



How Consero helped BigCommerce grow from start-up to one of the year's hottest IPOs

For the past nine years, BigCommerce relied on Consero's Finance as a Service [FaaS] model and found that the tech-enabled service provider scaled up well with the company's massive growth, allowing its CFO to focus on the strategic initiatives that took the enterprise from an early-stage start-up to a massive public offering.

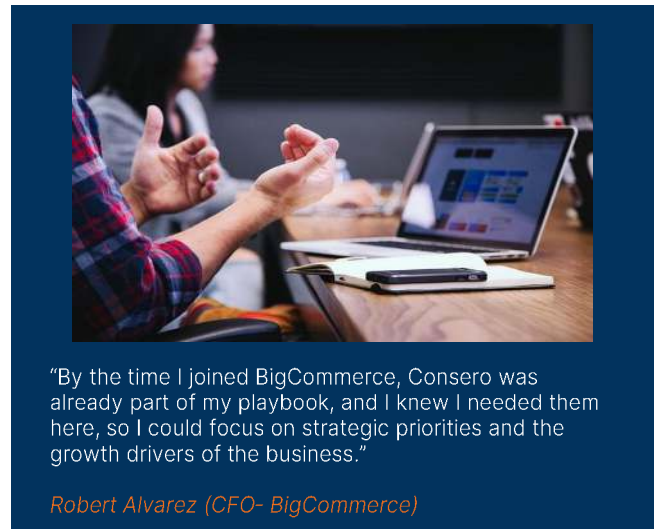
A Page From The CFO Playbook

Back in 2011, BigCommerce was very much a start-up, still running on its series A funding and essentially relying on QuickBooks to manage its finances. That year, they tapped Robert Alvarez as CFO, and he knew they needed to take a hard look at the systems, processes and people in the finance function in order to drive efficiencies and scale up the operations of the business.

Alvarez had worked with Consero on multiple occasions before and knew their Finance as a Service solution could streamline processes, automate back-office transactions and essentially upgrade the finance function in a turn- key fashion.

"By the time I joined BigCommerce, Consero was already part of my playbook, and I knew I needed them here, so I could focus on strategic priorities and the growth drivers of the business," says Alvarez.

For the new CFO, Consero offered a managed solution with the right mix of digital systems, well-mapped processes and skilled finance & accounting talent. Within two weeks, the tech-enabled service provider had implemented and transferred the GL to Sage Intacct. Additionally, Consero was already working to streamline and automate as much as of the processes as possible. "We get a lot of leverage around the automated workflows and we've been paperless from the beginning, which streamlined many processes over the life of this partnership."



Skilled Finance Talent & Pre-Integrated Software Stack with Digital Processes and Workflows

But Consero's contribution went beyond upgrading their technology and processing the back-office finance & accounting transactions. "We were able to take a huge part of the human capital burden off his desk," says Chris Hartenstein, Managing Director with Consero. Alvarez didn't have to fret about the recruiting, hiring and managing of the finance function, which only became more as the company grew over the next eight years. "My team didn't need to worry as much about training anyone and getting them up to speed," says Alvarez. "We just let Consero know what we needed and Consero stepped in to deliver it, which saved us plenty of time and recruiting cycles."

With Consero managing the back-office and business continuity risks, Alvarez didn't have to be concerned with losing key team members. "In smaller middle market companies, the loss of any member of the team means so much institutional knowledge walks out the door with them," says Hartenstein. "But at Consero, we have any number of people to step in should someone leave. This ensures their business continuity is maintained."



And even now, as BigCommerce operates as a public company, Consero is still an important piece of the company's finance function. "There aren't too many service providers that stayed with us from the time I started, and that speaks to the quality and reliability of Consero's technology, systems and people," says Alvarez.

In fact, the Consero team worked so closely with BigCommerce, that the company leveraged their expertise to help prep them for their IPO. Over the eight years, Consero's worked so closely with Robert's team, it was obvious they should leverage their skills for the IPO prep. "They had so much tribal knowledge, and such a grasp of all the previous transactions and systems," says Alvarez. "So, the IPO readiness plan had several components prepared by them." This was only possible by collaborating on a consistent and intimate basis.

