

The 2026 SaaS Tech Stack Blueprint

A plain-English shortlist for each layer of a small-business software stack, with the trade-offs to check before you pay.

Compiled by TTrade on 2026-09-28 from our published comparisons at <https://ttrade-delta.vercel.app>.

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How to use this blueprint

Pick one layer at a time, shortlist at most two tools, and run the same checklist on each:

1. Run the same real task in each trial and note where you hit friction.
2. Price the plan you would actually need, including seats and add-ons.
3. Check the limits of the free plan or trial, if there is one.
4. Confirm that the integrations you depend on work as described.
5. Test how easily you can export your data if you ever leave.
6. Send support one real question and see how quickly a useful answer arrives.

Ecommerce

Shopify

Commerce-first platform for selling online, in person and across channels

Editorially reviewed 2026-09-28

Shopify is a hosted ecommerce platform that combines an online store builder, checkout, payments, inventory and order management, and point-of-sale tools in a single admin. Plans run from Basic for solo entrepreneurs and Grow for small teams to Advanced for global reach and Plus for complex businesses, and an extensive app and theme marketplace fills feature gaps. In our editorial view, it best fits merchants whose website exists mainly to sell products.

Best for

- Product-led online stores that plan to scale
- Retailers selling both online and in person
- Brands that want a large app and theme ecosystem

What stands out

- Commerce-first admin keeps products, inventory, orders, discounts and checkout in one place
- Unlimited products and abandoned checkout recovery are included on every plan
- Built-in POS lets one catalog and inventory serve online and in-person sales

Watch out for

- No free plan, and the standard free trial is short (3 days as advertised in September 2026)
- An extra transaction fee, varying by plan, applies to orders processed through a third-party payment provider rather than Shopify Payments
- The Basic plan includes no staff accounts, so teams needing their own admin logins must move to Grow or higher

Alternatives to compare

Wix, BigCommerce

Pricing notes

Shopify has no free plan. As of September 2026 its site advertises a 3-day free trial (no credit card required), sometimes followed by discounted introductory pricing for a set period; Shopify notes trial terms can vary by store location. The main paid tiers are Basic, Grow, Advanced and Plus, with Plus aimed at complex businesses and sold on one- or three-year terms. Billing is monthly or annual, with annual billing lowering the effective monthly rate, and prices are shown in local currency. POS Pro is a per-location add-on, though Plus includes some POS Pro locations. Check the official Shopify pricing page for current prices.

Our take

In our editorial view, Shopify is a strong default for merchants whose website exists mainly to sell products, especially if you also sell in person or expect to grow into a team. Its commerce-first admin, native POS and app ecosystem are the main draws. The trade-offs: there is no free plan, Basic has no staff accounts, and paying through a provider other than Shopify Payments adds a fee. For a content-

led site with light selling, Wix may suit you better; if you want staff accounts on an entry plan, compare BigCommerce, minding its sales thresholds and payment-provider fees.

Full comparison: <https://ttrade-delta.vercel.app/compare/shopify>.

Graphic Design

Canva

Template-first design for social, presentations, docs and print, with a free plan

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Canva is a design platform for the browser, desktop and mobile, built around a large library of editable templates for social posts, presentations, documents, video, websites and print. The Free plan covers the core editor and real-time collaboration, while Pro and Business add premium stock, Magic Resize, background removal, scheduling, more Brand Kits and larger AI allowances. In our view it suits non-designers and marketing teams better than product UI design.

