



CHOOSING YOUR ECOMMERCE PLATFORM

Everything you need to know

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION _____	4
FUTURE-PROOFING YOUR ONLINE STORE ____	5
SETTING UP SHOP _____	6
▶ Hosting options	
▶ Design and customisation	
▶ Building your product listings from scratch	
▶ Migrating from another platform	
SELECTING THE FEATURES YOU NEED _____	9
▶ Inbuilt, native features	
▶ Add-on features	
▶ Integrations	
▶ Automation	
SUPPORT SERVICES _____	12

OMNI-CHANNEL READINESS _____ 13

- ▶ Point of Sale
- ▶ Online marketplaces
- ▶ Mobile app

MANAGING YOUR SUPPLY CHAIN _____ 15

- ▶ Inventory management
- ▶ Customer order fulfilment

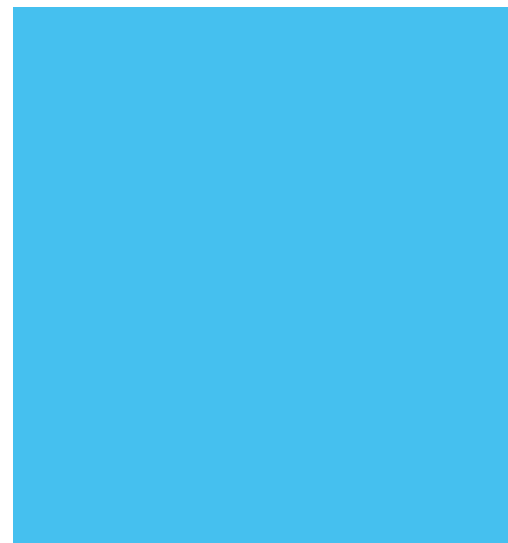
PRICING _____ 16

HIT THE GROUND RUNNING _____ 17

INTRODUCTION

There are over [180 ecommerce platforms](#) available on the market today, serving the needs of one billion online shoppers spending \$1.9 trillion annually in 20 million online stores. These platforms all offer different sales and management tools, different levels of customisation, and different pricing structures. They also each require a different level of technical expertise to make the most of those features. The full range of options can seem overwhelming when you're looking for the perfect match for your online store.

So we've written this handy guide to take the hard work out of choosing the right ecommerce platform for your online store. We'll lead you through the most important points you'll want to consider when selecting an ecommerce platform, whether you're an experienced bricks-and-mortar retailer looking to open your first online store, or an ecommerce star that's outgrown your current platform.



FUTURE-PROOFING YOUR ONLINE STORE

We've put this first, because we think it's a key concept that you should keep in mind every time you're making business decisions, including right now, when you're reading this guide.

You want your ecommerce store to be a raging success. So do we. And as it grows and changes, so will your customers' needs and expectations. If you want to keep delivering, your ecommerce platform needs to keep up. So we recommend choosing a platform that's

- ▶ **scalable**, in terms of both processing power and pricing
- ▶ **flexible**, so that you can adapt your store to meet your customers' requirements
- ▶ **innovative**, and built by a brand that can keep up with developments in technology.

With almost all the other points we discuss in this guide, there are no right or wrong answers. The decision comes down to what's the best fit for your business—you might decide some features aren't worth paying extra for. But we believe scalability, flexibility, and innovation are must-have features for the ongoing success of your store.



