

Six Key Steps for a Successful Marketplace Launch



This is the third in VTEX's three-part series on building an online marketplace business. [Part 1](#) provided an introduction to the ecommerce marketplace model. In [Part 2](#), we covered digital strategy planning for setting up a successful marketplace.

This last piece in the series covers steps for successfully launching a marketplace.

Setting the Stage

A great deal of preparation and planning goes into launching a marketplace. There are six key areas to address in your launch plan, any of which can be addressed in parallel:

1. Identify a marketplace "champion"
2. Build a cross-functional team
3. Define "MVP" criteria
4. Secure external expertise
5. Establish a seller pipeline
6. Choose a technology stack

Let's take a look at each of these areas.

1. Identify a Marketplace Champion

Your marketplace will, no doubt, be a strategic change in your business. This is why it is important, early in the planning process, to establish a senior member of your company to serve as your marketplace champion.

Think of your marketplace champion as the executive sponsor who ensures you have all the

resources you need, ensures collaboration throughout the organization, and demonstrates to all team members the importance of the marketplace launch. Since your marketplace is a strategic transformation within your company, the ideal champion is an executive, such as CIO, VP of ecommerce, or even the CEO or business owner.

2. Build Cross-Functional Teams to Align Requirements

Launching a marketplace requires participation from a wide range of departments and functional areas. Before you begin to build out your plan, you will want to first assign your team members, since they will be key participants in the planning process. Here is a snapshot of a typical marketplace launch team.



3. Define MVP Criteria

If rapid time-to-revenue is one of your goals, you can consider defining a minimum viable product (MVP) criteria so you can launch quickly and build out features over time. A good place to start is to consider the six mission-critical pillars of any marketplace:

■ Marketplace model

Will you deliver the full open multi-seller model, or only showcase one or a limited number of third-party sellers? Will there be certain categories which will be open versus closed?

■ Product catalog

Populating the system with third-party seller products and content. You will want to launch with the right amount of products to position the marketplace to inspire repeat visitors.

■ Third-party seller(s)

Build your seller pipeline early - have many vendors lined up ready to go before your marketplace is live, but you don't have to launch with all of your sellers as you can add sellers over time.

■ Customer service

How will you handle customer service for third-party seller products and orders routed and fulfilled by third party-sellers? Create a clear returns policy and process.

■ Seller order management

Distribute orders to third-party sellers, orchestrate order-related information, routing orders to the correct sellers.

■ UI/UX

Define how to present third-party sellers' products and how they will look on your site.



4. Identify a System Integration Partner

It's important that the partner you choose to build your marketplace has solid marketplace experience. This can be someone within your organization, or an outside agency or system integrator.

5. Establish a Seller Pipeline Early

The last thing you want is to launch your marketplace without an optimal number of sellers. In many cases, you will have only one chance to present your marketplace to a visitor, so you want to put yourself in the best position to demonstrate the value of your marketplace right away, to ensure an ongoing stream of repeat visitors.

As you create your marketplace plan, be sure to build into your plan a sufficient time frame to identify, recruit and onboard the ideal number of sellers, covering the desirable range of products and services. In addition, it's important to evolve and grow your seller pipeline continually, to ensure you always have a healthy stream of new sellers, and also help you to maximize revenue.

6. Choose the Right Tech Stack

Since a marketplace is a natural extension of ecommerce, many businesses find value in deploying an ecommerce platform with built-in marketplace and order management capabilities. This approach provides a range of benefits, such as faster time-to-revenue, use case flexibility and lower TCO.

On the other end of the spectrum are standalone marketplace platforms. These can be attractive to companies who wish to stick with their current ecommerce platform. The downside is that this approach requires custom integration with existing commerce platforms, order management and fulfillment systems. These integrations are complex and can take months to over a year, and also can be expensive.

Another consideration for some organizations is whether to build the marketplace platform on their own. With the speed at which markets evolve and customer preferences change, buying is usually the right option. Building your own is risky and will take many months to complete. And once operational, your home-grown solution will require ongoing maintenance and updates, placing additional burden on already stretched IT resources. Aligning with the right software technology partner will enable faster time-to-revenue for your marketplace and also let you focus on what you do best, your products and services.

The marketplace business model has revolutionized digital commerce as we know it. Today, more than half of online sales globally are through ecommerce marketplaces – and the number is only growing.

VTEX is at your service, to help your company get in on the marketplace opportunity – and make your marketplace a resounding success. We offer the only fully-integrated ecommerce, marketplace and order management solution – used by organizations throughout the world to take their businesses to a higher level. Our customer success team will be at your side and working with you to maximize your investment and grow your business.

Contact us today to put the power of an integrated marketplace and embedded customer success team to work for your company.

You Have the Power!

