

Turning Today's Smart Shoppers into Loyal Customers



Why Retailers Need
a 360-degree Customer View
to Win in the Omnichannel Age

PULSE
commerce

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Introduction

When you ring up a sale with a brand new customer, whether online or in a store, is that the end of the relationship? Or is it just the beginning? In her best-selling book “The Membership Economy,” Robbie Kellman Baxter makes a clear case for the latter. The economics are profound, as it costs 7x more to acquire a new customer than to earn a repeat visit.



Brand loyalty is the key to growth for almost all retail categories. Whether your business relies heavily on repeat visits (e.g. sports apparel stores) or on low frequency purchases (e.g. a wedding reception decorations retailer), brand loyalty matters. You’d love for that soccer aficionado to shop every season. And you’d love for a recent bride to recommend your store, whether online or brick & mortar, to her friends when the time comes.

You build loyalty through great shopping experiences and customer touch points. One hundred years ago, those experiences began in stores, through interactions with store associates. And they continued with ongoing personal relationships. People’s lives centered on relatively small geographic areas, and retailers learned about their customers in person. Today, we are a mobile society. Store associates aren’t lifetime employees, and loyal shoppers visit multiple locations of their favorite retailers, including online.

The proliferation of customer touch points during the past 20 years has been immense. Meanwhile, your ability to truly know your customers, and how they interact with you, has become near impossible. Consider a shopper who just walked into one of your stores. Imagine if store associates knew the answers to all of these questions:

- Did she do any research before walking in?
What products was she browsing?
- Has he shopped here previously?
What did he buy and what brands does he like most?
- How happy was she with her last purchase here?
Has she returned anything?
- Has he purchased from us online?
Was it from our site? Or from a marketplace?
- Does she talk about our category, or about us, on social media?
- Have we interacted with him after the sale?
Live chat? Contact Center? Chat bots?

Your customer is capable of remembering all of it. And increasingly, as shoppers, they expect you to remember too -- to know them across all the touch points they've experienced with you. And while technology is the driver behind channel proliferation, technology has not kept up with your need to know about all of those new types of interactions as your customers move from your site, to your store, to the telephone contact center. And back to the store again.

In this whitepaper, we will explore the challenges that retailers face in delivering omnichannel customer satisfaction as well as the solutions.

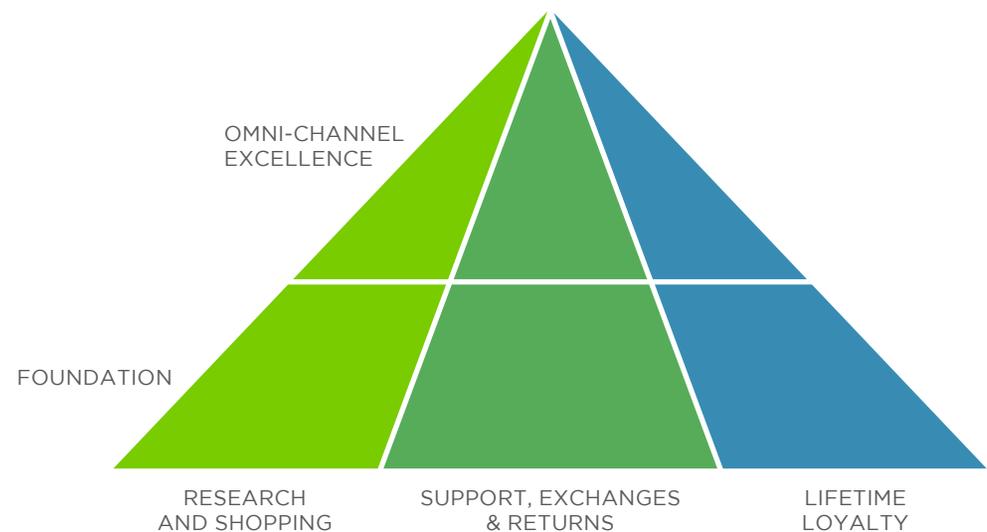
We will follow customers along the buyer journey.



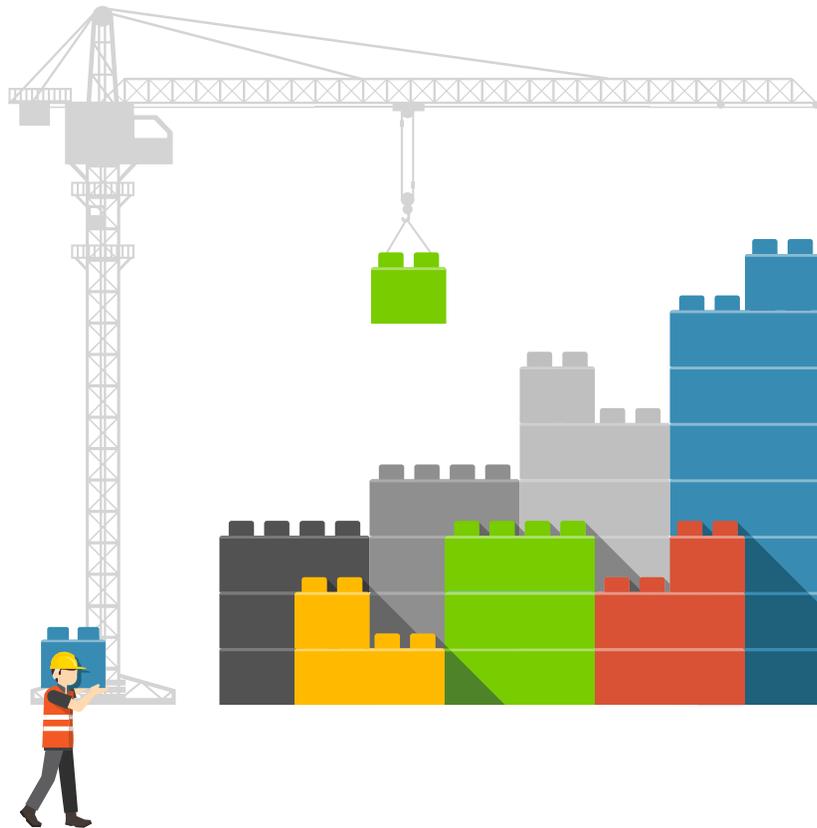
How can you treat individual customers consistently, as if your brand truly knows them, regardless of whether they are on social media, buying on a marketplace, or in your store? And given that we can't possibly know every single touch point, how can we, at a minimum, intelligently ensure that every interaction that customers have will be positive.

