Ecommerce Boom Puts Increased Spotlight on Developers

WAKEFIELD

Sponsored by PayPal

PayPal

Contents

P PayPal

Introduction

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic pushed ecommerce to greater heights for retailers, distributors and shippers. But perhaps no group was more affected than ecommerce software developers. While some jobs and roles waned during much of 2020, developers were seeing a significant spike in the demands on their workloads.

That left many to ask if the pandemic would change ecommerce for good or if would we see a return to the prior normal, or at least near normal?

PayPal retained Wakefield Research to survey 1,000 ecommerce software developers and 500 U.S. business decision-makers (BDMs) who manage them to find how organizations were impacted by the pandemic. This took into account developers in both small and large companies, full-time and contract employees and were found spread across the country. Importantly too, the survey asked how they see the future being shaped in terms of the demands placed on ecommerce software developers and their organizations.

It turns out very few of these developers or BDMs at their firms believe there will be a return to pre-COVID workloads. Indeed, those on the front lines of developing ecommerce solutions expect to see even greater demands on online commerce over the next 12 months. A staggering 94% said that ecommerce efforts will remain at the heightened levels of the pandemic or increase in 2021. Nearly half (45%) are in the camp that it will continue to ramp-up. That number is considerably higher at larger firms with 100+ employees, 58%, suggesting that developers at larger businesses are seeing even greater ecommerce demand going forward.

These developers face an uphill climb to address these increased pressures in terms of the infrastructure supporting them.

The survey also revealed a remarkable split in thinking on how developers see their roles evolving in their organizations. The results show that BDMs are more open to developer input into the business functions of their organizations but 53% of developers say they are happy never exploring that possibility.

There's No Going Back to Pre-COVID Levels for Ecommerce Developers

94% OF ECOMMERCE DEVELOPERS BELIEVE WORKLOAD LEVELS WILL REMAIN AT COVID LEVELS OR INCREASE

45% OF DEVELOPERS BELIEVE IT WILL INCREASE!

PayPal

Key Findings

⚖️ Heavier Workloads Are Here to Stay

📎 Solutions Aren't Keeping Up

🔍 Developers Unsure of New Opportunities

Heavier Workloads Are Here to Stay

During the pandemic, obstacles big and small, from layoffs to transitioning to working from home, didn't generally impact software developers. Working from home made many employees more efficient and that may have helped developers as demand on their crucial role building ecommerce software increased.

In fact, during this time, a vast majority — 94% — said their workloads increased and 53% reported that these increased workloads were "significant." Carefully developed roadmaps were condensed or scrapped altogether. And unlike many industries, software developers saw their ranks grow during the pandemic by some half a million jobs worldwide*. Those added ranks still didn't seem to quell the feeling of increased workloads among those in the survey.

COVID-19 expanded and accelerated companies' ecommerce plans

75%
of BDMs say their ecommerce expanded or accelerated due to COVID-19

88% BDM | 84% DEVELOPERS
Both groups agree ecommerce was essential/very important to the company's bottom line during COVID

94% of developers say there's no going back to pre-COVID ecommerce with **2 in 5** developers (45%) predict their company's online and mobile ecommerce solutions will grow or expand in the coming 12 months

Developers and BDMs alike agree developer roles/responsibilities will continue to grow

94%
Almost all ecommerce developers have taken on additional work to implement changes due to COVID-19, including **53%** who have taken on significantly more work
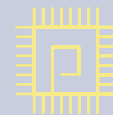
74% BDM | 80% DEVELOPERS
Both agree developers' roles/ responsibilities increased in last 12 months due to COVID

Organization size also made a difference when it came to how much extra work was spread around to developers. At companies with more than 100 employees, 69% of developers said they took on additional work while their counterparts at smaller firms had an even heavier workload.

P PayPal

Solutions Aren't Keeping Up

As workloads increase however, the solutions developers create and maintain — and consumers rely on — aren't satisfying the needs in these accelerated times. A surprising 81% of developers say their current solutions do not fully meet customers' expectations and 22% say they meet just a bare minimum.

Additionally, foundational issues also make an impact. From lack of staff to having to create ad hoc solutions, more than four out of five developers (83%) cite some sort of legacy shortcoming at their firm.

