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Overview

With so many businesses already offering online B2B eCommerce, we've created this eBook based on our experiences and those in the market.

This eBook has been written by a combination of eCommerce vendors and Solveda (global eCommerce consultancy) and collated by Solveda EMEA Sales Director, Chris Patterson. *The 10 Commandments for Eliminating B2B eCommerce Friction*, combines many decades of experience in a short summary.

Most B2B businesses now offer some form of online presence, however very few can say with confidence that they are exploiting its full potential. Consider this book as food for thought, and once you've read it, speak to Solveda (contact details at the start and end of this document and throughout out this eBook) and we can talk about a <u>free friction assessment</u>.

ABOUT SOLVEDA

Founded in 2013 and headquartered in Long Island, New York, Solveda is an award-winning software design and development company. As a highly innovative global systems integrator, Solveda's commitment to on-time, on budget projects is increasingly embraced by some of the world's best run businesses.

Over the past two decades, Solveda has served customers ranging from Fortune 500 companies to the world's largest retailers. Solveda has built patent-winning mission critical systems like the trading and accounting system at American Financial Group, run-the-business ERP solutions, and highly transactional eCommerce sites at Yamaha Music, Carrefour, Sleepy's, Continental, TATA and Al-Yousifi.

Solveda's design and software practice brings strong solution design capabilities around a wide array of proprietary, commercial, and open-source platforms. The enterprise solutions practice offers custom development and product engineering solutions.

CONTACT US FOR A FREE FRICTION ASSESSMENT

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https://www.solveda.com/friction-assessment



friction@solveda.com

Get it Now

The 10 Commandments for Eliminating B2B eCommerce Friction

INTRODUCTION

Acquiring customers is expensive and challenging! So, once you acquire them, you want to keep them for as long as possible and get them to buy as much as possible. But have you considered how you may be inadvertently driving them away from your brand? As a consumer, have you ever walked out of a shop because an assistant took too long to serve you? It's a simple example of how to lose a customer but sadly in the digital world, it's even easier for a customer to click to another brand and place an order. In this report, we will identify 10 ways that you are potentially losing customers and will guide you on how to create a customer experience that is as slick and frictionless as possible.



65% of businesses now offer B2B eCommerce capabilities¹

B2C eCommerce sites have long known that friction in the buying process impacts sales. Amazon revolutionized the checkout process by introducing 1-Click in 1997 – where buyers entered the billing and card information just once and from then on buying was just a single click away. However, there is much more to removing friction than just reducing clicks. Good product information and images, helpful technical details, personalization, recommendations, reviews and so on all make a huge difference as does performance, layout, and search. Experts spend ages fine-tuning these areas and simple changes can bring huge awards.



Online retail sales get all the attention, whereas the real digital revolution is actually happening with B2B e-commerce sales²

With the enormous uptick in B2B eCommerce, the friction removal approaches such as those adopted by B2C eCommerce sites are now being deployed by B2B sites. However, B2B is different from B2C so this article will look at those specific tactics B2B eCommerce sites can adopt to help remove friction and increase sales.

¹ https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/growth-marketing-and-sales/our-insights/busting-the-five-biggest-b2b-e-commerce-mythsThe B2B Future Shopper Report 2021, WTC

² https://www.growglobal.com/global-e-commerce-b2b-e-commerce-5-times-bigger-than-b2c-e-commerce/

1 BE FAST & FURIOUS

The single most important factor in converting customers both B2C and B2B is page load speed. But it's even more important than that because since 2010 for desktop and 2018 for mobile, Google counts site speed as an important factor in ranking so if your site's slow, it won't show.

66

Google's research³ suggests that if it takes longer than 3 seconds to load a page you've lost half your users.

It is also important to separate performance at checkout from other transactions, for example search – clearly you want nothing to slow down anywhere but certainly not at checkout.

From 2021, Core Web Vitals⁴ will feature as ranking signals and these include speed, responsiveness as well as a page's visual stability. Besides ranking higher, faster sites get a higher quality score which means a lower cost per click (CPC) for your AdWords campaigns.

But it's a competitive world so it is important to keep improving as standing still is as good as going backwards. New technologies such as Headless PWA are making app-like experiences super-fast on both mobile and desktop and as we know speed is king in B2B.