We will also, for many of the touchpoints within each step, cover the *foundational capabilities* you need in place, as well as those that will help you achieve *omnichannel excellence*.

HIERARCHY OF OMNICHANNEL EXCELLENCE



Customer Loyalty Building Blocks



Intuitively, if you're a retailer, you know that loyalty begins with the basics. Customers have needs, and they come to you to buy the products that will satisfy those needs.

- "I'm having a wedding, and I need party favors."
- "Soccer season begins in 3 weeks, and I need practice gear."
- "We're headed to Mexico for the winter holiday, and I need SPF 30 swimwear."

The Basics

As a retailer, you help shoppers find the products that will make them happy, and you make the purchase process as easy as possible. You deliver where and when you promised you would. And, if your new customer has questions, or wants to return or exchange a product, you answer their questions quickly and make returns and exchanges simple too. You might even go a step further, with a basic loyalty program that rewards purchases.

Except, the basics aren't simple anymore, because at every step of the buyer journey, customers are not just changing lanes on the highway, they're switching from planes, to trains to automobiles... to SpaceX (see **figure 1**).



Shopping and Research

To serve your well-informed customers better, you need to know what they know. Before entering the store, what did they learn from google searches, reviews, twitter and your Facebook page? How does pricing and return policy vary between your ecommerce site, marketplaces, and your stores? Are your contact centers giving the same answers to the same questions as your live chat operators and your store associates?



Support, Returns & Exchanges

Return and exchange policy and execution are two of the most important factors consumers consider when choosing a retailer – whether buying online or in stores. In fact, according to the **UPS Pulse of the Online Shopper™ study**, 66% of shoppers review a retailer’s return policy before making a purchase. At a minimum, this must be a simple process. More advanced retailers are enabling customers to buy, modify an order, return and exchange across multiple contact channels. The easier we make it for customers, the more likely they are to return.

Are each of your channels providing great support?

Are they able to interact with a customer the same across all channels?

Or is your company treating one customer like three: (1) the store customer, (2) the website customer, and (3) the call center customer?

Lifetime Loyalty

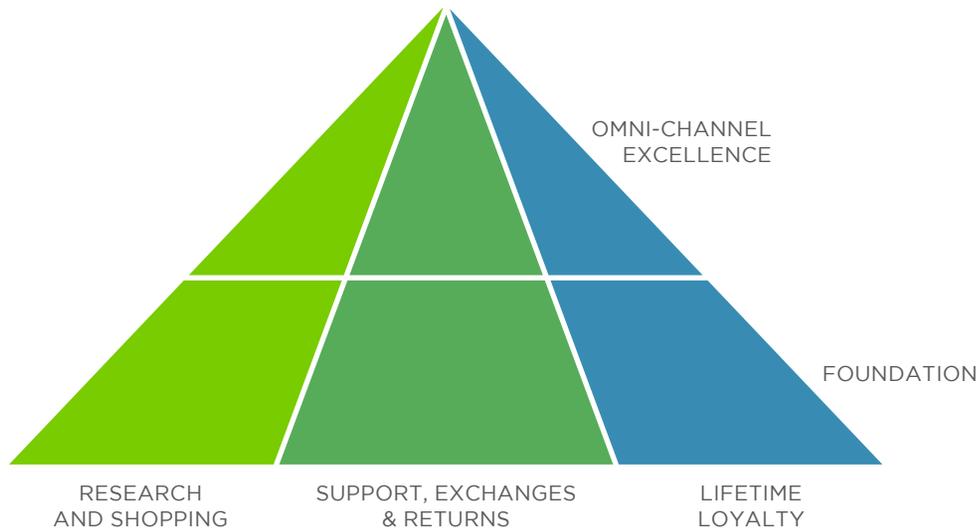
Loyalty programs are everywhere we turn. From buy 10, get 1 free punch cards, to rewards points, to discounts off the next purchase, retailers are in an arms race to keep customers coming back. And loyalty programs help you get to know your customers better too. Are you keeping your customers engaged with your brand after they walk out with their first purchase?