Despite developers' additional work, they see room to improve their ecommerce platforms
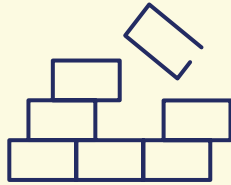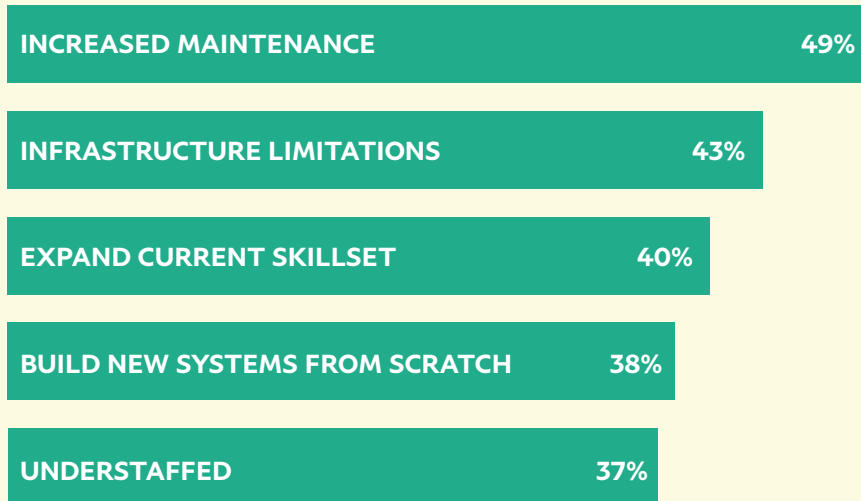
81% say that their ecommerce solutions don't fully meet consumer demand

22%

Nearly a quarter say their solutions just meet the bare minimum of consumer demand – or that they accomplish even less than the minimum

Much of the additional work is due to developers needing to overcome organizational limitations e.g., executives who weren't planning on the sudden reliance on ecommerce

TOP REASONS ECOMMERCE DEVELOPERS HAVE TAKEN ON ADDITIONAL WORK AS THE RESULT OF COVID-19*

INCREASED MAINTENANCE	49%
INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITATIONS	43%
EXPAND CURRENT SKILLSET	40%
BUILD NEW SYSTEMS FROM SCRATCH	38%
UNDERSTAFFED	37%

*Asked among 895 U.S. software developers who took on additional work to implement changes to their company's ecommerce solutions.

Developers at companies reporting at least **$5M** in revenue felt stronger than their counterparts at smaller firms that *increased maintenance*, *infrastructure limitations* and *learning new skillsets* were the reasons why they had additional work during the pandemic.

While those issues were significant for smaller and less profitable companies as well, poor communication and an *understaffed workforce* were reported higher than they were by developers at the larger companies.

P PayPal

Developers Unsure of New Opportunities

The pandemic and the increased focus on ecommerce has exposed another area that may have been neglected in the past. The role of the developer inside an organization and how much input they have on business units has been evolving and has also taken a new turn during the pandemic. But these new survey results are not all cut and dry and illustrate the divide on this topic between developers and business decision makers.

With companies needing to rapidly react out of necessity because of the pandemic, developers suddenly played an even more critical role across organizations. Four fifths (80%) of ecommerce developers said they had more input in the business decision making process over the past year. And 86% expect to have more input moving forward.

For the BDM, a majority (57%) is more open to this increased involvement from developers, especially for bringing new ideas to the table. But it might take developers some time to adjust to that expectation as only 47% said they actually want to play a larger role in their organization.

Why is there this seeming disparity between the two groups on this topic? Perhaps it's the archetypal perception of developers' preferring to stay behind the scenes proving out: 65% of them believe that someone else in the organization should make key business decisions when it comes to ecommerce.

Developers increasingly have a seat at the table, but they are struggling to juggle priorities

80%
of developers say their role in making decisions over the company's ecommerce solutions increased in the last year with **86%** thinking their role in making decisions over the company's ecommerce solutions will **increase in the next 12 months**

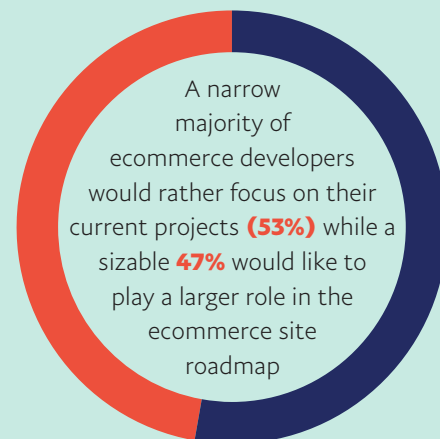**Almost 3 in 5 BDMs (57%) want developers to play a larger role**
BDMs are eager to see developers be more proactive at bringing ideas to the table **(62%)**, be more involved in the timing and scheduling **(46%)** and interact internally with more business units **(46%)**

A larger role in the product roadmap doesn't necessarily mean leading the charge

Among developers who have experienced friction with executives, HALF put the onus on executives who don't fully appreciate what developers bring to the table
As they see work mounting and their time shrinking, developers are split on how they want to move forward

A narrow majority of ecommerce developers would rather focus on their current projects **(53%)** while a sizable **47%** would like to play a larger role in the ecommerce site roadmap

Future Considerations

● Is it Time for a Chief Developer Officer?