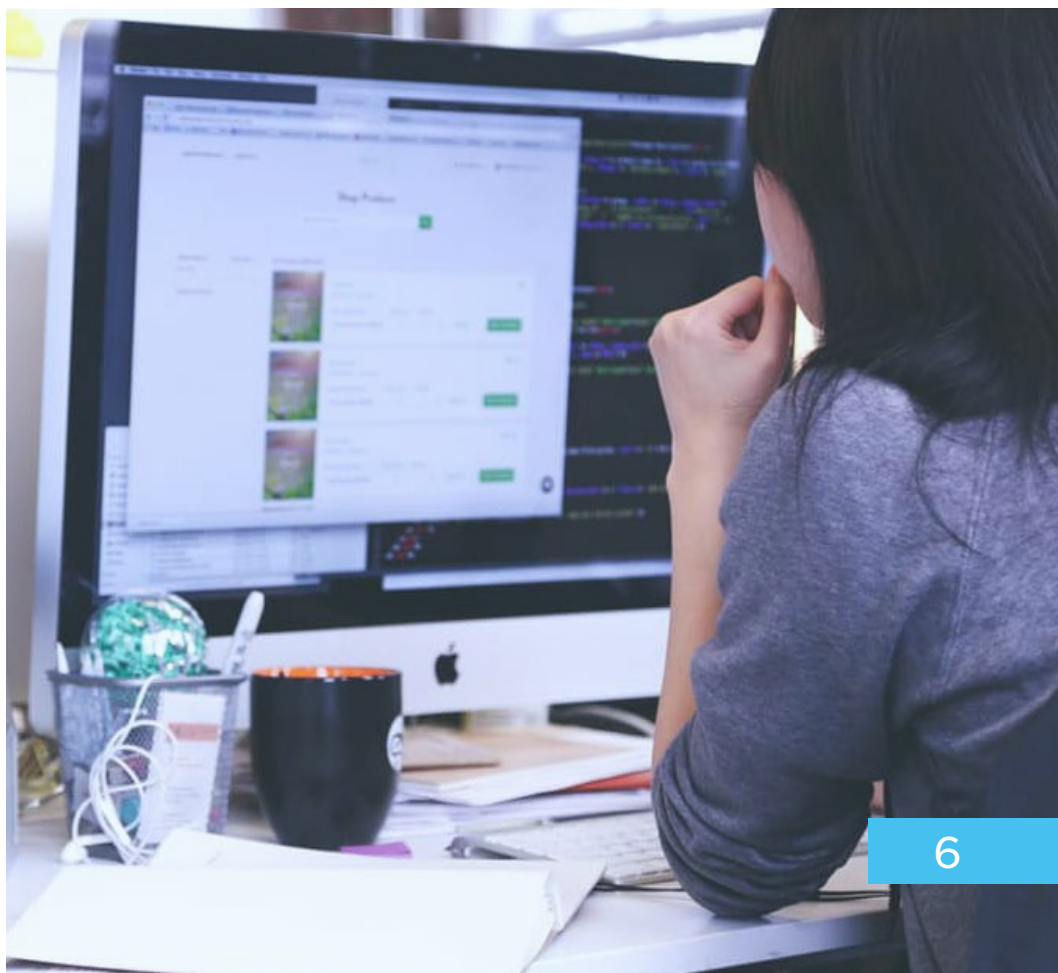
SETTING UP SHOP

In our experience, most retailers want to get things up and running as quickly as possible, and don't have an unlimited budget to get that done. Sound familiar? Then you'll appreciate some of these ideas for building your ecommerce store.

HOSTING OPTIONS

If you're fortunate to have your own web development team or in-house IT department, you may find it cost-effective to manage your ecommerce site hosting. Your team will need to keep on top of the latest developments with your selected ecommerce platform and ensure that your physical or virtual infrastructure meets the minimum requirements.

This can be time-consuming and difficult to get right, which is why many ecommerce store owners prefer to use managed services, with bandwidth, storage, security, and backups all optimised by the ecommerce platform provider. Another advantage of choosing Software as a Service (SaaS) for your ecommerce store is the cost: it can save up to 50% of your setup costs and up to 90% per year in maintenance costs.