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Robert Alvarez (CFO- BigCommerce)

Company Culture That Fits

“When I suggest Consero to someone, I stress that they need to treat them as part of their in-house team, and not merely an outsourced provider.”

Alvarez prides himself on watching Consero team members that serviced his account, mature and advance into leadership roles at Consero. But such a long-term engagement requires that Consero staff truly fit the culture over at Big Commerce.

Consero was in alignment with BigCommerce’s two-bucket approach to hiring:

Bucket One: verifying a candidate had the given skillset, experience and competencies

Bucket Two: seeing they have the intangibles, the values and characteristics that would allow them to fit well with the culture and grow with the existing team

“Without fail, when we needed more support, Consero always finds the right solution for us,” says Alvarez.

Clean Data and Due Diligence Ready

With Consero tackling the finance function with the right people and technology in the early days, Alvarez was able to devote his time to the higher-level strategic initiatives at his company. “As a SaaS business, we’re very metrics and data-driven, so while Consero helped with a lot of the day-to-day accounting, we were able to focus on building up our data warehouse, metrics reporting, and operational best practices across the company,” says Alvarez.

“At BigCommerce, we take real time to map out strategic goals and initiatives, and the reality is that many of the initiatives are owned by other functional areas, but we get pulled in early to play a part in virtually all of them,” says Alvarez. “By outsourcing pieces of the finance function to Consero early on, we were able to be that partner where every functional area can lean on my team for what they need.”

And over the past nine years, Big Commerce has raised growth equity from tier 1 investors like General Catalyst, Revolution, Softbank, GGV Capital and Goldman Sachs, all prior to its successful IPO and subsequent follow-on offering. The IPO was clearly a major initiative that required additional resources and rigor, yet Consero gave Alvarez a solid head start. “If we didn’t have accurate reporting, we would not be compliant or diligence ready in our private financing rounds or our IPO and secondary offering. We’ve been able to meet all of the diligence requests because of the transparency and accuracy in our finance function,” Alvarez noted.

Consero’s CEO, Scott Tynes explains: “So many of the controls we put in place as part of our onboarding are exactly the type of processes that private companies need to establish before going public, and so, BigCommerce had a great foundation to build upon in order to get public company ready.”



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This was already evident to Alvarez in the case of audits. “E&Y has been our auditor since I began, and they appreciated the controls, automation and transparency of the systems Consero helped put in place, which allows them to work faster as well,” says Alvarez.

Going Public

BigCommerce decided in June 2019 that they wanted to go public, eyeing an April 2020 date, but the uncertainty brought on by COVID-19 pushed the offering to August. Even with the delay, its IPO stands as one of the most successful of the year, quadrupling in value by its second day of trading, and maintaining a large share of that leap to this day.

After the IPO, Consero is still servicing BigCommerce, without missing a beat. The only difference being the company expanded their in-house team to address public company requirements in areas such as compliance, external reporting, investor relations and governance. But Consero still provides the same underlying software and accounting support to the company as they always have. That is why Hartenstein stresses that clients don't outgrow Consero, as BigCommerce leveraged them when they had revenue of \$10 million and now, when they're bringing in well over ten times that.

One of the mixed blessings of that kind of performance is that it accelerated the company's deadline to become SOX compliant. "That's one of my team's next big project, with the idea that we'd be ready by Q3 of 2021, so we'll only need to test it in Q4, with time to spare before our deadline of December 31st," says Alvarez. Of course, Consero will be aiding in this initiative as well.

Given the trajectory of BigCommerce, Alvarez remains convinced of the value Consero brings. "My advice is to anyone considering hiring them, is first, this is not about outsourcing," says Alvarez. "It's about finding a Finance as a Service partner that can bring technology, process automation and a back-end workflow that's been proven for years. Why build everything from scratch when there's someone with a checklist, and the experience to build something that can grow with you? That's why Consero has been part of my playbook and why I'm so proud of everyone on the Consero team who has leaned in so much to help get us to this point."

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