The basics matter

While there are a myriad of initiatives within each loyalty driver that we can enhance, retailers ignore the basics at their peril:

- 89% of customers have stopped buying from online stores after they’ve experienced poor service (source: **Right Now**)
- A 5% reduction in customer abandonment rate can increase profitability by 25% - 125%. (Source: “Leading on the Edge of Chaos,” Murphy & Murphy)

HIERARCHY OF OMNICHANNEL EXCELLENCE



It takes 12 positive customer experiences to negate the poor impression left behind from one unresolved, bad experience. -

*“The Customer Service Report for Ecommerce,”
Nancee Halpin, March 2016.*

According to Harris Interactive, consumers believe that customer service agents failed to answer their questions **50%** of the time.

360 Customer View Omni-channel Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalization • Staff access to online browsing history, abandoned carts, etc. • Consistent pricing across channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Click & Collect • Buy online, return in store • Rapid store and contact center order modification • Excellent Post-Purchase Experience and Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalization • Product subscriptions • Repeat, one-click purchases • Relevant and timely promotions • Targeted merchandising • Rewards for engagement, not just purchases • Excellent Post-Purchase Experience and Communications
	The Basics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpful Staff (and site) • Merchandise in stock and easy to find • Product info easy to find • Items delivered on time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpful Staff (and site) • Seamless returns & exchanges
	Shopping & Research (First purchase)	Product Support Exchanges and Returns	Loyalty and Repeat Purchase

Research and Shopping

Even 100 years ago, shoppers frequently began their buyer journey before walking into the store. First she may have seen her friend wearing a new style. Then she may have talked to friends at a Sunday social. Next, she may have window shopped at various stores, or in the Sears catalogue, followed by store-by-store price comparisons if she happened to be in a city.

Today, most of that journey begins online. The couple planning their wedding bounces from Instagram to Pinterest to product reviews to retailer websites. And it doesn't end there. Once the shoppers have zeroed in on product choices, they frequently seek retailer reviews too. Which ones offer the best service and return policies?

You want to be found everywhere you can be along that path. And you want the messages shoppers receive to be consistently positive everywhere the customer turns. Including when that shopper walks into your store.

It's absolutely critical that you know what your shoppers will learn along that path.

Social Media

Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, special interest forums (e.g. photography forums) are the new Sunday socials. 24/7. Worldwide.





My Wedding Reception Ideas

49,737 Followers 347 Following
www.mywedding...
USA / Personalized wedding reception decorations, accessories, favors, and gifts



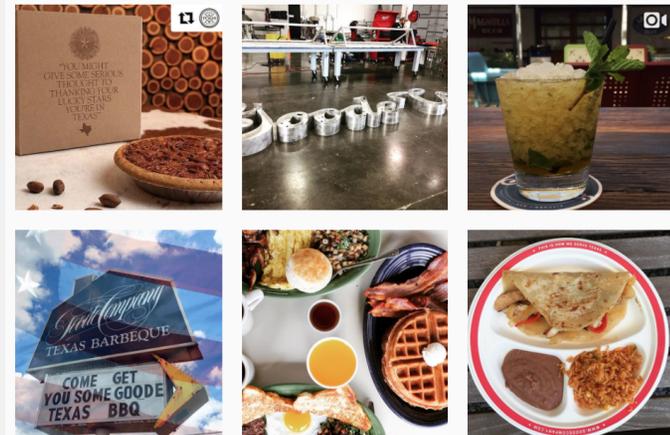
Bridesmaids Gifts
94 Pins



goodecobbq [Follow](#)

924 posts 3,159 followers 2,129 following

Goode Company You might give some serious thought to thanking your lucky stars you're in Texas. bit.ly/2pWYkt8



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126,858 people like this

88% retypically

See All

Chat (27)



Foundation

Foundation If you have no presence, you can start small. Create a basic page for each. At worst, shoppers won't find you on any of them. Yet, over time, you may find that your customers will pin the awesome bridesmaid gifts they found, or post a video of a goal they scored in their new soccer cleats they bought at your store.

Your store associates and contact center employees should be aware of your social presence. When a shopper mentions the picture they saw on Pinterest, your associates should be ready to pull up the page on their phone, and know where to find the items you've highlighted on social media in the store.

Omnichannel Excellence

Each social media channel can be used for advanced marketing and awareness that goes far beyond what can be covered in a whitepaper.

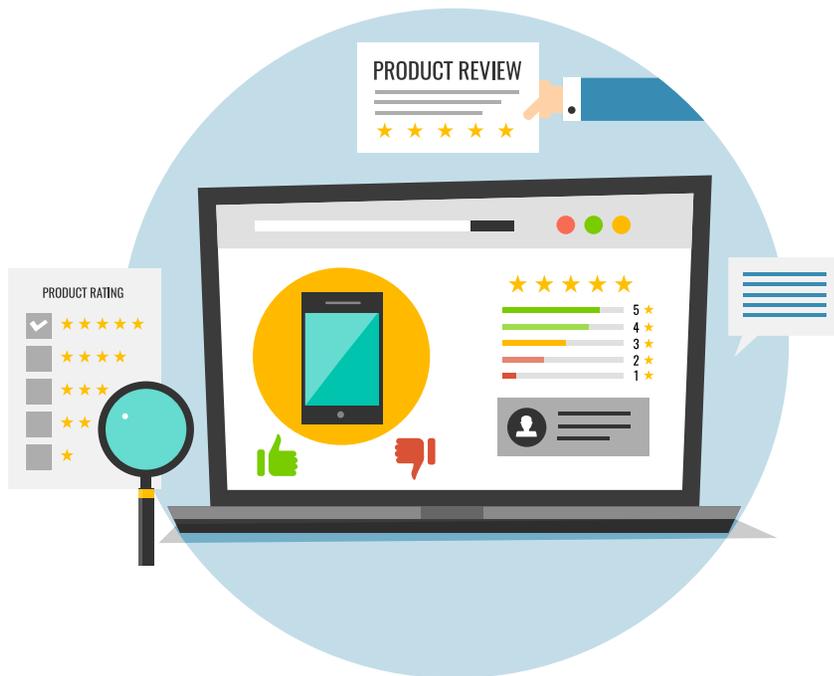
Watch our Pulse Commerce
Pinterest webinar,
“How to Market and Sell on Pinterest”
to learn directly from the CEO of
My Wedding Reception Ideas how to
drive growth through that channel.