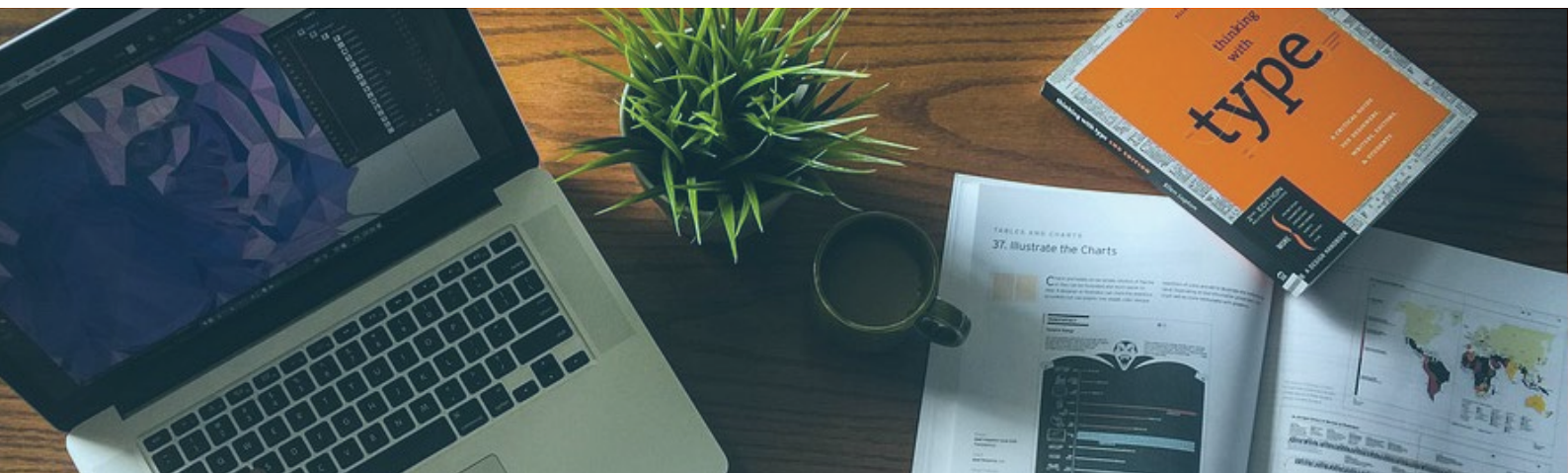
DESIGN AND CUSTOMISATION

Your online store is a showcase for your brand, and giving your customers the best possible experience from the moment they land on your site is the key to conversion. Whether you've chosen to manage your own services or purchase a fully managed solution (or anything in between), you'll need to give some thought to the design elements of your website—not just its form, but also its function, including its browsing and search navigation, categories and filters, and checkout process. If you're interested in learning more about design for your ecommerce store, [check out our guide](#).

While all ecommerce platforms offer some level of branding, the level of customisation and the technical expertise required to achieve it will vary. Using a basic, mobile-responsive theme is a quick way to get started, but it won't give your customers that unique brand experience. Look for a platform that lets you:

- ▶ choose from free, editable, and fully-responsive [web store themes](#)
- ▶ purchase [premium themes](#) with additional feature sets and ongoing updates, designed to boost conversions for specific verticals
- ▶ customise every aspect of your website and shopping cart with [full access](#) to your store's HTML, CSS, and JS.

And for an ecommerce site design that's truly “you”, without the need to customise code yourself, utilise [bespoke design services](#)—the fastest way to build the perfect, full-featured ecommerce site.



BUILDING YOUR PRODUCT LISTINGS FROM SCRATCH

The more product lines you're planning to offer online, the more important it is to have a simple process for building your product listings. (It's no big deal to tweak a few lines of one page of HTML code, but no one wants to repeat that step one hundred times!) That's why ecommerce platforms tend to separate the style from the content; behind the scenes of your online store, your product listings live in a database of neatly structured information that the front-end can display in a consistent format.

If you've already got a product catalogue file or database, you'll want to choose a platform that offers a simple import process, which will help you avoid the errors that manual entry or data manipulation can introduce. If you're starting from scratch, look for a platform that offers [easy-to-use templates or import wizards](#) (like ours) for your product listings.