SOLVEDA Best Practice

Caching Strategies

For all our clients we have a sophisticated performance & caching review and tuning process. Performance testing can identify the bottlenecks.

Caching strategies can be coarse or fine grained – caching large sets of data (for example: a set of SKUs for a Category and the associated price) or fine grained (for example: a cache store for one SKU and one price).

When combined this can be extremely powerful and lead to an impressively fast site!

And then there's Customer Experience (CX).

CX spans many areas on a B2B eCommerce site from UI to search to content but the most important thing you can do is not waste your B2B buyer's most valuable commodity - their time.

With 86% of buyers willing to pay more for a good CX, ⁵ it is hardly surprising that Temkin Group discovered that for \$1B revenue plus companies investing in CX can expect to earn on average \$700M more. ⁶

As an example, an HCL Commerce customer recently moved to V9 which has driven a 30% increase in performance and a consequent \$70M in extra revenue.

³ https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/marketing-strategies/app-and-mobile/mobile-page-speed-new-industry-benchmarks/

⁴ https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-core-web-vitals-ranking-signals/

⁵ https://www.pwc.com/us/en/advisory-services/publications/consumer-intelligence-series/pwc-consumer-intelligence-series-customer-experience.pdf

⁶ https://www.qualtrics.com/xm-institute/roi-of-customer-experience-2018/

An astonishing 53% of buyers⁷ have switched suppliers for all purchases in the last 12 months because they find online purchasing frustrating and more difficult than offline

Buyers want to get in, buy, and get on with their jobs. Each time your buyer decides a consequent action is needed is an opportunity for them to wander off.

Creating a frictionless buying experience is vital and a low click journey is essential. However, the B2B journey is different from the B2C journey – it's more complex. Often more people are involved, the buying process may have approvals and workflows, and the order value is usually higher. Besides this, sales cycles can be much longer and relationships vital.

When designing the journey, consider these features:

- Repeat order: much of B2B business is repetitive. Expose previous orders with a simple low click reorder button
- Upload CSV: allow your B2B buyers to work on assembling a buy list offline in spreadsheets and upload to order en masse
- Bulk order by item number: bulk buyers will expect wholesale packaging and discounts, so your site needs to be able offer this to permitted buyers for allowed products
- Order from custom catalog: again, consider the time-poor B2B buyer. Displaying only the products & prices specific to them will allow them to order quicker.
- Kitting / Bundling: grouping together certain products to form a bundle speeds up ordering as buyers don't need to spend time doing this. This needs to be tied into warehouse processes to make it cost effective.

SOLVEDA Best Practice

Punch-out

Most high-end eCommerce vendors offer the ability to punch-out to buyer procurement platforms. This allows B2B buyers to sit within their existing procurement systems while browsing and selecting from your custom catalog.

Buyers select you as a seller, create their orders which are then automatically placed into their internal approval flow.

Buyers save time by using systems they know and avoid rekeying. Sellers exist as a preferred supplier within buyer's systems.

⁷ https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/marketing-strategies/app-and-mobile/mobile-page-speed-new-industry-benchmarks/

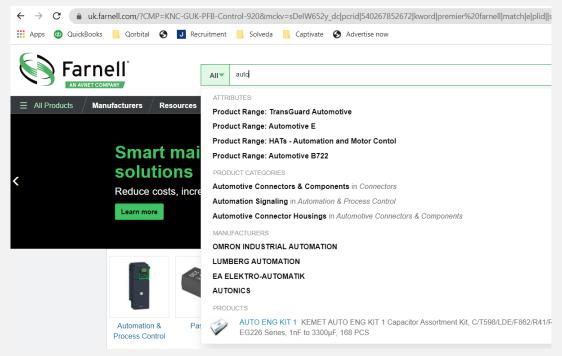
3 Make Search Snappy and Relevant

Picture yourself as a buyer and you've just used a reasonable search phrase for a product and received zero hits and no recommendations. Do you soldier on until you find what you're after (if you can) or do you skip to another site which has a great search engine which displays what you are looking for immediately. Do you tolerate a bad site that lists loads of irrelevant products that you are asked to wade through before you find what you want?

