

OROGAMIS

B2B Ecommerce Checklist





The B2B ecommerce industry is an ever-growing behemoth. Researchers forecast US-based B2B ecommerce spending to eclipse the \$1.8 trillion mark by the close of 2023, a figure that will represent a whopping 17% of all B2B sales in the country.

To be successful in the B2B space, it's going to take more than a cursory understanding of how to build a website. And, you're going to need a deeper understanding of how, when, and why companies are successful in this space.

Running an effective B2B ecommerce business takes strategy, a variety of resources, and a steady finger on the pulse of evolving technology. When selling to consumers, some liberties can be taken to enhance the customer experience—liberties that you don't get to enjoy when it comes to selling in a B2B environment.

However, at the end of the day, businesses themselves won't be buying from you. The people representing those businesses will. In this way, the world of B2B ecommerce is a lot like B2C, but that's where the similarities end.

Companies operating in a B2B ecommerce environment target wholesalers, retailers, resellers, and more traditional organizations like schools, nonprofits, and government entities. These businesses aren't typically looking to place a quick order for a staple product; rather, they're much more likely to do their own research, make use of self-service tools, and navigate the market they want access to from a computer or mobile device before engaging with a provider of goods or services.



...which is why this checklist was conceived.

At Orogamis, our craft is building business assets that prime companies for growth over the long term. No matter where you're looking to sell, to whom, or why, this B2B ecommerce checklist will provide you with a framework for how to think about the different components of your business as you move into the future.

Spending some time to think critically about each of the sections below will help you address challenges you might not even know you had and keep you ahead of the game in the process.



Section 1: Developing Your Platform

When we talk about your ‘platform’, we’re not just referring to your website, your sales structure, or your order fulfillment architecture. We’re talking about all of these things, holistically.

Your B2B ecommerce platform is the machine that works to drive new sales from existing customers,

attract fresh interest from target markets, and act as a tool to further expand your brand experience for the customer.



1. Partitioned access.

Access to pricing, ordering portals, and product options should be user-specific. For example, you wouldn’t want non-registered site visitors to have access to partner-only pricing information. Furthermore, some parts of your platform can have unique benefits for your salespeople, who should have logins and permissions unique to them.



2. Customized payment and ordering options.

Many businesses want to be invoiced for the products and services they buy. This might be an ordering option that is only available to customers who have been granted payment terms. Alternatively, some of your customers might want to initiate an ACH transfer referencing their order number—the idea is to make it easy for every customer tier to order from you and pay in a way that is easiest for them.

3. CRM and ERP integration.

If you're just starting out and don't have an established Customer Relationship Management solution, this won't apply to you. However, if you use something like SAP or Salesforce as a CRM/ERP, be sure that your front-end ecommerce platform plays well with it.