MIGRATING FROM ANOTHER PLATFORM

If you're switching to a new ecommerce platform so you can scale up your online store and reach new customers, you'll want to migrate data from your existing platform. Check how your current platform exports data—not only your product listings, but also your customer information and order history. Will it be easy to transform and load them into a new system, without too much manual intervention? (In case you're wondering, it's easy to extract all your data from Neto—you own it, and we want you to have access to it in case you need to use it in any other system.)

Data migration is a critical step in the success of your online store. It can take some time to get right and avoid unnecessary downtime, so you'll want to carefully test the process before committing to the new platform. And if you're finding it tricky, some ecommerce platform vendors, including Neto, will offer a [data migration service](#) to help you get it right.





SELECTING THE FEATURES YOU NEED

Getting this part right is one of the most important parts of selecting your new ecommerce platform. It can be tempting to buy the flashiest system you can find, but there's no point in paying for features you won't use—that money could be better invested elsewhere in your business. We suggest looking for a platform that takes a modular approach to building your ecommerce website—so you're not locked into a set number of sales channels, and you can turn them on and off at any time, so you're only ever paying for what you need.

INBUILT, NATIVE FEATURES

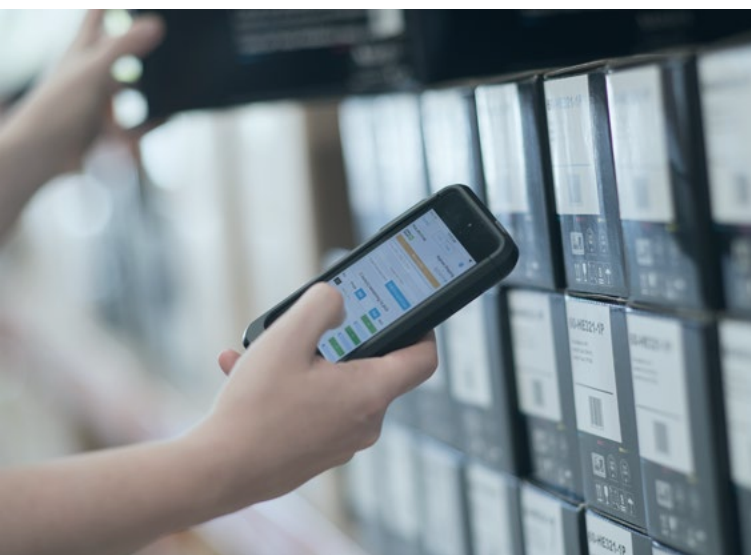
For your business to thrive, essential ecommerce functionality needs to be included as part of the core package, not "added on" through third party patches. So what should you look for? Well, you'll need at least basic inventory management and order fulfilment, but we recommend looking for advanced features such as purchase orders, cost of goods sold (COGS) tracking, and advanced stocktaking and stock adjustments. The beauty of having these core features natively inbuilt is that everything fits perfectly, and all dependencies are taken into account for a truly seamless experience. That's why we insist on delivering inbuilt, native features in our platform.

ADD-ON FEATURES

Ecommerce platform vendors may also offer additional modules of specialised features as optional extras you can add to your subscription. For example, if you're shipping orders from a small warehouse, you can easily get by with the standard fulfilment features in Neto. But if you're shipping hundreds of packages from your massive warehouse each day, you might choose to streamline your process further by

- ▶ boosting your order picking speed and accuracy with the mobile scanning and label printing
- ▶ create consignment labels for multiple shipping carriers from right within your order workflow.

Some platforms include an [open API](#) that enables third parties to extend the functionality of the platform by creating their own add-ons, usually with a specific target audience in mind. For example, a business might build an add-on to display their sales figures in a business intelligence dashboard. Some ecommerce platforms offer only the most basic features, and rely upon these third-party add-ons to meet their users' needs, which can make it difficult for customers to resolve technical issues. To avoid problems, we recommend choosing a platform that offers core native features and in-house built add-ons wherever possible, if third-party add-ons are used then ensure that they come from trusted developers, such as the [Salesforce add-on](#), built by OneSaas.



