athos commerce

BUYER'S GUIDE

Choosing an ecommerce tech stack for intelligent product discovery

A framework for evaluating on-site optimization and off-site product feed vendors



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Your current setup is a tale of two halves

Crack an egg into a bowl and find only yolk, and you'll know right away something's missing. Nobody needs to tell you the picture is incomplete.

Many online retailers are having a similar moment. Ask an ecommerce or performance marketing team about their day-to-day remit, and you'll likely get two very different answers. Take a closer look, and it's clear both teams rely on the same product data. One team sends it to Google Shopping, marketplaces, social platforms, and AI assistants to bring the right shoppers on-site. The other turns it into on-site search results, category pages, and personalization. Yet many retailers manage the two halves as though they're from different eggs.

An ecommerce leader may not directly own product feeds. But take a moment to consider who owns organic search and product discovery on AI platforms. It's typically the ecommerce team, working with the same data as the performance marketing team.

That overlap matters because product data is a continuous improvement initiative that affects the whole business. A product information management (PIM) system and a round of manual data enrichment give you a starting point. After that, trends change, stock fluctuates, and every promotional period can lead to iterations of the same product data. Each feed improvement can attract higher-intent shoppers from off-site channels and paid campaigns. Each data gap also affects the on-site experiences that decide whether those shoppers convert.

The questions in this guide are built for both teams to answer, using the same products and the same shopping period. Crack the data open, and you'll see the whole picture, from how shoppers discover your products off-site to what they experience once they arrive on-site. You'll gain valuable insight into the focus areas for your current setup, ready to engage any ecommerce technology partner. Whether your score reveals a mostly optimized setup or one that needs help, you'll find the answers to put that cracked egg back together again.



Two halves, one set of product data

Off-site [Performance marketing] - Sends product data to Google Shopping, marketplaces, social platforms, and AI assistants to bring the right shoppers on-site.

On-site [Ecommerce] - Turns the same data into on-site search results, category pages, and personalization.

Where they overlap - Organic search and product discovery on AI platforms usually sit with the ecommerce team, working from the performance marketing team's data.

STEP 1 · ASSESS

Five questions to answer before a demo

Base your answers on a recent shopping period and a product sample that includes important sellers alongside items that have caused problems. Your ecommerce and performance marketing teams should assess the same sample so you can trace differing answers to a specific query, listing, or product update. Support each answer with a current example, including any work an agency handles for you. Where a report is missing, or a process hasn't been tested, mark the answer as unknown and name someone to investigate it before scoring.

Question	Evidence to bring	Track
Q1. Can shoppers find the products you stock?	Real search queries, including zero-result searches, and examples where products you stock were missed	[ON-SITE]
Q2. How much merchandising still depends on manual rules, and can you tell which changes improved results?	Recent promotions and collection changes, how products were promoted or demoted, and the reports used to judge results	[ON-SITE]
Q3. Are priority products eligible and accurately represented on your chosen channels?	Disapprovals and warnings in Google Merchant Center or marketplace dashboards, plus spot checks of price, availability, and product details	[OFF-SITE]
Q4. How much manual work goes into recurring product feed problems?	Time spent investigating and fixing product feed errors, such as missing GTINs or attributes, including agency work	[OFF-SITE]
Q5. Can you keep product information consistent across your site and channels?	One product update traced from its source to each destination, with exceptions explained	[BOTH]



Michael Stars [ON]

Static search and filtering were costing Michael Stars sales through zero-result searches. After moving to Athos search and merchandising, zero-result searches dropped 35 percent.[1]

35%

fewer zero-result searches

Four approaches to product discovery

Shoppers find and choose products on your website and through external channels such as Google Shopping, marketplaces, and AI assistants. A vendor may specialize in one part of that journey or offer applications across several parts. An evaluation needs to account for the connections between applications as well as the features within each.

[ON-SITE]

On-site optimization

Search, merchandising, and personalization on your own site

Investigate: *relevance on your catalog, merchandiser control, and connections to product data maintained elsewhere*

[OFF-SITE]

Off-site discoverability

Product feeds and listings for shopping ads such as Google Shopping, plus marketplaces and AI platforms

Investigate: *channel coverage and enrichment, error handling, and who owns ongoing maintenance*

[EITHER]

Native platform capabilities and plugins

Discovery tools supplied by your commerce platform or added through apps

Investigate: *available features and plan limits, app dependencies, and the combined workload*

[BOTH]

Intelligent product discovery platforms

A broader offering spanning on-site discovery and product feed management

Investigate: *which applications share data and workflows, how they connect, and what remains separate*



A specialist can be a good fit when you need depth in one area, and the rest of your setup works well. Before adding another tool, check whether an unused native feature could meet that requirement. Consider a broader platform when several parts of discovery need improvement and coordination is a major part of the problem.

