

Pavement Evaluation Questions for Peter

Chocolat on James - E-commerce Platform Decision

Date: November 3, 2025

From: Dan Edwards, Chocolat on James

To: Peter, Pavement Founder

Purpose: Gather detailed information to make an informed decision about Pavement

Introduction

Hi Peter,

Thank you for the opportunity to learn more about Pavement. As we evaluate e-commerce options for Chocolat on James, we want to make sure we fully understand your service model, capabilities, and how it would work for our business.

Below are detailed questions organized by category. Your clear answers will help us make the best decision for our chocolate business.

1. Platform & Technology (14 Questions)

Core Platform

- 1. What specific e-commerce platform is my website built on?** (e.g., WooCommerce, custom-built, proprietary system?)
- 2. What does "full access and rights to the website" truly mean?** Can I access the admin panel? Code? Database directly?
- 3. Can I get direct access to the code or database if needed?** Or does all access go through your team?
- 4. How is the website hosted?** What are your uptime guarantees? (e.g., 99.9% uptime SLA?)

5. **What security measures are in place?** (SSL certificates, PCI compliance for payment processing, data encryption, etc.)

Management & Analytics

1. **Is there a mobile app for managing orders?** Can I process orders and check inventory from my phone?
2. **What analytics tools are built-in?** Can I use Google Analytics? Google Tag Manager? Facebook Pixel?
3. **Can the website handle high traffic spikes during holidays?** What's the maximum traffic capacity?

Backup & Recovery

1. **How do you handle data backups?** How frequently are backups made? Where are they stored?
2. **What's your disaster recovery process?** If something breaks, how quickly can you restore it?

Hosting & Performance

1. **What are the server specifications?** (Server location, CDN for fast loading, page speed optimization?)
2. **How do you ensure website performance?** What's your average page load time?
3. **Do you provide load testing before major sales events?** (e.g., before Christmas rush?)
4. **What happens if the website goes down?** What's your response time for critical issues?

2. Marketing & Growth Capabilities (18 Questions)

SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

1. **What SEO features are built-in?** (Meta tags, XML sitemaps, custom URLs, schema markup, redirects?)
2. **Can I edit SEO elements myself?** Or do I need to request changes through your team?
3. **How do you handle site structure for SEO?** (URL structure, internal linking, breadcrumbs?)

4. **Can I install Google Search Console?** Track search performance and fix issues?

Email & Marketing Automation

1. **What email marketing capabilities are included?** Built-in email tools or third-party integrations?
2. **Can I integrate my own email marketing platform?** (Mailchimp, Klaviyo, Constant Contact, etc.)
3. **Can I export my customer email list at any time?** Full export with all customer data?
4. **What automation is available?** (Abandoned cart emails, post-purchase follow-ups, etc.)

Social Media & Advertising

1. **How do you help with social media integration?** Instagram Shop, Facebook Shop, social sharing?
2. **Can I run paid advertising and track conversions?** Facebook Pixel, Google Ads conversion tracking?
3. **Can I create landing pages for campaigns?** Custom pages for specific promotions or products?
4. **What tools for A/B testing?** Can I test different layouts, copy, or offers?

Local & Marketplace Exposure

1. **What tools for local marketplace exposure?** Beyond pvmt.com, how do you help with local visibility?
2. **Do you list my business on local directories?** Google My Business integration, local SEO support?
3. **How does the pvmt.com marketplace work?** How much traffic do businesses typically get from it?

Loyalty & Retention

1. **Do you offer loyalty program functionality?** Points, rewards, referral programs?
2. **What customer retention tools are built-in?** Win-back campaigns, VIP programs, etc.?
3. **Can I create discount codes and promotions?** Percentage off, dollar off, BOGO, free shipping, etc.?

3. E-commerce Functionality (13 Questions)

Product Management

- 1. What are options for product listings?** SKUs, variants (sizes/flavors), custom fields, product categories?
- 2. Is there a "build your own box" or custom product builder?** Critical for chocolate gift boxes.
- 3. How many products can I list?** Any limits on SKUs or variants?
- 4. Can I offer product add-ons?** (e.g., "Add a greeting card for \$5")

Inventory & POS Integration

- 1. How does inventory management work?** Real-time stock tracking? Low stock alerts?
- 2. Does it sync with Square POS?** Automatic inventory updates between online and in-store?
- 3. Can I manage inventory for multiple locations?** (Store vs. warehouse vs. online-only products?)

Shipping & Delivery

- 1. What shipping options are available?** Real-time carrier rates (Canada Post, Purolator, etc.)?
- 2. How does local delivery scheduling work?** Can customers choose delivery date/time?
- 3. Do you support in-store pickup?** Can customers order online and pick up in-store?

Payment & Subscriptions

- 1. What payment gateways are supported?** Stripe, Square, PayPal, others?
- 2. What are the transaction fees?** Per transaction or percentage-based?
- 3. Can I offer subscriptions or recurring orders?** Monthly chocolate boxes, etc.?