INTEGRATIONS

Integrations are another way to get more out of your ecommerce platform, by providing one- or two-way sync services to other, specialist platforms you use for customer support, marketing, and reporting. This can reduce manual handling and simplify your processes, so you'll want to investigate which ecommerce platforms offer the integrations you need.

For example, your accounting platform is specifically designed to help you meet your reporting and tax obligations and is the best place to manage your books, but chances are it only offers basic invoicing and inventory management capabilities. Our approach is to give you the best of both worlds with [direct integration to leading accounting software](#) including Xero, MYOB, and SAASU ensuring that all your ecommerce transactions are synced to your accounting platform without manual handling.

AUTOMATION

Automating your processes is another great way to save time and money, which is why Neto integrates with a wide variety of [add-ons](#) to help you with automation tasks, such as

- ▶ batch processing orders and bulk-printing pick lists and consignment labels, for more efficient fulfilment
- ▶ notifying you when it's time to order more stock from your suppliers
- ▶ emailing individual customers to offer discounts on items in their wishlists or abandoned shopping carts to follow up after their purchases, or to let them know an item is back in stock
- ▶ tracking visitor clicks and running analytics to understand your customers, what brings them to your site, and what they're searching for
- ▶ posting to social media channels, monitoring performance, and tracking interactions
- ▶ targeting specific customers and demographics through email list segmentation.





SUPPORT SERVICES

Learning a new ecommerce platform can be frustrating, even if you're tech-savvy. That's why we think support is important enough to warrant its own section in this guide. When you're researching ecommerce platforms, check whether they can provide

- ▶ the level of support or training you'll require during setup and ongoing operations
- ▶ a fast enough response to your enquiries and fix for your problems support during Australian business hours (so that you can get help when you need it)
- ▶ support by your preferred communication method, e.g. email, phone, online chat
- ▶ local support, if you prefer it.

You'll usually find that fully managed ecommerce services offer a higher level of support than the alternatives, with a single port of call for all your enquiries. Keep in mind that if you're having problems with third-party add-ons, you may need to chase down support from both your platform vendor and the add-on vendor. And if you're considering going with an open source ecommerce platform, it's likely you'll need to search online forums for help. Sometimes, it's nice having the option to pick up the phone and speak with a human.

OMNI-CHANNEL READINESS

Consumers are increasingly expecting to be able to shop anywhere—online, from their mobile devices, or in store—and they want a consistent experience across all channels. They want to see their in-store order history by logging in online. And if that t-shirt they bought through your mobile app was too small, they want to be able to exchange it in store. If you select an omni-channel ecommerce platform, like Neto, you'll be able to manage all your channels in a single system and deliver the seamless experience customers want.

POINT OF SALE

A physical shop-front gives you valuable face-to-face time with your customers and a chance to learn about their needs, deliver support, handle returns, and offer after-sales service. Whether you've already got a real-world store, you're considering opening one, or you just want to keep your options open for the future, choosing an ecommerce platform with an inbuilt point of sale (POS) system will simplify your business processes and reduce the time and labour cost of manually consolidating your different sales channels.

Look for a tablet-enabled POS and an ecommerce platform that lets you add new POS terminals on the fly. This is a powerful tool not just for traditional brick-and-mortar stores, but also for pop-up shops, market stalls, conventions and expos, helping you to sell everywhere.



ONLINE MARKETPLACES

In a recent market survey we conducted with Telstra, we learned that

- ▶ 39% of online shoppers use marketplaces exclusively
- ▶ 22% use marketplaces in addition to a branded website
- ▶ one in three online shoppers plans to switch to Amazon when it launches soon in Australia.

That means you could double your customers simply by selling your products in an online marketplace as well as your ecommerce website. But while these sites offer their own tools to list products, manage orders, and contact customers, you'll be duplicating time-consuming tasks and eating into your profits.

