigured store, or
2. Developers enable modules individually to integrate specific functionality (such as payment gateways or tools to process recurring user subscriptions) into your website.

When should an organization use Drupal Commerce?

- Drupal Commerce allows shops to tell powerful stories around their products in an integrated shopping and publishing platform.
- Drupal as a content management framework provides a lot of flexibility and integration points with other systems, and by extension enables integration with those eCommerce features and APIs.

What are the drawbacks to Drupal Commerce?

- It offers fewer robust and advanced Commerce management tools compared to Magento.
- It comes with very little "out of the box," and instead will often require contributed or custom modules to achieve specific goals.

What is Shopify?

Shopify is a leading software-as-a-Service (SaaS) eCommerce platform that has processed more than $55 billion in store sales since its launch in 2004. For organizations that blend online commerce experiences with brick-and-mortar stores, Shopify can be an excellent choice. Shopify provides its own payment gateway (Shopify Payments), and provides tools so that organizations can implement a mobile-based register with Shopify POS.

The cost of a Shopify subscription starts at $80 a month, and can rise up to $300 a month for the advanced version. The advanced and premium versions of Shopify both include excellent analytics tools such as acquisition, sales, and marketing reports, and can automatically calculate shipping costs with dedicated providers like UPS and FedEx. If you require more enterprise functionality, Shopify Plus starts at $2,000 a month and offers access to specialized APIs and advanced workflow creation tools.

Like Magento, Shopify offers a suite of paid integrations (called "apps"). The Shopify App Store allows organizations to purchase or submit apps that extend the software's functionality to address specific commerce needs. However, most Shopify Apps are subscription-based, rather than costing a one-time fee. Additionally, integrating Shopify with a Drupal site is a relatively simple undertaking. Organizations can easily sync product data into Drupal, which enables you to create a rich content experience around each product.

Since Shopify is fully proprietary and is self-hosted, it's not an ideal platform for organizations that need to retain total control over all of their data. However, for organizations that need to integrate an eCommerce system with a pre-existing platform, Shopify is an excellent choice for managing all commerce functionality.

When should an organization use Shopify?

- For organizations that need a seamless online and offline commerce, Shopify is an excellent solution

- For smaller-scale organizations that don't need massive warehouse or SKU management capabilities, Shopify is a far simpler solution to configure and use

- If you're interested in storytelling alongside smaller product offerings, Shopify is likely a great choice

What are the drawbacks to Shopify?

- As stated above, Shopify works best for smaller organizations. It's not a tool that's designed for complex enterprise eCommerce management

- Since Shopify is a cloud-based solution, you do not retain total control over your information. If your organization has a rigorous data protection policy, Drupal Commerce or Magento Commerce will allow you to continue to own your own data

- Most, if not all, additional apps to fill gaps in functionality will incur a recurring fee instead of an upfront, one-time license or purchase.

In conclusion

Choosing the right eCommerce solution and tools for your organization can seem like a daunting task. There are numerous different options, and it can be difficult to know what you need in your stack.

Fortunately, FFW has extensive expertise in helping organizations understand their needs and identify which tools best serve those needs. To get help choosing the right eCommerce platform and marketing tools for your site, or to learn more about designing a holistic eCommerce solution, contact us. Our digital experts are here to help you make the most of your digital experience platform.

About FFW

FFW is a digital agency focused on creating digital experience platforms that ensure our clients' success, always moving forward at the speed of digital innovation.

We're an Acquia preferred partner, and have been recognized for our commitment to Acquia products, expertise, and quality of our production. We're 3-time Acquia Engage sponsors, 3-time Acquia Partner Site of the Year winners, and 3-time Acquia MVP winners, with 120 Acquia-Certified developers on staff.

Since 2000, the world's largest brands have relied on us to build accessible, creative, and user-friendly digital solutions that deliver results. We are more than 375+ people across 10 countries, with a track record of over 1,000 digital solutions delivered.

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