Corporate & B2B Features

- 1. What features for corporate gifting?** Bulk orders, custom invoicing, net-30 payment terms?

- 2. Can I create custom quotes for large orders?** Approve orders before processing payment?
- 3. Is there a wholesale/B2B portal?** Separate pricing for business customers?

Customer Experience

- 1. How do you manage seasonal menus?** Easy to show/hide products by season?
 - 2. Is there a customer account portal?** Order history, saved addresses, reordering?
 - 3. Can customers save favorites or wishlists?** Build shopping lists for future orders?
 - 4. What review/rating system is available?** Product reviews, business reviews, photo uploads?
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4. Control & Flexibility (13 Questions) - ⚡ CRITICAL!

Ownership & Access

- 1. Who owns the domain name?** Is it registered in my name or yours? Can I transfer it?
- 2. Who owns the customer data?** Can I export it at any time? What format (CSV, XML, JSON)?
- 3. Who owns the website content?** Product photos, descriptions, blog posts - can I take them if I leave?
- 4. What does "full access and rights" really mean in practice?** Admin dashboard access? Code access? Database access?

Day-to-Day Management

- 1. Can I make changes myself?** Add products, change prices, update text, upload photos?
- 2. Or do I always go through your team?** What requires your involvement vs. what I can do?
- 3. What is typical turnaround time for updates?** Same day? 24 hours? 48 hours? Longer?
- 4. Is there a limit on monthly requests?** How many changes can I make per month?

Customization & Integration

- 1. Can I install third-party apps if I need specific functionality?** Or am I limited to what you offer?

- 2. How much control do I have over the website's design and layout?** Can I customize colors, fonts, page layouts?
- 3. What are limitations on adding new features?** What if I need something you don't currently offer?
- 4. Can I access raw website traffic data and logs?** Server logs, analytics data, user behavior?

Technical Flexibility

- 1. Can I add custom code if needed?** JavaScript, CSS, tracking pixels, third-party integrations?
 - 2. What if I want to integrate with a tool you don't support?** (e.g., specific CRM, accounting software, marketing tool?)
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5. Exit Strategy & Data Portability (8 Questions) - ⚠ CRITICAL!

Leaving Pavement

- 1. What is the process if I decide to leave and migrate to another platform?** Step-by-step?
- 2. Can I export ALL my data in usable format?** (Customer data, order history, product listings, images, content?)
- 3. What file formats can I export?** CSV, XML, JSON? Compatible with Shopify, WooCommerce, etc.?
- 4. How complete is the data export?** Does it include customer addresses, order notes, discount codes, etc.?

Costs & Contracts

- 1. What are costs associated with migrating away?** Any exit fees? Setup fees to recover? Final invoices?
- 2. Is there a contract term?** Month-to-month? Annual? Multi-year?
- 3. Are there penalties for early termination?** What if I want to leave before the contract ends?
- 4. What happens to my domain name if I leave?** Do I keep it? How long does transfer take?

Business Continuity

- 1. What happens to my website if Pavement goes out of business?** Do I get access to files/database?
 - 2. How do you ensure business continuity?** Backup plans? Succession planning?
 - 3. Do you have insurance and legal protections?** To protect my business data?
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6. Pricing & Costs (10 Questions) - CRITICAL!

Setup Costs

- 1. What are the one-time setup fees?** Website build, configuration, training, photography?
- 2. What's included in the setup fee?** How many product listings? Pages? Custom features?
- 3. Are there additional costs for customization?** Custom features, design changes, integrations?
- 4. Do you have photography connections?** Cost for professional product photography?

Monthly & Ongoing Costs

- 1. What are the monthly fees?** Base subscription? Tiered pricing based on revenue/orders?
- 2. What transaction fees do you charge?** Percentage per sale? Flat fee per transaction?
- 3. Are there any hidden fees?** Storage fees? Bandwidth fees? Support fees? Additional user accounts?
- 4. What's included in the monthly fee?** Hosting? Support? Updates? Maintenance?

Additional Costs

- 1. What costs extra?** Add-ons, integrations, premium features, priority support?
 - 2. What are annual price increases?** Do fees go up each year? By how much historically?
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7. Support & Reliability (14 Questions)

Customer Support

- 1. What kind of customer support do you offer?** Phone? Email? Live chat? In-person?
- 2. What are support hours?** Business hours only? 24/7? Weekend/holiday support?
- 3. What is guaranteed response time for critical issues?** (e.g., site down, payment processing broken?)
- 4. What is guaranteed response time for non-critical issues?** (e.g., content updates, feature questions?)
- 5. Is there a dedicated account manager?** One person who knows my business?

Training & Onboarding

- 1. What training is provided?** In-person? Video tutorials? Documentation? Ongoing training?
- 2. How long does onboarding typically take?** From contract signing to website launch?
- 3. Do you provide training for my staff?** How to process orders, manage inventory, etc.?