Free monitoring tools can help you stay on top of the latest trends in your category, the most recent mentions of products you sell, and the most recent mentions of your store or site too.



Ratings and Reviews Sites

There is no shortage of ratings and reviews sites. The short list includes Google, Yelp, TrustPilot, Shopper Approved, BizRate, Yotpo. Amazon, while not a review site, is often used as one by shoppers who intend to purchase in stores.



Foundation

Every retailer should claim their presence on Yelp and Google. Make sure that your company is represented well and accurately on both.

Omnichannel Excellence

Encourage your shoppers to rate their experience on Yelp and Google. Capture their email address at the point of sale, whether online or in a store, and follow up with a thank you email that includes links to ratings and reviews sites.

Perhaps most important, monitor reviews on an ongoing basis to identify improvement opportunities as well as causes for celebration.



Ecommerce

Of course, these are the most important touch points on the buyer journey. You are in complete control of the customer experience on your website, and in your retail stores and kiosks.



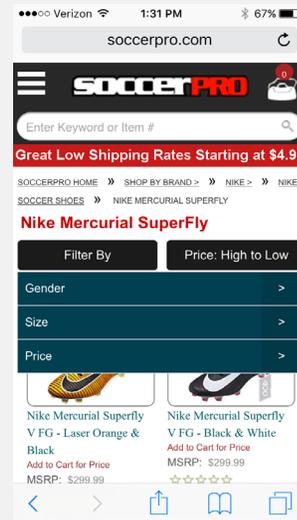
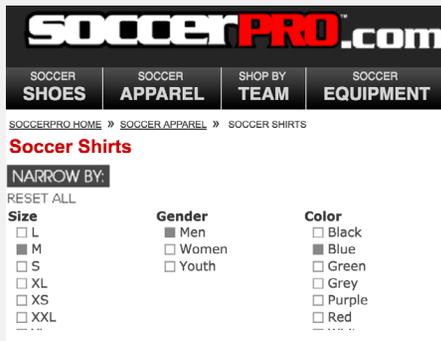
Foundation

The online basics are no simple task. Customers want to find the products they seek quickly, enjoy a fast checkout, and receive their shipment on time. How do you make all that happen?

Shopping and Finding Products

Your site must be easy to navigate and search. Faceted search and filtering is table stakes today. No customer wants to browse 100 products to find a medium, men's, blue soccer shirt. Filtering helps!

Your ecommerce platform should have advanced filtering and faceted search.



Online Means Mobile Too

Mobile ecommerce grew 45% in Q4'16 vs Q4'15

Mobile generated 42% of overall ecommerce growth in Q4'16

Source: [comScore](#)

And customers love product information. In fact, high quality product information can have a dramatic impact on sales. As can low quality product information. According to a **Shotfarm study**:

- **Returns:** 42% of consumers have returned an online purchase because product information did not match the product received.
- **Abandoned Carts:** 30% of shoppers say they abandoned a shopping cart due to poor product descriptions or low quality images.
- **Brand Image:** 87% percent of consumers say they would be unlikely or very unlikely to make a repeat purchase with a retailer that provided inaccurate product information.

If you're a fashion retailer adding thousands of SKUs 5 times per year, updating online product information can be a Herculean task. The more comprehensive your product information, the more new loyal customers you'll attract.

A Product Information Management (PIM) system will help you speed up the onboarding of new vendors and products, while improving product information accuracy for your customers.

Fulfillment and Delivery

Accurate and on-time delivery is where the rubber truly meets the road. Your ecommerce operations will live or die by your order management process and supporting systems.

Orders must be routed to the optimal fulfillment center to ensure on-time shipment. And the fulfillment center's orders must be prioritized and automated, with packing slips and shipping labels printed. Integration with shipping software is also key for both the shopping experience and the shipping.

Without automation, any online retailer with sales above \$1M will suffer from customer dissatisfaction.

Accurate and on-time order delivery, and seamless returns, are the foundation of ecommerce customer loyalty.

Without that foundation in place, there is little point in focusing on advanced initiatives.



Omnichannel Excellence

Advanced ecommerce goes far beyond what can be covered in a single whitepaper.

In general, we put the customer first by listening to him or her. Relentless testing and improvement are a core tenet of a 360° customer view. Improve the shopping experience through ongoing, repeatable, changes to the site. Observing how these changes improve the customer experience will go a long way towards increasing satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately repeat purchase and lifetime customer value.

Most successful retailers perform ongoing A/B testing of their websites to ensure continuous evolution towards delighting customers with an enjoyable online shopping experience.

Our on-demand webinar, **“Boosting Ecommerce Conversions and Revenue with A/B Testing,”** gives a comprehensive overview that can help you get started.