Here are some important search features to look out for:

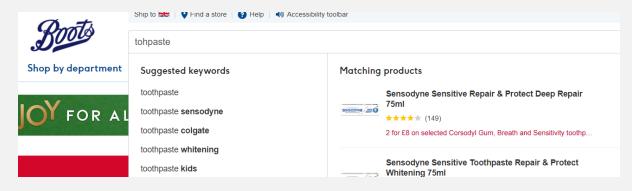
Autocomplete, suggestions and search filters

 Premier Farnell, a global UK B2B corporation, offers autocomplete and suggestions which can later be filtered:



Synonyms and spell-check

Boots understands synonyms and typos:



There are plenty of further ways a site can offer advance search:

 Voice and Visual search. As people are becoming much more inclined to access your site via mobile, they have less access to a full desktop keyboard. Voice AI as well as image searching both within a site and via search engines make it far more convenient for users to access products using these interfaces.

As ever, mobile is driving a shift in how people find products with at least 20% of mobile searches now coming via voice8.

- Matchmaking to handle color palettes
 Make sure your search engine can handle color synonyms e.g. "crimson" = "red".
- Synonyms automatically created based on search data
 It is possible to build lists of synonyms, and these are a good start for advanced search.
- However, users often enter arguments which don't entirely reflect what they are looking for, with a variety of spellings, so having an automatic way of almost ignoring the entry's meaning but matching it to selected hits is a must. For example, having a synonym engine that works out that both "mac power" and "apple charger" produce numerous clicks to the same charger page means it can automatically generate (and keep generating) matches.
- Search within custom catalog (i.e., only the products you are approved to buy). Authenticated B2B users only want to see the content they might buy. Having product content tagged for buyer type will allow your site to be far better tuned to what you can sell.
- Search by contract pricing. Your search engine needs to be able to handle searches for pricing specific to the authenticated user.

SOLVEDA

Client Spotlight

Search Relevancy

For a large commercial truck parts retailer, with a 500K SKU catalog, the search results often showed out of stock items. They wanted to offer any product the customer may want but didn't often carry inventory for those products.

Solveda worked with the team to introduce a "ranking" factor, based on historical sales, to boost search positions of the highest selling items. The ranking was not specifically tied to guaranteed inventory availability but provided a very good indicator that inventory would be available (they go to great lengths to keep popular items in stock).

The Results

Significant improvements were made, with first pages showing in-stock items, all smartly balanced with the underlying "relevancy" required for an effective search.

⁸ https://www.brafton.com/blog/seo/8-voice-search-statistics-in-2019-and-why-they-matter/

- Search that handles UOM conversion (Imperial to Metric and vice versa). Users will be more comfortable with the measurement units in their market so be prepared to convert where necessary.
- Own brand (white label) vs brand leaders. There are obvious advantages to both buyer and supplier (price and profit) for own brand products to receive prominent positioning.

Customer searching can bring more value if relevant offers appear alongside relevant search terms and with AI on the rise, search is becoming more intelligent. Consider a website that sells gloves and has products for cleaners as well as builders. An Intelligent search engine will know who is searching (as they are logged in) and will be able to return the relevant results. A builder most likely is not going to want Marigolds – irrelevant hits will just add friction.

Finally, it's also important to be able to handle different search terms including non-product ones. For example, customers might want to search for a returns policy or terms & conditions. Your search engine needs to find more than just the product information — it needs to also aid the selling process.

4 THINK MOBILE FIRST

A chunky 63 percent of Google's US organic search traffic originated from mobile devices which means a large proportion of buyers are now using mobile and a mobile first strategy has become essential for any B2B site?.

Many buyers have company mobile phones on which they spend a large proportion of their day and site design needs to consider these things:

The buyer can switch device during the process. Consider buying

somebody wandering around a warehouse or office

building an order list and returning later to their desktop to complete the order. The experience needs to be seamless and fit the device on which they are working.

- Create content specifically for mobile, be it images, videos, documentation, or podcasts.
- Make the experience fast and personal. Just like for desktop, slow load times will make people give up.
- If you need, use the device's capabilities such as location and camera.
- Mobile screen estate is obviously different from a desktop so data entry for a parts list, for example, will be different than on a desktop.
- Avoid using pop-up windows in a mobile experience.