4. Costing.

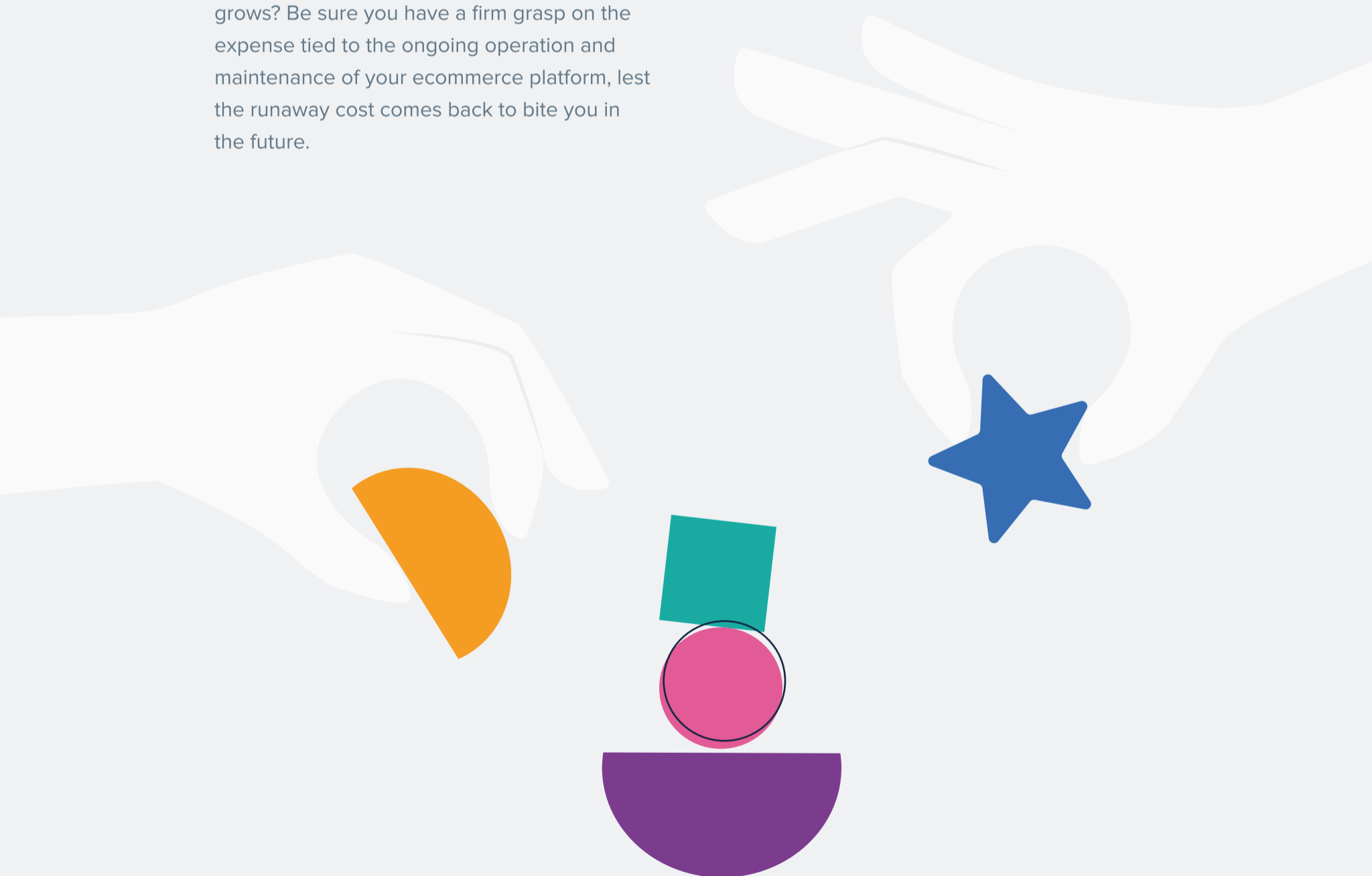
This is one of the most overlooked aspects of B2B ecommerce platform selection and development. How much is it going to cost? While the investment might be manageable at the beginning, what happens at scale? Do you have a plan for expansion as the business grows? Be sure you have a firm grasp on the expense tied to the ongoing operation and maintenance of your ecommerce platform, lest the runaway cost comes back to bite you in the future.

5. Omnichannel interplay.

Most successful B2B sellers today don't rely on a single sales channel for all of their revenue.

Many of them have dedicated sales people focused on developing business from existing accounts. Yet others have inside sales teams who prospect using more traditional lead generation methods like cold calling and direct mail.

However your business is structured, be sure your B2B ecommerce platform is one that unites all of your sales channels.





Section 2: Nailing SEO and Online Presence

We are intentionally lumping SEO and Online Presence together because they are equally weighted and are, by most measures, both responsible for presenting your best face to the online world.

For SEO, you are effectively courting the large search engines Google, Bing, Yahoo! and a few smaller ones. When we talk about Online Presence, we're mostly referring to social media, content strategy, and other soft assets that can give your brand credibility and a sense of thought leadership.

6. Updated sitemap and search appearance.

It is often said that Google and other search engines need a 'map' of your website. While this does refer to the XML sitemap itself, it also refers to more nuanced information like page titles, event- and product-rich snippets, sitelinks, breadcrumbs, and more. Thankfully, [Google's Search Console](#) makes this all very easy.

7. Indexing.

Is every page on your site being correctly indexed by search engines? Are the correct meta tags, slugs, and URLs in use throughout your site? A site index audit can reveal gaps where some attention is needed to ensure that the entirety of your site is accessible and indexable by all search engines.

8. Keyword planning and optimization.

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9. Messaging and positioning.

Shifting into social media marketing, your B2B brand needs a unified, consistent brand message and positioning statement to inform virtually everything else that is used on all the major social media platforms. This is where it can be helpful to have a Brand Guide that contains guardrails, an elevator pitch, and other propositional verbiage that best showcases the value your company has for potential customers.