Brick and Mortar Stores and Kiosks

Brick & Mortar Stores and Kiosks

Many books have been written about how to deliver great shopping experiences. We will focus on the transition from the online shopping experience to the store.



Foundation

Inventory and Cross-Channel Consistency

According to **Accenture**, 57% of baby boomers believe that the ability to check product availability online prior to going to the store is the one change that would most improve the connected shopping experience. And according to **google**, 1 in 4 consumers who avoid stores do so because of limited awareness of nearby stores or the risk of items not being available.

So if your website says an item is in stock, then the item better be in stock. One of the fastest ways to ensure a customer never returns is to let them leave empty handed after a special trip for a specific item.

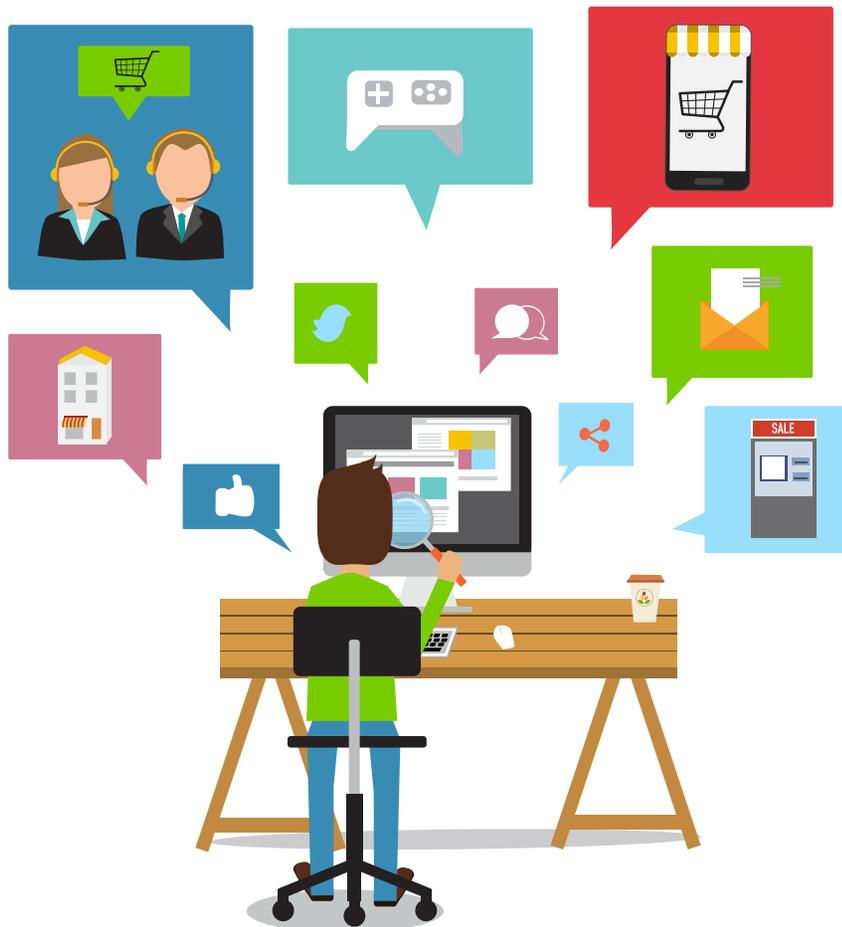
An OMS will ensure that your website has the most up-to-date store inventory information available, and can even fuel your website with the information needed to recommend a different location with stock on hand.

Also, the offline price better be the same as online. If it's higher, complaints will follow. If it's lower, some shoppers who purchased online will eventually discover the discrepancy and wonder why they bothered buying online.

A PIM will centralize pricing control and ensure consistent product information across sales channels.



Omnichannel



Omnichannel Excellence – All Channels

Online and offline retailing are finally coming together as, simply, retailing. According to Frost & Sullivan, omnichannel is defined as “seamless and effortless, high-quality customer experiences that occur within and between contact channels.”

As the premise of this whitepaper points out, consumers are interacting with retail brands across all channels – owned retail properties (website and stores), owned online presence (social media) and earned customer loyalty and interaction across all channels.

A 360° customer view is the lynchpin on which deep loyalty rests. The most successful retailers are putting the customer at the center of operations, considering their journey towards the first purchase and an ongoing relationship. Put differently, your customer expects you to act as one unified retailer.

Your mission is to, as a company, treat the customer like that 1920’s merchant would have -- with a twist. Now you must do it across the stores, the website, social media, the contact center, kiosks and more.

Omnichannel Shopping

Today's consumer expects to traverse your contact channels seamlessly.

We've already discussed the up-front research process, and the customer's journey from social media to review sites to your website to your store.

Putting the customer at the center, you serve him or her best if you let her buy where she'd like to, receive shipment where and when she'd like to, return and exchange where and when she'd like, and so on. **Examples include:**

► RESEARCH ONLINE AND PURCHASE IN STORE:

Your store associates should be armed with the same insights your customer has when he or she walks into the store. It starts with quick and easy access to your ecommerce website, product information, social media presence and reviews.

Let's rewind to 1920 again. A store associate helped the customer, accompanying them through the store, pointing out advantages and disadvantages of different items.

Today's customer has done that with you too - Online. **If your store associates could see past site history**, including past orders, and even items abandoned in shopping carts, they'd be able to serve customers much better.

- "Did you need more information about that tent?"
- "Would you like me to show you some of the items that you left in your cart?"
- "Let me direct you to our latest sun-protection swimwear selection."