SOLVEDA **Best Practice**

Mobile First Design

It's not a new concept, but Mobile First Design is the only effective and practical way to solve this thorny topic.

In some business domains this particularly important, given 70% of traffic may be from a mobile device.

⁹ Merkle Inc, 2019

5 REMEMBER, IT'S PERSONAL!

One of the best ways of adding friction to the sales process is by not knowing your buyer. It's a big subject spanning most areas of the buying process and here's a selection of areas to consider:

As manufacturers and distributors transition to digital sales environments, personalization needs to be a top priority and tech investment. Research shows ¹⁰ that most buyers now expect all their interactions to be personalized. Gartner predicts B2B sellers that incorporate personalization into digital commerce will realize revenue increases up to 15%.

- Pricing and Discounts. Typically, more established customers with bigger volumes can
 expect lower prices and if you don't respond to this, you've added in potential friction –
 price lists must be tailored to each client. The same might go with discounts where,
 depending on your market, competitors might have better signup incentives to attract new
 customers.
- Customer preferences. Certain accounts will have certain default purchasing processes. Make sure only those relevant to the client appear at checkout.
- Administrative Self Service. History shows us that efficiencies are usually made through disintermediation and B2B eCommerce is no exception. Your buyers are all different with individual payment settings, user management, authorization workflows and so on. If customers need to speak to you for every change their business requires this will add friction and delays whereas a great self-service portal increases their customer satisfaction and will add to revenues.

SOLVEDA Client Spotlight

Curated Catalog

Our client, a commercial restaurant supply company, has some very large chain restaurants as customers. As such, these buyers have negotiated to purchase from a curated catalog, with their agreed upon prices.

Contract pricing is nothing new in B2B, but a curated catalog allowed buyers of large chains to see only the products that should be purchased.

Instead of being confronted with a catalog of 100K products, buyers may only see 200, and have full confidence that whatever they purchased will "fit" within their company's guidelines.

¹⁰ https://b2bmarketing.wbresearch.com/blog/personalization-the-new-foundation-of-b2b-digital-sales

6 DON'T BE A MONEY BARRIER

B2B buyers need far more flexible options than B2C. They expect POs, trade credit, cash on delivery, invoicing as well as the traditional credit card and payment providers.

Flexible eCommerce payment options blend traditional methods of payment processing (like cash on delivery, checks, and ACH transfers) with modern digital counterparts (like mobile wallets, third-party financing, and cryptocurrency). It's in your best interest as a B2B seller to implement flexible payment options if you want to drive eCommerce conversions.

However, it is worth considering these carefully as many introduce friction. For example, credit cards are ubiquitous and simple to use, but company credit cards can be risky and need administering, and personal cards will require an expense claim. And with credit cards you are always at risk of a charge back with associated financial risks and administerial overheads.

Invoicing, trade credit, cash on delivery are traditional methods but they mirror physical processes in a digital age. With all these a back office is required to make sure money is collected, buyers are credit-worthy, and reconciliation can match deliveries with orders.

In a digital age, digital payments excel and there are numerous providers with the list continually growing. Both buyers and sellers can benefit as the buying process can be streamlined, cashflow improved and credit risk diminished. Examples include Stripe, Braintree, Chargify, Recurly, Chargebee, Digital River, Netsuite and Apttus.

And now with the advent of cryptocurrencies, it might be a great idea to accept them too.

Post payment follow-up is an important part too as sellers need to know what has been done well (and not so well) so the account can be grown. These can be used to deepen and expand account relationships, something that we expect more with B2B than B2C.

SOLVEDA

Best Practice

One Size Doesn't Always Fit All

It's counter intuitive to a streamlined checkout process, but for one of our clients we built a checkout flow that included **additional** steps. It was designed to ensure that the delivery of large items could actual "land".

If a customer ordered specific items, it would be necessary for the buyer to receive the items at a loading dock so the product could be wheeled from the truck into the warehouse. If a loading dock was not available, then a truck with a liftgate would be required.

Adding these simple steps increased the landing rate by 8%, resulting in less trips, less returns, and adding more to the bottom line.

It's often a stretch to get B2B to move from traditional buying but as buyers become increasingly digitized, the task gets smaller.