Because AI features can appear in any of these approaches, the label tells you little about how the proposed solution will work with your products. A demonstration should make the required configuration visible, along with the connections between applications. Even when one company supplies several tools, ask to see how a product update passes between them.



Sterling Home [ON]

On its commerce platform's native search, queries such as "green sofa" missed the right product across a catalog with many variant pages. During its summer sale, search conversion rate rose from 0.50 percent to 0.76 percent in the 33 days after launching Athos search, compared with the 38 days before.[2]

0.76%

search conversion rate, up from 0.50%

STEP 2 · COMPARE

Compare the work each approach covers

Use this table to compare proposals against the same work. The columns match the five questions on page 4, and each cell describes what to ask the vendor to show you. Some approaches don't cover every area; an on-site search vendor, for example, usually doesn't manage product feeds. Those cells are marked "Usually outside scope" and tell you what to confirm instead, such as which tool or team will handle that work. The last column shows the work your team takes on to set up and run each approach.

Approach	Q1 On-site findability [ON]	Q2 Merchandiser control [ON]	Q3 Channel accuracy [OFF]	Q4 Feed maintenance [OFF]	Q5 Product consistency [BOTH]	Setup and running work for your team
On-site optimization	Run your own real search queries against your catalog and compare the results with what shoppers should find.	Show how performance data decides which products are promoted or demoted, then how the results of a change are reported.	Usually outside scope. Ask which tool or team will manage channel listings.	Usually outside scope. Name who will own feed errors and fixes.	Change a price in your source system and show when the site reflects it.	Connecting product data and tuning search at setup; ongoing relevance tuning and maintaining links to feed and other systems.
Off-site discoverability	Usually outside scope. Confirm which tool handles on-site search.	Usually outside scope. Confirm which tool handles on-site merchandising.	Get the list of channels supported today and see how listings are checked for price, availability, and product details.	Watch a real feed error get found, diagnosed, and fixed, and note who does each step.	Trace one product from your source data to each channel, including any changes the feed applies along the way.	Connecting product data and channels at setup; daily monitoring and fixing products that fail channel rules

Approach	Q1 On-site findability [ON]	Q2 Merchandiser control [ON]	Q3 Channel accuracy [OFF]	Q4 Feed maintenance [OFF]	Q5 Product consistency [BOTH]	Setup and running work for your team
Native platform capabilities and plugins	Test the search included in your plan on your own queries.	List which merchandising controls your plan includes, whether any use performance data, and where plan limits apply.	Confirm which channels need a separate app and whether each app checks listing accuracy.	List which feed tasks the apps automate and which your team handles by hand.	Show how a product update passes between the platform and each app.	Choosing and configuring apps at setup; app updates, plan changes, and coordinating support across app vendors
Intelligent product discovery platforms	Test the proposed search application on your own queries.	Show how the proposed merchandising application uses performance data to promote or demote products and report the results.	Confirm the channels the proposed feed application supports and how it checks listings.	Watch a real feed error get found, diagnosed, and fixed.	Show which product data the applications share, who owns it, and where handoffs remain.	Migration and integration work at setup; maintaining shared product data rules and any connections the platform doesn't cover

Ask each vendor to identify which applications its proposal includes. Where delivery depends on a partner or an integration, the proposal should explain who is responsible and which additional services are required. An implementation estimate will not tell you how much work remains after launch. Ask who maintains the configuration as your assortment and channel requirements change, and record agency responsibilities alongside your team's. Use those answers to compare ongoing effort separately from the work of switching.



David Jones [OFF]

David Jones had limited SKU visibility, too many feed filters, and frequent Google Merchant Center disapprovals. After switching its product feed management to Athos and removing filters left by the previous setup, more than 60 percent of its SKUs were reactivated.[3]

60%+

of SKUs reactivated

STEP 3 · MEASURE

Count the work between your tools

Each additional tool adds work to keep product information aligned, even when every tool performs well on its own.

A price change may reach the website before a channel listing updates, leaving someone to check whether the difference is an expected delay or an error. Product data can also change with trends, available inventory, and promotional periods. Correcting an attribute in one application should remove work in the others.

To understand where that work arises, trace a recent product change from approval through each destination and record the time involved. Distinguish errors from deliberate differences, such as a channel-specific title, so the assessment captures unnecessary reconciliation without treating useful customization as a problem. Count four kinds of work:

1

Repeated corrections:

The same underlying product error is repaired in multiple places.

2

Investigation:

Staff compare catalog records and published listings to find where a change stopped, or an error began.

3

Handoffs:

An update waits for another team, an agency, or a developer before it can proceed.