These capabilities exist today. With the right CRM-enabled ecommerce platform your associates can access a customer's full order and shopping history in real time.

► CLICK AND COLLECT / BUY ONLINE AND PICKUP IN STORE (BOPIS):

Some customers want to ensure that the product they intend to buy in the store is available for them. Or they've been shopping online and realize they want the item in hand right now.

When that customer walks out with the item you promised, after a quick and easy pickup and checkout, you've gone a long way towards building loyalty. You've made a commitment. And you've delivered on it. Customers remember.

Our SlideShare,
**"How to Profit from Buy Online
 Pickup In Store,"**

outlines 5 ways that omnichannel retailers
 can boost revenue, cut costs,
 and increase loyalty with
 Click and Collect programs.

► SHIP FROM ANOTHER STORE

You've almost made the sale, and the customer says, "I love this swimsuit, but I'd like it in red instead of blue." And, alas, you're out of stock.

Your omnichannel enabled store associate has access to inventory information across the entire enterprise, and responds,

"We don't have it on hand here; I can have it here tomorrow for pickup, or we can ship it anywhere you'd like. No charge."

"Can I pick it up at your downtown location tomorrow," she asks.

"Of course. You'll receive a notification email at around noon, when it's ready for pickup."

Behind the scenes, a 3rd store is shipping to the 2nd store, where your customer will pick up the item.

You've given your customer a successful trip to the store, and earned a few loyalty points along the way.

► SHIP FROM A STORE (INSTEAD OF FROM A WAREHOUSE)

The same can happen online, too. In an instant. Your customer chooses an item, but it's not in stock in your fulfillment center. Your omnichannel-enabled **ecommerce and order & inventory platforms** intelligently route the order to a store that happens to be overstocked with the item.

For the customer, it's just another successful online purchase.

For you, instead of selling the item on markdown, you've saved the sale, and taken the first step towards building a loyal customer relationship.

Our SlideShare,
**"How to Profit from
 Ship from Store Programs,"**
 outlines 5 ways that omnichannel retailers
 can boost revenue, cut costs, and
 increase loyalty with
 Ship from Store programs.

The store with the overstocked item? They receive an automated order routing, with a packing slip and shipping label printed and ready to go.

► RECEIVE ON A SPECIFIC DATE

Your customer really knows how to plan ahead. He's chosen a gift to send his mom for her birthday – and her birthday is in 3 weeks.

He'd love for her to receive it exactly on her birthday.

Or, perhaps a customer is heading to their ski home in 3 weeks, and wants new boots to arrive the day after his arrival. He doesn't want the shipment a single day later or earlier.

Your omnichannel enabled ecommerce website, or retail store, can place the order today, ensuring shipment on just the right day, and just the right time, to delight your customer.

Imagine the loyalty you'll have engendered when his mom calls to thank him; or when that package arrives at 10AM, just in time for him to hit the slopes.



Support, Returns, Exchanges

Support

Your new customer just made their first purchase with you - a \$100 online order that will ship later today.

What is the lifetime value of your customer? \$100? \$500? \$1,500? At Bergdorf Goodman, they're hoping for \$50,000 or more.

Customers become increasingly engaged with your brand during this period between the purchase and delivery.

According to narvar's March 2017 post-purchase benchmark:

- Those who track orders visit the tracking page 3.1 times per order.
- SMS opt-in rate is 5.5x higher than prior to the purchase
- Click-through-rate on marketing assets that appear on a branded order-tracking page is 3x higher than for marketing emails.

You've had your first date with the customer. You have your new customer's attention. What will you do to make your customer fall in love with your company?





Foundation

Every channel must be ready for product support. It starts with your website being up to date with FAQs, and links to product manuals. These are resources for your customers, your store associates and for your contact center.

The customer may not even know exactly what product they purchased.

Omnichannel Excellence

Omnichannel Enabled

Your omnichannel-enabled team member can gain an immediate, real-time view of your customer's order history, quickly identify the product in question, and link rapidly to more information to help.

Multiple Touch Points

If customers can't get through to you directly to resolve issues, now they frequently flock to social media. And the impact is usually not good for the company in question:

- [Southwest Airlines feels the wrath of Kevin Smith](#)
- [United shares tumble as social-media storm spreads worldwide](#)

Of course, there are some positive examples of this too. The important point is that you have to monitor social media just in case a customer seeks support through twitter or Facebook.

[Best Buy's twitter support channel](#) is well regarded for the customer and employee engagement it fosters, as well as the support outcomes.





Order Modification

Buyer's remorse can set in quickly. "I ordered the wrong color" is just one of many changes a customer may want to make. As long as the order hasn't shipped yet, why not make the customer happy?



Foundation

Customers must have a seamless order modification process within the channel they purchased the product.

- **Online:** If an item purchased online has not yet shipped, customers expect to be able to login to their account and change the order.
- **Telephone:** If an order purchased via a call center has not yet shipped, customers expect to be able to call and change the order.
- **Other channels:** The same is true for all sales channels.



Omni-channel Excellence

Perhaps the customer is in a store, and sees an item he just ordered online. He see's it up close and wants to make a change.

The omnichannel enabled store associate looks up the order and makes a change in real time. Or the telephone CSR makes the change. Or maybe even the customer can, directly on the website.

How? An enterprise order management system is tapped into all orders across all channels, enabling any team member with access to modify existing orders in real time.