Maintenance & Updates

- 1. How do you handle bug fixes?** What's your typical turnaround time?
- 2. How often do you update the platform?** Security patches? New features? How do updates affect my site?
- 3. Do I need to approve updates?** Or do they happen automatically?

Reliability & References

- 1. What is your typical uptime percentage?** 99%? 99.9%? 99.99%? What's your track record?
- 2. How do you handle seasonal peaks?** (Black Friday, Christmas, Valentine's Day?) Extra server capacity?
- 3. Can I get references from other chocolate/food businesses?** Specifically similar to mine (retail + online)?

8. Timeline & Launch (6 Questions)

Christmas 2025 Timeline

- 1. Can you guarantee a launch date for Christmas 2025?** We have ~7 weeks until Christmas.
- 2. What is the realistic timeline from contract signing to go-live?** Broken down by phase (setup, design, content, testing, launch)?
- 3. What do you need from me to hit the timeline?** Content? Photos? Product information? Time commitment?
- 4. What are the risks that could delay launch?** What typically goes wrong? How do you mitigate?

Launch Process

- 1. What does a typical launch look like?** Soft launch vs. hard launch? Testing period?
 - 2. What support do you provide during launch week?** Extra monitoring? Immediate bug fixes?
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9. Business-Specific Questions for Chocolat on James

Our Unique Needs

- 1. How do you handle seasonal products?** (e.g., Christmas specials, Valentine's Day, Easter, etc.)
- 2. Can we do pre-orders for special events?** (e.g., McMaster event, ArtCrawl, corporate orders?)
- 3. How do you handle custom/personalized products?** Custom messages on chocolates, custom gift boxes?
- 4. Can we offer "build your own box" functionality?** Let customers choose 6, 12, or 24 pieces?

Hamilton Local Focus

- 1. How do you support local businesses?** Local SEO? Local partnerships? Community features?
- 2. Can we highlight "Hamilton's Chocolate" positioning?** Throughout the site design and messaging?

3. **How do local customers find businesses on pvmt.com?** Search by city? Category? How much traffic?

Integration Needs

1. **Do you integrate with Square POS?** Real-time inventory sync? Order imports?
2. **Can we use our existing Square payment processing?** To keep everything unified?
3. **Do you integrate with social media?** Instagram feed on website? Facebook Shop?

Corporate Gifting (Critical for Us!)

1. **How do you handle corporate/bulk orders?** Volume discounts? Corporate invoicing? Net-30 terms?
 2. **Can we create custom corporate portals?** For repeat B2B customers?
 3. **What tools for managing corporate relationships?** CRM integration? Sales pipeline?
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10. Success Metrics & Examples (5 Questions)

Track Record

1. **How many food/chocolate businesses do you currently serve?** Can you share examples?
2. **What's the average revenue increase for businesses after launching with Pavement?**
Any case studies?
3. **What's your client retention rate?** How long do businesses typically stay with Pavement?
4. **Have any businesses left your service?** Why? What were their concerns?

Our Success

1. **How will you measure our success?** What metrics do you track? How do you help us improve?
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Key Areas We Need Clarity On

Before making a decision, we need 100% clarity on these critical areas:

1. Data Ownership & Portability

- **We need:** Full ability to export all customer data, product data, order history, and content at any time in standard formats (CSV/XML)
- **Question:** Can you guarantee this in writing? What exactly can we export?

2. Control & Flexibility

- **We need:** Ability to make day-to-day changes ourselves (add products, update prices, change text, upload photos) without waiting
- **Question:** What can we do ourselves vs. what requires your team? What's the turnaround time for changes?

3. Complete Pricing Transparency

- **We need:** All costs documented upfront - setup, monthly, transaction fees, add-ons, customization, photography, etc.
- **Question:** Can you provide a complete price breakdown with no hidden fees?

4. Exit Process

- **We need:** Clear understanding of what happens if we want to leave - can we export everything? Any fees? How long does it take?
- **Question:** Can you provide the exit process in writing?

5. References from Similar Businesses

- **We need:** Contact information for 2-3 chocolate/food/retail businesses (similar to ours) who've used Pavement for 6+ months
- **Question:** Can you connect us with references we can speak to directly?

6. Christmas Launch Guarantee

- **We need:** Firm launch date guarantee (if we're going to commit to Pavement for Christmas)
- **Question:** Can you commit to a specific go-live date? What's the penalty if you miss it?

Next Steps

We appreciate your time in answering these questions thoroughly. Once we have your responses, we'll:

1. Review answers with our consultant Greg Kowalczyk
2. Speak with your references (if provided)
3. Compare Pavement with other options (Square Online, Shopify, or delaying to Q1 2026)
4. Make a final decision by **[INSERT DATE]**

We're excited about the potential of working together, and these questions will help us make the right decision for Chocolat on James.

Thank you,

Dan Edwards

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[Contact Information]

Document Prepared By: Greg Kowalczyk

Date: November 3, 2025

Purpose: Comprehensive evaluation questionnaire for Pavement service decision

Total Questions: 80+ organized across 10 categories