There is an unprecedented opportunity to rethink the role developers play inside an organization. As business leaders, and the developers themselves, begin to recognize the benefits of integrating developers into key decision-making processes, there is the possibility for new avenues of growth. This could lead all the way to a Chief Developer Officer, someone charged with executing strategy in a holistic manner to generate optimum results from the developer workforce in an organization. Whatever the ultimate end is, BDMs need to proactively reach out to developers who want to engage with more parts of the business.

● Look for Help if Solutions are Strained

The new normal when it comes to ecommerce has clearly put a strain on the solutions that developers are charged with maintaining. PayPal has a long-running, consistent record of dependable tools that can benefit ecommerce developers, whether they're stretched too thin or not.

● Choice a Major Factor for Developers

Ecommerce developers appreciate flexibility from payment solutions which helps open up avenues of innovation for their organizations. PayPal's open ecosystem and sophistication when it comes to ecommerce integrations can be a deciding factor when it comes to making the final call on a payment partner.
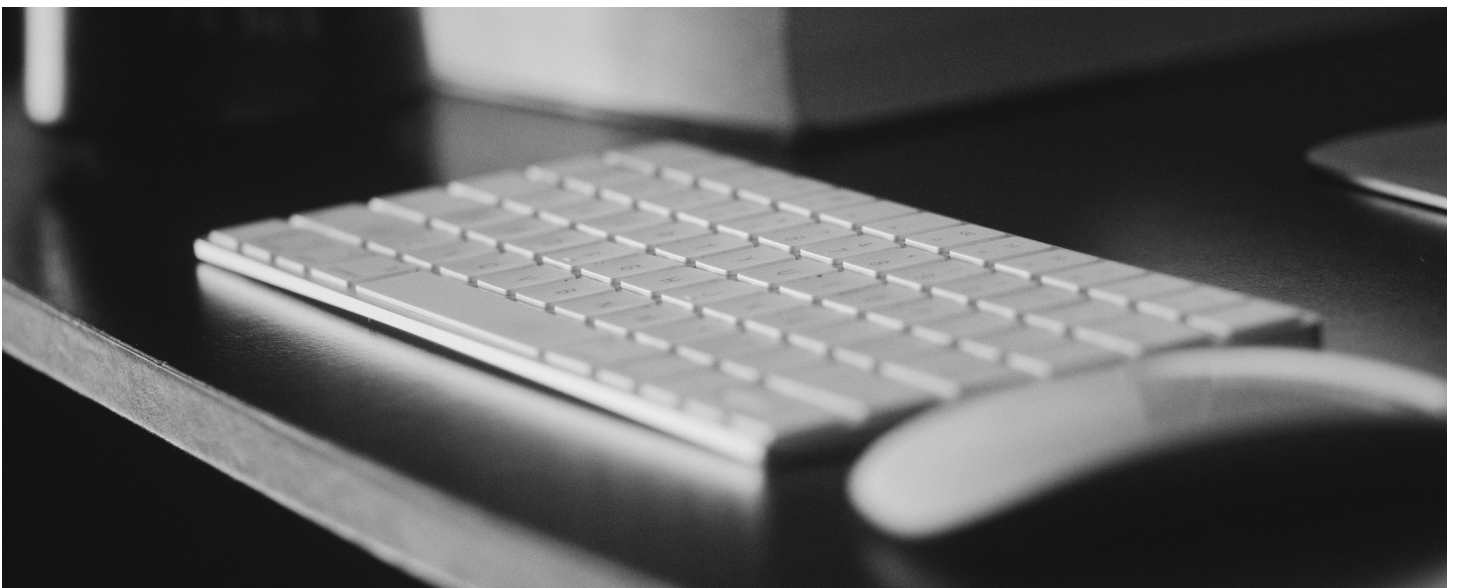
P PayPal

Methodology

The survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com) on behalf of PayPal among 1,000 U.S. software developers who have worked on or developed eCommerce solutions for their company and 500 U.S. business decision-makers who are director level or higher and work with software developers. The survey was conducted between March 24th and April 7th, 2021.

Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results. For the interviews conducted in this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 3.1 percentage points for software developers and 4.4 percentage points for BDMs, from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.

CONDUCTED BETWEEN MARCH 24-APRIL 7, 2021

SURVEYED:
1000 U.S. software developers
500 business-decision makers

MARGIN OF ERROR:
3.1/4.4 points

P PayPal