4

Verification:

Someone checks that the correction reached every affected destination and that the problem has not returned.



Use recorded staff hours and agency charges to estimate operating costs, and count temporary migration work separately. A rejected listing won't tell you how many orders it cost, so document the assumptions of sales revenue impact and keep those estimates apart from observed results.

Ask a vendor that covers both feed management and on-site discovery to trace the same product change, showing which tasks it would remove and where your team would still be involved. Include reporting in that discussion because combining channel and on-site figures may require additional work. Before treating those figures as one revenue total, establish which transactions each report includes and how you handle overlapping attribution.



Pillow Talk [OFF]

Pillow Talk updated product titles and categories by hand, and product attributes differed from one channel to the next. After moving its product feeds to Athos, more than 90 percent of its SKUs received at least one Google Shopping impression every day over a 90-day period.[4]

90%+

of SKUs with a daily Google Shopping impression

STEP 4 · SCORE

Rate your current setup

Use evidence from your chosen product sample and shopping period to score each question from 1 to 10. The descriptions under 1, 5, and 10 show what each score looks like. They are reference points for your own assessment and are not drawn from industry benchmarks. Choose an intermediate score where the evidence falls between descriptions, or enter U when you cannot substantiate an answer.

Question	Score 1: Needs attention	Score 5: Partly working	Score 10: Working well	Your score (1–10 or U)
Q1. On-site findability [ON]	Relevant stocked products are frequently missed or return zero results	Common queries work; others need repeated fixes	Representative queries reliably return relevant stocked products	
Q2. Merchandiser control [ON]	Product placement is set by hand, and results are hard to assess	Some placement uses performance data; other rules are manual and rarely reviewed	Placement decisions draw on performance data, and merchandisers can see which changes improved results	
Q3. Channel accuracy [OFF]	Priority listings are disapproved or contain incorrect details	Regular checks uncover errors that require correction	Priority listings are eligible and accurate in repeated checks	
Q4. Feed maintenance [OFF]	Recurring problems require repeated investigation and repair	Known fixes follow a process but remain manual	Recurring problems need little manual work; controls and checks prevent recurrence	
Q5. Product consistency [BOTH]	Conflicting copies need separate corrections	The team has agreed on a source; updates require manual reconciliation	Approved updates reach each destination; deliberate exceptions are documented	

Product sample: _____ **Shopping period:** _____

Evidence and owner for each score: _____

STEP 5 · ACT

Turn your scores into actions

Use each score to decide what to investigate or retain in your current setup:

1–3
Investigate the problem before adding spend or effort to that process.

4–7
Test improvements with your existing setup.

8–10
Retain the process and monitor performance.

U
Gather evidence first.

Use the bands to plan follow-up work; they show where to investigate and make no prediction about revenue. For every score below 8, use the corresponding action:

Question	What to investigate	Track
Q1. On-site findability	Test missed queries; distinguish missing product attributes from search configuration or capability limits	[ON]
Q2. Merchandiser control	Identify which placement decisions are still manual and which changes have no way to measure results	[ON]
Q3. Channel accuracy	Find the causes of disapproved or inaccurate listings on priority channels	[OFF]
Q4. Feed maintenance	Check whether recurring repairs can be prevented or handled with less manual work	[OFF]
Q5. Product consistency	Trace duplicate edits and conflicting values to their source; assign ownership	[BOTH]

With mixed scores, focus on the weaker processes and preserve the parts that are working. Several low scores give you a reason to compare broader approaches alongside improvements to current tools; scores of at least 8 throughout support retaining the setup unless requirements change. For each improvement, agree on who owns the work and how success will be tested, then schedule it around your sales calendar. During peak preparation, that may mean completing smaller changes now and allowing a later window for implementation.





RUDIS [ON]

RUDIS found merchandising highly manual after a platform move. Using Athos merchandising rules on its high-traffic collections lifted conversion rate on those collections by 18 percent.[5]

18%

conversion rate on high-traffic collections

STEP 6 · DEMO

Ask vendors to demonstrate the answer

Your assessment examples give vendors a concrete problem to demonstrate against, making it easier to judge whether a solution would improve your current process. As they work through representative products, ask what would be needed to reproduce the demonstration in your environment. Their proposal should distinguish included capabilities from configuration, integration, and services that would be delivered later.