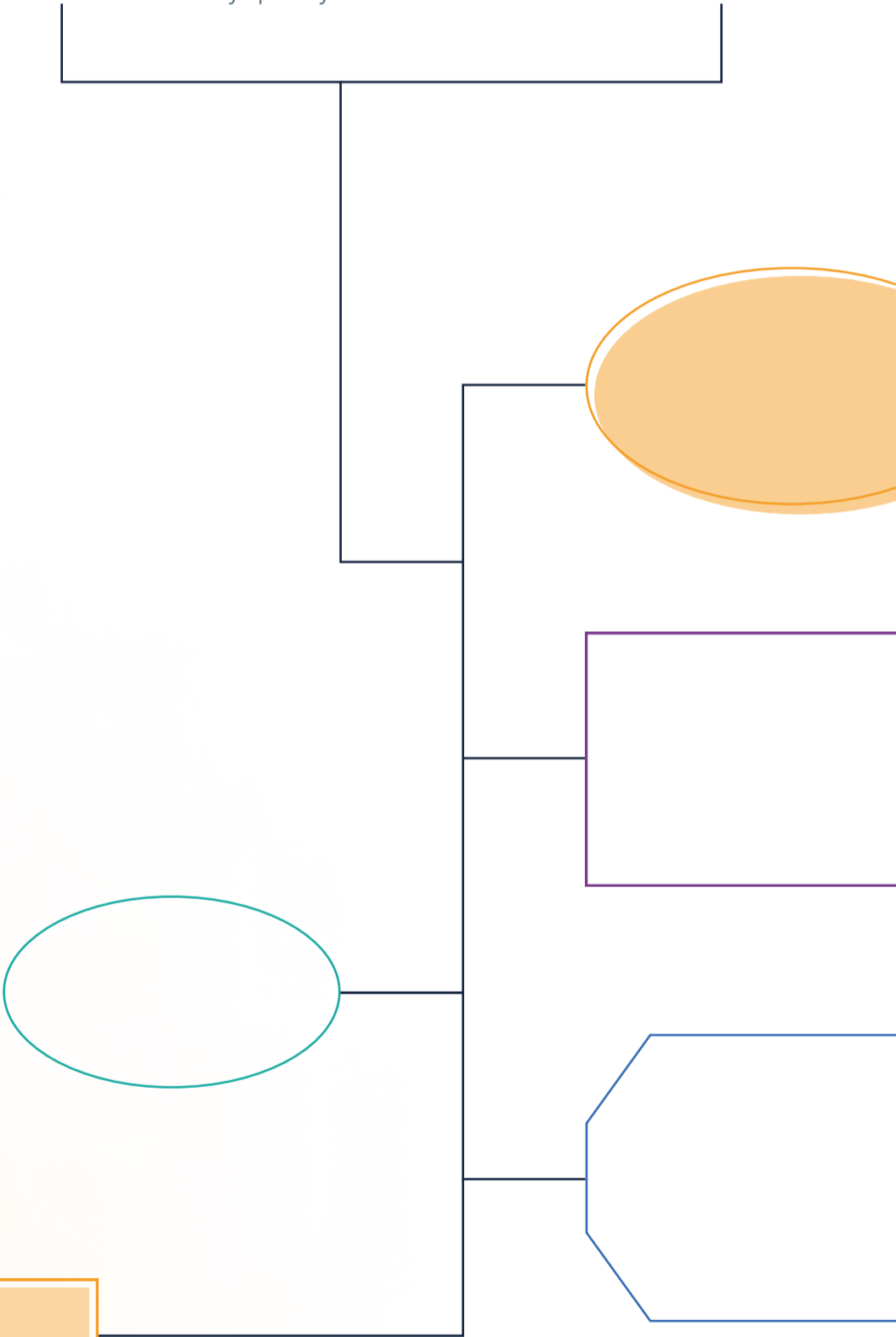
10. Content strategy and distribution schedule.

Successful B2B ecommerce companies know that they need to stay top-of-mind with decision makers within their target markets. Meet them where they already are by bringing thoughtfully crafted content to outlets like LinkedIn, Quora, and Reddit. Also, plan on having a steady drip of high-quality content distributed according to a set schedule, and keep it fresh by referencing trends that impact the buyers in your market.

[Note: content strategy and social media marketing are time- and skill-intensive endeavors. If you don't feel equipped to take these on with your existing level of understanding (or free time), consider outsourcing the work. An investment in a knowledgeable content strategist and/or social media specialist can pay big-time dividends over the long term.]

11. Pay-Per-Click and other paid advertising.

Speaking of online presence—how often are you being presented to your potential customers, online? One way to know for sure is to execute a smart, hyper-targeted PPC or other paid advertising campaign. The bang-for-your-buck is easily quantified, and results from your efforts can come incredibly quickly.