So we recommend you choose an ecommerce platform that offers a foolproof way to manage your marketplace customers, products, sales, and stock alongside your other sales channels. Look for features like automated and scheduled listings, standard and custom templates, and synced order and inventory management. Neto offers full eBay integration and is currently integrating our ecommerce platform with Amazon.

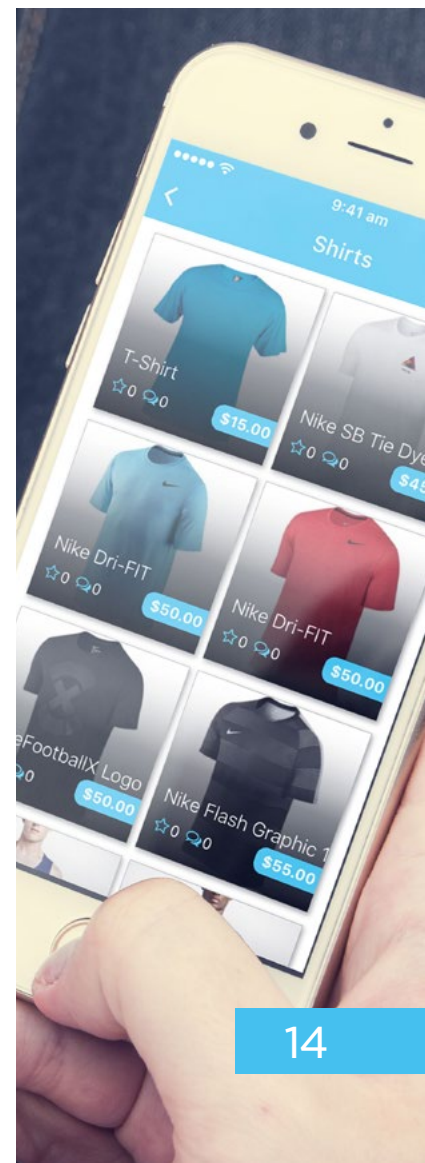
MOBILE APP

Did you know that

- ▶ 71% of Australian consumers use [mobile devices for online transactions](#) because it's fast, easy and convenient
- ▶ [apps account for 89%](#) of the time people spend viewing media on mobile devices
- ▶ 53% of smartphone and tablet owners shop on [company-specific apps](#)?

With a branded mobile application, you can give your customers the ultimate mobile shopping experience by taking advantage of the device's full feature set. And in return, you'll have a captive audience for your products, free from the distractions of other stores on their marketplace apps or web searches.

Of course, developing a mobile app can take a lot of time, money, and effort—unless it's offered as a part of your ecommerce platform. Which, with Neto, it is.



MANAGING YOUR SUPPLY CHAIN

Ecommerce success isn't just about increasing your sales. To make your online store as profitable as possible, you'll want to reduce your overheads by optimising your supply chain from end-to-end.

INVENTORY MANAGEMENT

Effective inventory management can reduce your costs, increase your cash flow, and free up your working capital for investment in other parts of your business, all while improving your ability to meet demand. That's why it's one of the top ten things a retail business can do to boost profit margins and customer satisfaction.