¹¹ https://ultracommerce.co/blog/payment-methods-for-driving-b2b-ecommerce-conversions/

7 KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON

Understanding how your site is performing requires great analytics to find things like bottlenecks, rage clicks, and general site metrics. In B2C one of the first considerations is to work out how many site sessions are occurring because **Sessions x Conversion Rate x AOV = \$**.

In B2B sessions really matter too because relationships are closer and, in this case, digitized. So, through behavior of your buyers, it is possible to fine tune offerings and products and offer a similar if not better version of the F2F salesman.

Modern analytics can be divided into three areas – web analytics, application performance and behavioral analytics:



- Web analytics is often performed using tools like Google Analytics (GA) which is essential for picking up things like sessions, bounce rates and so on.
- Application Performance Monitoring (APM) is typically done with tools like Dynatrace, and it involves monitoring the whole application's performance for availability, transaction times, and performance issues.
- Behavioral Analytics can find a deeper level of detail. For example, standard web analytics, such as Google Analytics, may provide aggregated metrics that are valuable, but incomplete. It tells you what happens. Sophisticated behavioral analytics tools, such as HCL Discover, offer "struggle detection", keeping track of user actions and shedding light on why it happens and what you can do to fix it.

B2B companies historically lag behind their B2C counterparts in adopting and deploying commercial analytics, but the ones who engage with the tools already outperform their peers; their return on sales are up to five percentage points higher than that of their counterparts 12

¹² https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/growth-marketing-and-sales/our-insights/b2b-commercial-analytics-what-outperformers-do

8 Tell them where their Stuff is

The "Amazon Effect" has completely changed how we think about deliveries from an annoying charge that features (and possible abandons) a purchase at its end, to a feature (Prime) that you search for. Besides the fact that they excel at impressive physical distribution capabilities, they also charge for Prime upfront encouraging its use thereafter - it simply feels like delivery is free each time you order. It's the gold standard.

94% of people who make purchases for their company expect the same level of customer satisfaction as when making personal purchases. These expectations focus on low-cost, fast, and <u>highly transparent</u> delivery of goods ¹³.

As usual B2B is a little trickier. Orders can be significantly more complicated, reliant on other suppliers and time is often more critical. Unless it's the cake for your 5-year old's birthday party today, B2C can be a little more flexible with delivery time but with B2B, orders are often time critical. Besides this, the exact same trends in B2C delivery are emerging in B2B as buyers are increasingly expectant of the same experience – delivery slots, free delivery, tracking, overnight and same day delivery (and the all-important avoidance of the sudden big charge at the end of an order).

Here are a few things to look out for:

- Be on time: Schedule deliveries in time slots with real time tracking. B2B buyers expect the same as B2C.
- Be clear with communications: allow buyers a two-way communications stream with your back office and with drivers. Use tracking so they can selfserve.
- Keep costs down: if your volumes need it, outsource delivery so costs can be shared. Use the right software to plan routes automatically and dynamically as orders change.
- Offer options: like B2C, offer a range of options and delivery costs so that your buyer can choose what suits them
- Be fast: B2B always has increasing efficiency pressures so the ability to get orders to customers quickly and punctually is always a must-have and in some cases can trump price!

SOLVEDA

Client Spotlight

Manage Delivery Expectations

For two of our B2B clients, a large trucking parts company and a restaurant supplying company we see that:

- B2B buyers are often working on tight deadlines and tight margins
- They simply don't have the capacity to keep a large inventory of your products.

In today's "just in time" fulfillment age — we have found that buyers will remain "sticky" if delivery expectations are clear and met. If not met, they will appreciate a heads-up—all maximizing potential subsequent sales.

¹³ https://www.ccjdigital.com/business/article/14938682/study-shows-rise-in-delivery-expectations-for-b2b-b2c

9 LEND A HELPING HAND



The pandemic changed many things, but one that was very noticeable was the shift to digital guided buying. Prepandemic, in-person selling was the

least frictional experience will, one day, involve only AI probably on both sides of the equation.