Ask yourself	Ask the vendor	Track
Q1. Which stocked products were missed?	Run these queries against representative catalog data, explaining the results and how incorrect matches are corrected	[ON]
Q2. Which merchandising decisions are still manual?	Show how a merchandiser uses performance data to promote or demote products, how the results are reported, and how to restore the previous setup	[ON]
Q3. Which priority listings are inaccurate or disapproved?	Show how you detect these problems and verify the correction on the destination channel	[OFF]
Q4. Which feed problems consume the most time?	Demonstrate the repair process, identifying what is automated and who handles exceptions	[OFF]
Q5. Where do product records disagree?	Trace one update to each destination, showing which applications share data and where a separate integration or approval is required	[BOTH]

Every vendor

What must work during peak season?
Ask for a comparable customer reference and an explanation of escalation coverage, response commitments, and who is responsible when an issue crosses applications.

Reporting examples should show how the vendor measures the outcomes your business cares about, with attribution definitions and export options explained. Where reports must be combined, include that work and its dependencies in the proposal. Record unresolved requirements alongside the proposal, with delivery commitments for any roadmap capability that affects the purchase decision. Review the final scope against the acceptance tests used in the demonstration so those commitments remain tied to your requirements.

Plan the change around your sales calendar

The problems verified in your assessment should determine how much change the implementation requires. Better configuration or clearer ownership may resolve some issues without a new platform. For work that does require replacement software, agree on an acceptance test and an accountable owner before planning the rollout.

1. **Establish the starting point:**
   Use the assessment's products and queries to establish a baseline that includes shopper outcomes and manual maintenance. Agree on how improvements will be measured, allowing for other changes that could influence results during the rollout.

2. **Assign product-information ownership:**
   Shared attributes need an agreed source and someone responsible for approving changes, with channel-specific transformations documented. A title optimized for one destination should not overwrite information needed elsewhere. Ask the vendor to demonstrate how the proposed applications preserve those distinctions and handle exceptions as product records change.

3. **Set the sequence and rollback plan:**
   Coordinate on-site and off-site changes around their dependencies, allowing enough time to test before your busiest season. A staged rollout may offer more control, while a joint cutover requires evidence that both applications and their connections are ready. Before either proceeds, agree on the go/no-go checks and how the team would restore the previous operation.

4. **Confirm support before launch:**
   Document responsibility for configuration and feed exceptions alongside training and escalation arrangements, with coverage hours matched to the regions where you sell. An incident that crosses applications needs a named owner who can coordinate the vendor and any agency or integration partner. The proposal should specify which services are included and the charges for additional work.

At the first post-launch review, use the acceptance tests to assess what has improved and which manual tasks remain. Assign that remaining work before the implementation team moves on, with a follow-up scheduled to check performance through a full seasonal cycle. Compare those results with the page 11 scores you recorded at the start, so both teams can see which answers have changed and whether the two halves are now working as one.





Sweaty Betty [ON]

Sweaty Betty's product feed described products in less depth than its website. In a Q2 2026 Google Shopping test, 161 yoga products with AI-written product highlights earned 80 percent more revenue than a held-back control group.[6]

80%

revenue vs. a held-back control group

Customer results in context

Athos Commerce customers have used on-site discovery and product feed management to address different operating problems, and the examples throughout this guide link to their full case studies. When comparing any result with your own situation, look at the customer's starting conditions and scope of work alongside the reported outcome and measurement period.

ON-SITE DISCOVERY



MILTON & KING

3.84%

Conversion rate more than doubled, from 1.49 percent in October 2022 to 3.84 percent in November 2023, after deploying Athos Commerce search and merchandising.[7]



THULE SWEDEN

+80%

Increase in search usage since implementation, after launching Athos search in 23 markets at once.[8]

OFF-SITE DISCOVERY



endeavour group

+275%

Rise in paid campaign conversion rate within three months of rollout at BWS.[9]



officeworks

+50%

Growth in the number of SKUs shown to customers after replacing legacy file-based product feeds.[10]

Sources

1 Michael Stars
athoscommerce.com/case-studies/michael-stars/

2 Sterling Home
athoscommerce.com/case-studies/sterling-home/

3 David Jones
athoscommerce.com/case-studies/david-jones/

4 Pillow Talk
athoscommerce.com/case-studies/pillow-talk/

5 RUDIS
athoscommerce.com/case-studies/rudis/

6 Sweaty Betty
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7 Milton & King
athoscommerce.com/case-studies/milton-and-king/

8 Thule
athoscommerce.com/case-studies/thule/

9 Endeavour Group
athoscommerce.com/case-studies/endeavour-group/

10 Officeworks
athoscommerce.com/case-studies/officeworks/

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NEXT STEP

Book an Intelligent Discovery assessment.

Bring your page 11 scores, the products shoppers struggle to find, and the tasks your team keeps repeating. An assessment can help you evaluate what needs to improve and the work a change would involve, with timing that fits your peak-season plans.

Athos Commerce brings on-site search, merchandising, and personalization together with product feed management, so your ecommerce and performance marketing teams can work with one partner on the same products.

BOOK AN ASSESSMENT