RESEARCH AND
SHOPPINGSUPPORT, RETURNS,
EXCHANGESLIFETIME
LOYALTY

Returns and Exchanges

Returns are inevitable, and according to **UPS Pulse of the Online Shopper™** study, 66% of shoppers review a retailer's return policy before making a purchase. Furthermore, analysts estimate nearly **one-third of all online purchases** are returned.

Returns and exchanges are the front lines of the effort to generate customer loyalty.

In the ongoing customer relationship, this is a "2nd date" – it's your first test, and it's the moment your company will show future loyal customers your true colors.

And, no matter where the customer made their purchase, they see your company as one single entity, there to serve them and make them happy.





Foundation

“Reverse logistics,” sending items back to the fulfillment center for exchange or refund, is central to ongoing loyalty. Do it right, and the customer will sing your praise. Even if issuing a full refund, a seamless return process can be a huge driver of retail brand loyalty and customer lifetime value.

You need a system and process that will give the consumer return shipping labels and packing slips, ensure your fulfillment center has a means to track receipt, and reverse the order charges.

As is the case for modifying orders, the bare minimum customer expectation is that the return process will be quick and easy within the sales channel purchased.

- Buy online, receive by mail, return by mail
- Buy from contact center, receive by mail, return by mail
- Buy from store, return to store

Even simple returns within the same channel can be tricky. As complex as logistics are for fulfilling orders, the complexity of “reverse logistics” or reversing the shipment and charges, is even more complex.

An Order Management System (OMS) orchestrates a seamless order and fulfillment process. With full visibility of inventory across all fulfillment centers and stores, the OMS ensures that inventory is in stock, and then intelligently routes the order to the optimal fulfillment center, where packing slips and shipping labels will be ready and waiting.

A strong OMS will also manage the order reversal, making returns a snap for your customer, and for your fulfillment center to receive, and update your inventory with the additional item.



Omni-Channel Excellence

Given the importance of this “second date” with a new customer, retailers have upped their games, blending channels to make returns and exchanges easier for customers. The new mantra is, “buy anywhere, return anywhere.”

Buy Online, Exchange or return via Contact Center

Your customer bought an item online, and the moment they open it, they realize they bought the wrong size. You sent them exactly what they asked for, but it’s just a tad too tight.

Your omnichannel enabled CSR takes their call and can see the customer’s full history online, including this order. The CSR helps advise on the different brands and sizing, and helps the customer choose an alternative. And, the CSR finishes with:

“I see you live 2 miles from our city center location.
We have it in stock there, so you can exchange it there.

Or you can return it to us by mail. I just emailed you the instructions and the shipping labels.”

You’ve put the customer at the center of the transaction, given them a choice, made the exchange an easy one, and earned a 3rd date.

The same is true for returns. The contact center can see your full picture, and potentially help you find an alternative. Perhaps they’ll even see something you’ve abandoned in your shopping cart and offer advice on alternatives.

The CSR, armed with a full picture of the customer, the order, and inventory, is able to guide the customer to a happy and successful outcome. One that earns a repeat visit.

Buy Online, Exchange or return in the store

This is no different from the CSR interaction described above. When a customer walks into your store with an item purchased online, they expect to be treated as a customer of the retailer.

Your store associates should “know” the customer. The omnichannel-enabled associate can take the item for return, look up the order online, and either refund or issue store credit. No questions asked.

Again, this is your 2nd date with the customer. Handle it seamlessly and you’ve earned a 3rd, and the potential to increase customer lifetime value by 2x or more. Even if you issue a full refund. You’ll earn customer trust and give the best possible experience.

How? By enabling and empowering your store associates to serve customers as they prefer to be served.

How do you make this all happen?

It all starts by ensuring that your entire organization and supporting systems have the information they need on customers, orders, products, promotions and fulfillment necessary to put the customer in the center.

An Order Management System is typically the conductor of your omnichannel orchestra, maintaining a real-time view of all orders and inventory across your entire enterprise. And it intelligently shares that information, and informs every player – store associates, fulfillment center associates, CSRs, exactly what to do, and by when.

For a comprehensive overview on how to build these capabilities from a systems perspective, see in our whitepaper,

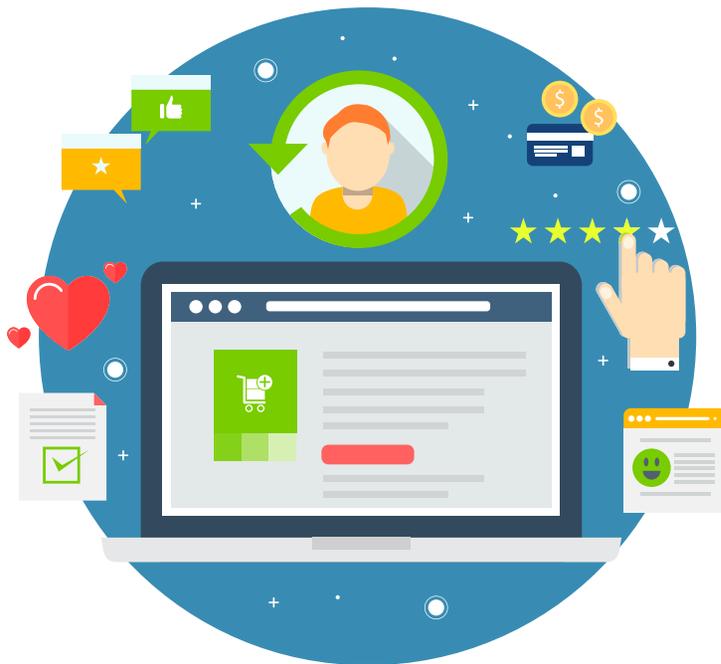
“The Expert’s Guide: Unified Commerce vs. Separate Systems.”