Best for

- Small businesses and solo marketers
- Social media managers
- Non-designers making decks and documents

What stands out

- Large template and stock library covering social, presentations, documents, video, websites and print
- Real-time collaboration and commenting are included on the Free plan
- Pro and Business bundle time-savers such as Magic Resize, background removal and a Social Content Planner

Watch out for

- Magic Resize, background removal, CMYK export and scheduling all require a paid plan
- Not built for UI prototyping with developer handoff, so product designers need a dedicated UI tool
- Canva Pro is for one person; teams generally need Business, which Canva says is priced by location and headcount

Alternatives to compare

Adobe Express, Figma

Pricing notes

As of September 2026, Canva offers a Free plan, Canva Pro (one person) and Canva Business (individuals and teams), each paid plan with a free trial, plus a sales-led Enterprise plan with no free trial. Paid plans are billed monthly or yearly. Canva says Business pricing depends on your location and the number of people on the plan, and on yearly Business plans, added seats or members are billed every three months. A lighter Pro Lite tier is rolling out gradually (currently India and Indonesia), Canva Teams is closed to new sign-ups, and eligible nonprofits and K-12 schools can use Canva free. Check Canva's official pricing page for current prices.

Our take

In our editorial view, Canva is a strong default for small businesses, marketers and anyone who needs polished social graphics, decks and print pieces without a design background. The Free plan is broad enough to evaluate the editor properly, and we think Business is the tier to assess once more than

one person touches your brand. If you already rely on Adobe Creative Cloud, Adobe Express deserves a side-by-side trial; if you design app or web interfaces, Figma is the better fit. Heavy AI users should watch Canva's usage allowance.

Full comparison: <https://ttrade-delta.vercel.app/compare/canva>

Productivity

Notion

An all-in-one workspace for docs, wikis, projects and built-in AI

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Notion is a connected workspace that combines documents, team wikis and flexible databases for projects and tasks, with Notion AI layered on top. Individuals can use the free plan without block limits, while teams pay per member for more collaboration, page history and admin controls. Full Notion AI requires the Business plan or higher. In our editorial view, it suits teams that want one adaptable tool rather than a dedicated wiki or a formula-driven doc builder.

Best for

- Startups and small teams building a shared wiki
- Individuals organizing notes, tasks and projects
- Teams that want docs and project tracking in one tool

What stands out

- Combines docs, wikis and project databases in one workspace, with Notion Calendar available on every plan
- Free plan has no block limit for individuals working solo
- Database views, forms and charts let teams build custom trackers without code (Free is limited to basic forms and one chart)

Watch out for

- Full Notion AI requires Business or Enterprise; Free and Plus get only a limited trial of Agent and meeting notes
- Free plan is tight for teams: block limit with 2+ members, 5 MB uploads, 7-day page history
- In our view, the blank-canvas flexibility means teams need to invest time in structure and conventions

Alternatives to compare

Confluence, Coda

Pricing notes

As of September 2026, Notion's pricing page lists a Free plan, Plus at \$10 and Business at \$20 per member per month billed yearly (\$12 and \$24 billed monthly), and Enterprise at custom pricing through sales. Custom Agents on Business and Enterprise are billed separately through Notion credits. Eligible teams may get a 30-day Business trial. Check the official Notion pricing page for current prices and terms.

Our take

In our editorial view, Notion is a strong option for startups and small-to-midsize teams that want docs, wikis and lightweight project tracking in one adaptable workspace. The free plan is a low-risk way to start, and for many small teams Plus may be enough. If AI is central to your workflow, budget for Business, since Free and Plus include only a limited trial. Teams invested in Jira may find Confluence a more natural fit, while builders of formula-driven docs may prefer Coda, now

Superhuman Docs. We think Notion strikes an appealing balance of flexibility and polish for everyday knowledge work.

Full comparison: <https://ttrade-delta.vercel.app/compare/notion>

SEO & Marketing

Semrush

Broad SEO suite with daily rank tracking and AI search visibility tools

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Semrush is a subscription SEO platform that combines keyword research, backlink analysis, technical site audits and daily rank tracking in one workspace, with daily AI prompt tracking on its Starter plan and above. A limited free plan and a 7-day free trial on eligible plans let you test it before paying. Local, content, social, advertising and market-intelligence toolkits are sold separately, so the total cost depends on which modules your team needs.