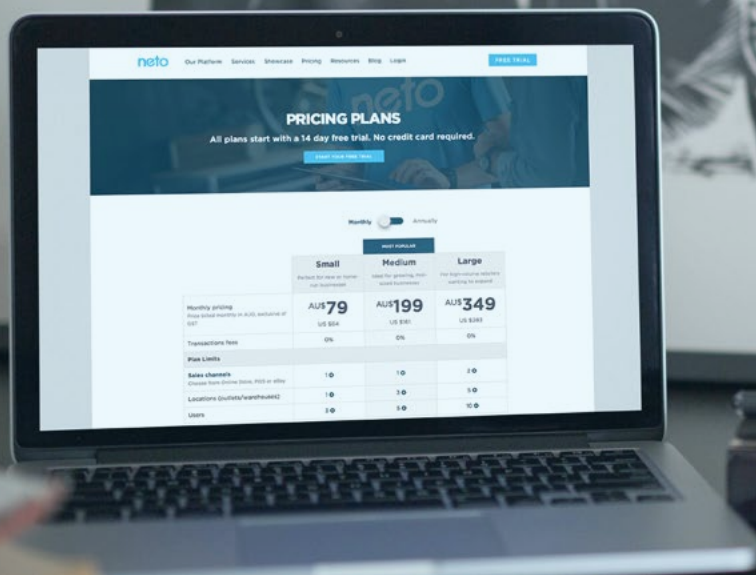
You'll be better able to manage your stock replenishment if you're tracking your inventory. The very limited capability of inventory tracking in accounting platforms has led to the development of specialised inventory management software. These platforms track your inventory from when you order it from a supplier, to receipt at your warehouse, through stocktakes and transfers, until items are allocated to orders and shipped. They may also offer features like smart purchase orders and automated ordering that's based on schedules or stock levels.

The next level is inventory management with all these features built directly into your ecommerce platform. Giving your customers online access to current stock availability and ensuring your staff can see stock levels across all locations and all channels you're selling in. This prevents overselling, which leads to unhappy customers and creates extra work for your staff to track and rectify mistakes. On average, our customers see 70% improved efficiency.

CUSTOMER ORDER FULFILMENT

Customers want their orders delivered as soon as possible, for the lowest price. You'll be better equipped to meet their expectations if your ecommerce platform comes with inbuilt fulfilment features and add-on integrations to the shipping providers you prefer to work with.

Look for integration with a variety of popular [Australian and New Zealand shipping carriers](#), including Australia Post eParcel, CourierPost (NZ), Startrack, Couriers Please, Toll Priority, Fastway Couriers and Sendle.



PRICING

This is inevitably a major deciding factor for ecommerce store owners, but it's one that should never be considered in isolation, and that's why we've left it until near the end.

It's not just the cost that varies from platform to platform—it's the entire structure of the pricing. Plans can be built around a list of features, an allowed number of transactions, a maximum number of product listings, a sales volume,... anything, really.

There's even a cost to free, open source ecommerce platforms. You'll have to manage your own hosting and deployment, and they generally won't include phone or email support, so you'll need to spend time finding your own solutions to any problems.

Many vendors offer appealing plans for small retailers, but then charge you more and more as you grow, either by forcing you to move to a higher plan or by charging based on your sales volume.

At Neto, we think it's important to be transparent and fair when it comes to pricing. We don't think it's fair to penalise your ecommerce store for growing—that's what your business is meant to do! We also don't think it's fair to charge you for advanced features that you're never going to use.

Instead, we've built our pricing structure around the idea of paying for the services you're consuming: the number of sales channels, the number of POS registers, the number of specialised add-on modules you've chosen to use, and any additional users above the allocated limit per plan. We believe this is the fairest payment structure for everyone.

HIT THE GROUND RUNNING WITH NETO

There's a lot to consider when you're looking for the right ecommerce platform, and we hope this guide has helped you figure out exactly what you need for your online store, now and into the future.

You should now have a good idea of things to look for, such as managed services, native features, useful integrations, fully customisable design, and omni-channel readiness. We've also mentioned things to look out for, like misleading or unfair pricing structures.

Once you've selected your preferred platform, you'll want to test it thoroughly before committing. Then you'll want to get started as quickly as possible, so you can start seeing the return on your investment in a premium ecommerce platform.

THAT'S WHERE NETO CAN HELP.

Our managed solutions include training and support, and we also offer bespoke design and data migration services to help you get up and running as quickly as possible. Our One-touch retail platform enables exceptional and consistent customer experiences via any channel, be it in-store, online or through a marketplace.

To see for yourself how Neto's smart features can help you sell everywhere and manage every aspect of your ecommerce store, [start your free trial](#) today.