In it, Pulse Commerce reviews in detail how to transform disparate point solutions (ERP, Ecommerce, Warehouse Management, Marketplace Management, CRM) into a single platform that acts in concert to enable seamless Omnichannel Excellence.



Lifetime Loyalty

The foundation of loyalty and customer retention is your customers' experiences with your company – with your store associates, with your website and with your CSRs.



Foundation

Before considering a rewards program to rival American Express', ask yourself whether you're delighting customers on their first, second and third interactions with your company.

Quick and easy shopping and returns, coupled with personalized experiences, drive loyalty more than any rewards system can deliver.

- **Research and Shopping**

- Is your website easy to navigate?
- Are store associates well informed?

- **Fulfillment**

- Are your items in stock?
- What is your order accuracy rate?
- What percent of your orders are received on time?

- **Support, Returns, Exchanges**

- Is the return process simple and seamless?
- Can customers buy anywhere and return anywhere?

- **Omnichannel**

- Do customers enjoy a consistent experience as they move from the website to the store and back?
- Are CSRs and store associates able to gain a full customer and order history when serving customers?



Omni-channel Excellence

Once the core foundation is in place, you can generate even more repeat business with additional loyalty initiatives.

Transform transactions into subscriptions

Enable your customers, particularly businesses, to setup ongoing, regularly scheduled deliveries. Whether it's coffee, or paper, businesses will appreciate having one less thing to worry about while receiving ongoing deliveries of the supplies they know they'll need.

The same goes for consumers for some categories. Is there a category that lends itself to the “Dollar Shave Club” model for your customers?

There is no better way to ensure repeat purchases, and develop an ongoing relationship, than to build it into the purchase model.

For a real-life example, see how
11th Street Coffee
 increased sales and
 Lifetime Customer Value
 by creating an online
Subscribe and Save offering.

Personalize Customer Engagement

Once a customer has made a purchase, you've gained significant insight. If a customer buys a tent, then we know she goes camping. We can personalize offers for additional camping gear.

Or for the person who buys a *Manchester United* team shirt, we can take that information into account for future offers.

Personalized offers, based on past purchase history, are an ideal way to stay engaged in a manner that has relevance and meaning to the customer.

Create a Community

If your store sells athletic gear, let the local running club hold meetings there. Or if your site sells soccer gear, create a forum for your customers to share photos and videos of your gear in action. Or simply manage an Instagram account exceptionally well.

Anything you can do to add non-shopping experience to your products will build a bond that can be timeless.

Build a Loyalty Program

According to the [Bond Retailer Report](#), 73% of loyalty program members will recommend the brands to others, and 70% of consumers will spend more if they can be rewarded.

The core structure of a strong loyalty program includes 4 basics:

- The program is aligned with the brand
- The program fulfills a customer need
- The program adds enjoyment to the customer experience
- Redemption is easy

And they can be made even better with creative names for programs and points (e.g. Pixi Beauty's 'Pixi Dust'). Rewarding activities outside of purchases can build engagement, such as offering points for site visits and social shares.

Our Pulse Commerce Webinar,
**“Building an Effective Loyalty Program
in the Amazon Age,”**
will help you consider all the important
angles in creating a program.

Conclusion

The more data-driven and actionable insights you have about your customers' interactions with us, the better you can serve them. Just like with their friends, your customers remember what they did with your company in person. In your emails. In their phone calls. If you can treat one consumer like one person, you can generate better, more connected experiences for them. And keep them coming back for more.



How do you treat them like one person across channels? Across geographies? Across multiple touch points with dozens of store associate, online, and contact center interactions? You capture as much activity as you can – all orders, all products, all promotions, all returns – and ‘remember’ it all at every interaction.

It's impossible to know everything; to remember everything; because you can't fully capture every customer interaction. However, you do know where your customers interact with you, even if anonymously. The onus is on retailers to proactively interact with customers outside of those you directly control (e.g. social media) to connect with customers consistently, and positively, to present to them as if they are truly one person.

Still, the best way to build lasting customer relationships comes back to the basics that are so often neglected:

- Make shopping enjoyable, fast and easy
- Deliver exactly what was ordered, where and when you promised
- Make returns and exchanges as easy as possible
- Empower your team members with real-time order, customer, and inventory data needed to delight customers

Do the basics exceptionally well and you'll be ahead of most of your competitors. In doing so, you'll have built the foundation for scalable growth. You'll have built an omnichannel commerce platform that works together in concert to keep all people and systems updated with the real time information needed to delight customers.



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About Pulse Commerce

Pulse Commerce is the leading enterprise cloud platform for order & inventory management empowering retail leaders with unprecedented visibility and control of inventory, orders and customers. Retailers, such as Badgley Mischka, Hanesbrands Inc., and GoodeCompany.com rely on Pulse Commerce to improve order turnaround, increase customer satisfaction, and optimize inventory control and fulfillment costs. To learn more about how Pulse Commerce can increase your business performance by 20% or more, please visit www.pulse-commerce.com or follow [@PulseCommerce](https://twitter.com/PulseCommerce) on Twitter.