Best for

- In-house marketing teams
- Agencies managing several client sites
- Teams tracking both Google rankings and AI search visibility

What stands out

- Keyword research, backlinks, site audits and rank tracking live in one workspace
- Rank tracking updates daily on every paid plan
- A free plan and a 7-day free trial on eligible plans let you evaluate it before paying

Watch out for

- In our view, paid plans are a significant cost for solo site owners and small budgets
- Each plan includes one user seat; additional users are billed per month
- Historical data, content optimization and API access are reserved for higher tiers

Alternatives to compare

Ahrefs, Moz Pro

Pricing notes

Semrush offers a free plan (1 demo project, 10 reports per day) and a 7-day free trial on eligible plans, available once per account. Paid plans are tiered as SEO, then Starter, Pro+ and Advanced (which add AI search features), with custom Enterprise pricing; billing is monthly or annual (annual is paid upfront and saves up to 17%). Each plan includes one user, and specialist toolkits such as Local, Content and Traffic & Market cost extra. As of September 2026, the entry SEO plan is listed at \$139 per month on monthly billing (\$117.33 per month billed annually); check the official Semrush pricing page for current pricing.

Our take

In our editorial view, Semrush is a strong fit for marketers and agencies who want keyword research, backlink data, technical audits and daily rank tracking under one login, with AI prompt tracking on Starter and higher plans. It is worth shortlisting if daily ranking data and breadth matter more to you than a low price. Solo site owners on tight budgets may find the paid tiers and add-on costs hard to justify, so start with the free plan or 7-day trial and compare it with Ahrefs and Moz Pro before committing.

Full comparison: <https://ttrade-delta.vercel.app/compare/semrush>

Web Hosting

Hostinger

Low-cost managed hosting with its own hPanel dashboard and LiteSpeed servers

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Hostinger is a managed web hosting provider whose plans run on LiteSpeed servers and are managed from hPanel, its own control panel. Every tier bundles a first-year domain (on annual or longer terms), first-year email, SSL, and malware scanning, plus WordPress, an AI Builder, and free migrations; a CDN starts on the Unlimited tier. The main trade-off is pricing structure: the headline rate assumes a long prepaid term, and plans renew at noticeably higher renewal prices.

Best for

- Budget-conscious first-time site owners
- Bloggers and small business sites on WordPress
- Freelancers running a handful of small sites

What stands out

- Low introductory rates when you prepay for a long term
- First-year domain (on annual or longer terms) and email, plus free SSL and malware scanning, on every tier
- Hostinger pitches hPanel at beginners, yet it offers SSH, WP-CLI, Git, and PHP version controls

Watch out for

- Renewal rates are substantially higher than introductory prices
- Headline price is quoted on a 48-month term, paid upfront
- Entry Premium plan has weekly rather than daily backups, no CDN, 20 GB of storage, and 2 mailboxes per site

Alternatives to compare

Bluehost, SiteGround

Pricing notes

Hostinger's web hosting has no free plan, and its pricing page lists no hosting trial; eligible new hosting purchases carry a 30-day money-back guarantee. It comes in three tiers (Premium, Unlimited, Cloud Startup), each paid upfront for the chosen term. Monthly billing is offered, though Hostinger says longer terms are better value; the headline rate is quoted on a 48-month term, and plans renew at the higher listed renewal rates. As of September 2026, Hostinger's pricing page lists Premium at \$2.99/mo on a 48-month term (\$143.52 upfront in USD, excluding VAT), renewing at \$10.99/mo; promotions and regional pricing change often, so check the official site for current pricing.

Our take

In our editorial view, Hostinger is a sensible pick for budget-minded buyers who want a simple, bundled setup and are comfortable committing to a long prepaid term. The Unlimited plan looks like the better value to us, adding daily backups, a CDN, more storage, and unlimited mailboxes for a small introductory premium, though the gap widens at renewal. If phone support, daily backups on the cheapest tier, or shorter commitments matter more, SiteGround may suit you better, while

Bluehost's entry plan hosts more sites. Whichever you choose, budget for the renewal rate, not just the introductory price.

Full comparison: <https://ttrade-delta.vercel.app/compare/hostinger>

Before you buy

Features, plan limits and prices change often. Every product above links to its full comparison page; confirm current details on the vendor's official site before you commit.