But we're not there yet. Although AI can play a role in the process and so can technology generally, the first thing to do is for businesses to work out exactly how mature their guided buying process

According to CapGemini¹⁴ there are 5 key areas to consider:

- **Buyer journey**: Are your buyers looking for product demos, or do they want a partner with a shared view of milestones and activities?
- Sales intimacy: Are you doing one-toone transactional sales, one-to-many solution sales, or ongoing partnerships?
- People: Maturity in this area ranges from establishing rapport with customers to being an industry influencer.
- Forecasts and coaching: Are you at the
- one-on-one stage, using data-validated projections or using AI forecasting?

self-service easily and require people intervention only where necessary.

• Technology: Does your selling stack consist of email, a videoconferencing platform, and a

and searching.

CRM, or do you have comprehensive collaboration software for sales?

norm but as all buying went digital, buyers and sellers had to find ways of using digital platforms to help aid the sale. B2B sellers are at various levels of maturity in this process and clearly the

Assessing these areas can help businesses work out their maturity and how to affect it and where your friction is. Clearly the more complicated products need more intimacy, but the aim is to have closed loop metrics so that buyers receiving friction-free digitized, personalized experiences, can

SOLVEDA **Client Spotlight**

Guided Sales Widget

For one of the largest US mattress retailers Solveda built a Find Your Perfect Mattress, which guided customers through a simple, fun Q&A.

After 4 questions the custom algorithm was able

features. The Find Your Perfect Mattress funnel

converted 38% better than regular navigation

to return the most relevant results including

mattress size, firmness, and other comfort

¹⁴ https://www.digitalcommerce360.com/2021/09/03/guided-selling-is-critical-for-b2b-this-framework-can-help-youget-started/

10 Make Content Shine

Buyers expect detailed product information and a sophisticated multimedia experience with peer reviewed listings.

B2B buyers also need to drill down. Technical specifications and buyer thought leadership all play their parts because B2B eCommerce isn't about just replacing face to face selling. It's about bettering it.

A study reveals that **70%** of the consumers consider detailed product descriptions a critical parameter for buying a product. Detailed and accurate product descriptions help consumers to find products on the website easily ¹⁵.

All this means complicated content management so a CMS that can handle that is essential. Here are 7 things to look out for when you choose a CMS:

- Beautiful product display. Buyers expect the same detail and design as per a B2C site but
 with the catalog tailored to them only the things they are interested in should appear
- Omnichannel. Being able to manage and distribute channel specific content is essential. The
 product demo video you show on a mobile might be different from desktop for example and
 all this content needs distribution across the

website and social media channels.

- No Code. All this content needs to be published by the business not by developers. Marketing needs to be able to run a user-friendly WYSIWYG CMS across all these channels.
- Integrated Tools. Marketing Automation, Analytics, Personalisation Engines and so on all add to a complicated landscape that need to work together.
- International. Your CMS should smoothly distribute multilingual content across any geo.
- Workflow. Multiple languages and channelsspecific content provide for a complex environment that needs to flow through to publication. All this also needs appropriate management and approval which the CMS should provide.
- Expert Buyers. Never forget your expert buyers who don't want your content to get in the way

 give them shortcuts to get straight to purchase
 (uploading of a spreadsheet with SKUs and quantities is a good example).

SOLVEDA

Best Practice

There are no short cuts

Content is king, and there's simply no easy way to get around the fact that content writers (or scrapers) are required for the creation of the content.

However, technology can help for example:

- Easy to use WYSIWYG editors and publishing tools.
- Content that is indexed and searchable (most organizations focus on indexing catalog data; everything should be indexed!).
- Content that is clear and discoverable and available at the right time and place.

¹⁵ https://www.grihasoft.com/blog/the-critical-role-of-content-in-b2b-ecommerce/

CONCLUSION

B2B eCommerce is complex, more complex than B2C. However, buyers expect it to be easy and to enable them to quickly order and get on with their day-jobs.

Processes, payments, and shipping may all be more complex and there are numerous ways that this complexity can spill over and make the buyer's experience high on friction – we need to solve this friction or face losing loyal customers to the competition, who has figured it out. The path of least resistance will be the winner in the customer experience.

In this guide we have looked at the 10 commandments for reducing friction within a B2B eCommerce site. Solveda can help you prioritize and address points of friction - schedule a consultation with us today.

What is certain is that if you build your site with less friction and make it easier for the buyers, you will sell more.

CONTACT US FOR A FREE FRICTION ASSESSMENT

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Get it Now



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