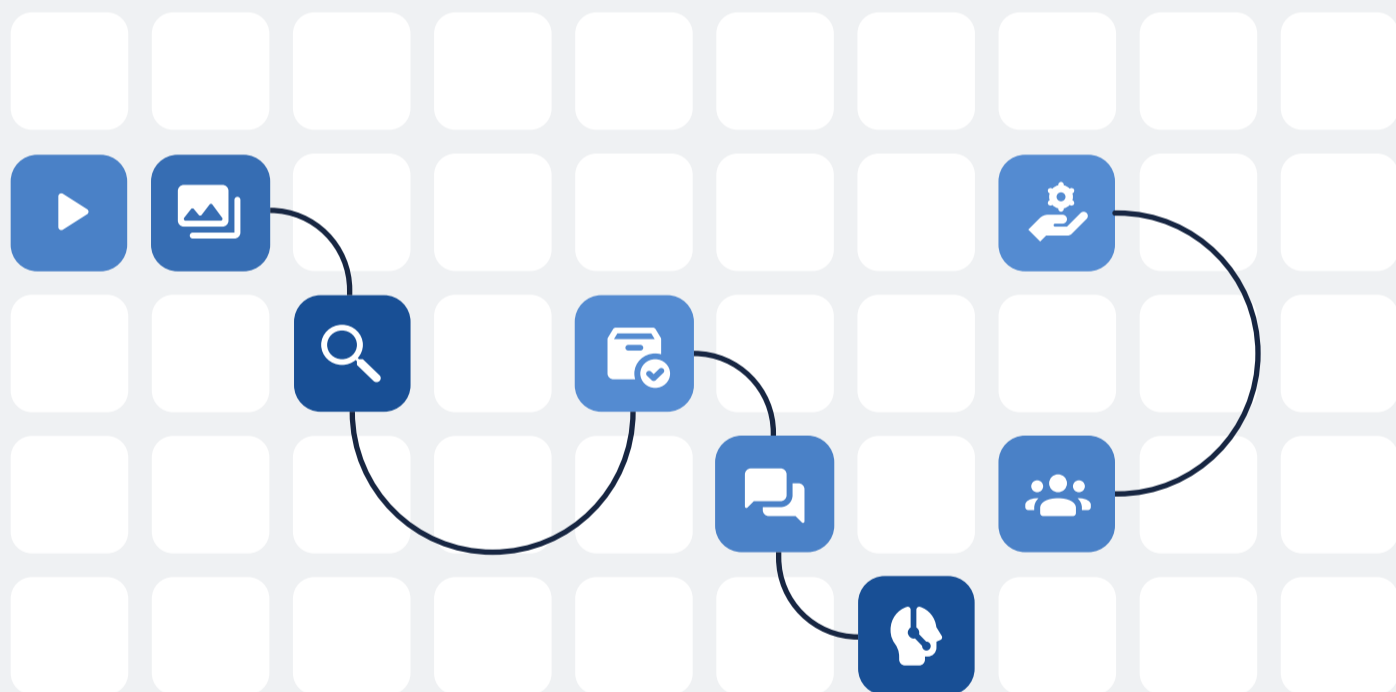




Section 3: Honing the Customer Experience

In the B2B ecommerce space, the Customer Experience (CX) includes every conceivable interaction your customer has with your company, starting from when they first encounter your brand as a prospect and continuing throughout their journey as a customer (for life, ideally).

This includes website design and page layout. It includes web chats, product information self-service, quote requests, order placement, post-sale follow-up and so much more. If you can isolate the key areas where your B2B ecommerce customer experience can be enhanced, you will get an edge on the competition and produce a rising tide that lifts virtually everything about how your business operates, from conversion rates to profitability.



12. Crisp, updated product images and videos.

It is shocking how long some B2B ecommerce companies will go without updating their imagery or video assets. These assets are doing some of the heaviest lifting on your site, and they should be as high-quality as your budget allows.

13. Robust, feature-packed online search.

As we've already mentioned, product information self-service is key for B2B ecommerce audiences.

They want to find the data they need on their own, quickly, and consistently. To that end, make sure your search feature is the best it can possibly be, allowing for granular filtering, results exporting and saving, sorting, and sharing.

14. Real-time stock inventories and/or backorder time windows.

Nothing frustrates a B2B ecommerce buyer more than clicking 'Place Order' only to be presented with an error informing them that the product they want is not available. Keep your customers informed of your inventory levels with as much real-time information as you can, and for items that are out of stock, assign a realistic backorder time frame.

15. On-demand customer service via chat, phone, or video call.

Continuing with the theme of self-service, the best approach to providing B2B ecommerce customer support is to make it available as often as possible via as many avenues as possible but without making it feel forced. Give your customers the choice of when and how they engage with your support team, and make it easy to access.

16. The Human Element.

B2B ecommerce automation, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and algorithmic business processes have all but removed the human element from the B2B ecommerce buying experience in many instances. This creates opportunities for companies that can humanize the customer experience in whatever way they can, distinguishing them as businesses run by people, not by programs.

The Power of the Third-Party

Business owners are perpetually close to their companies; they're so close, in fact, that seeing the forest for the trees becomes a significant challenge.

One of the most beneficial (albeit often difficult) decisions a business owner can make is to bring in the experts in one or more disciplines, in order to gain some perspective and identify areas where performance gaps exist and where attention is needed to improve efficiency, increase profitability, and gain more market share.

This is especially true when it comes to B2B ecommerce companies. Orogamis is a trusted resource with experienced professionals who have detailed knowledge that is indispensable for business owners looking to scale, expand, and grow into their full potential.

To learn more about how we can help transform your B2B ecommerce organization, contact us today.

