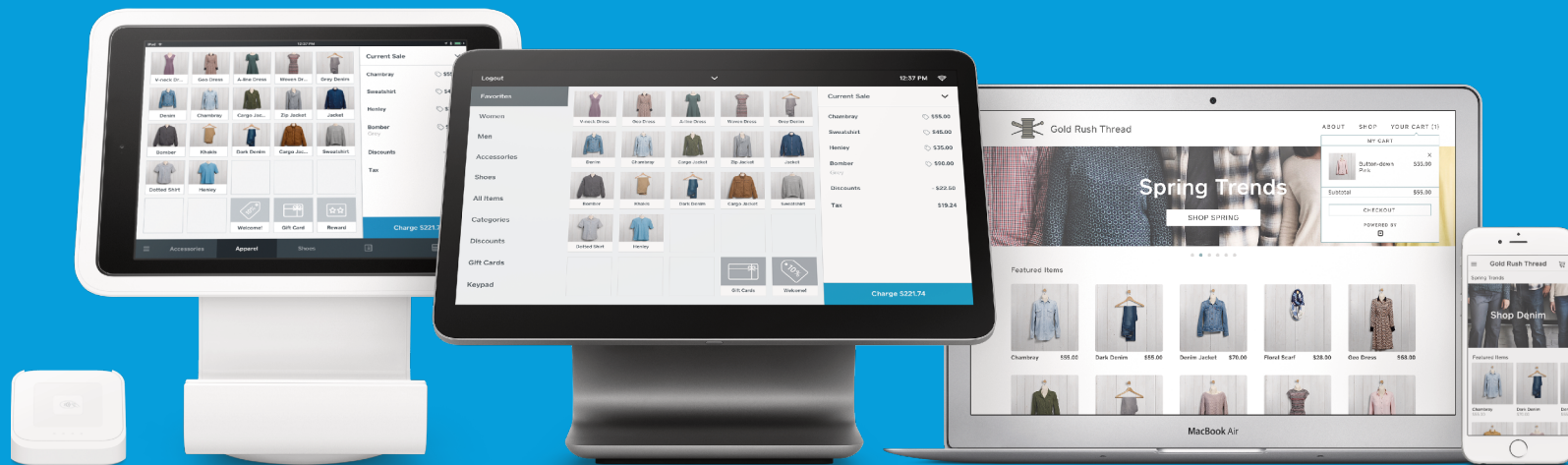




Unified Commerce: Creating Seamless Experiences for You and Your Customers





Introduction

Research shows that customer acquisition can cost five to 25 times more than customer retention. Focusing not only on retaining customers, but creating loyal ones, is more efficient than constantly going after prospective customers.

But how do you keep your shoppers coming back for more?

More often than not, you create repeat and loyal customers by developing unforgettable and frictionless experiences. The type of experience customers have come to expect extends beyond in-store greetings and coupon codes. Customers expect to find what they need easily — whether it's product or information — and to be served quickly, wherever they are.

But, as the ways shoppers can buy from retailers increases, meeting your customers where they are can feel like a constant game of catch-up. It's not enough to just have multiple channels and touchpoints for customers anymore. Those channels need to be linked together in a finely tuned experience that eliminates any barriers to purchase.

At the same time, the systems that create a seamless experience for your customers need to talk to each other so there's a similarly frictionless experience on the back end. That's where unified commerce comes into play.

When choosing your payment processor and point of sale, you should think about how you run your business, what channels you have, and the data you receive from your back-end operations. That data will become the powerhouse of your business. While your customers may not be able to tell the difference between an omnichannel business and a unified commerce model, when all of your channels are truly unified through your payments and POS, they provide you with a holistic, data-driven view of how your customers shop. When you better understand your customers, you are able to create those touchpoints and give them what they want before they even ask for it.

Is your commerce unified?

It's in your best interest to create a seamless way for customers to buy from you. The smoother the experience, the less likely the customer is to abandon a sale. Bad experiences are often cited as a reason for customer churn as well.

Retailers know this is a problem. Seventy-eight percent of retailers admit their customers do not have a unified brand experience, according to a study by Periscope research. And, as a result, more than 50 percent of organizations will redirect their investments to customer experience innovations in 2019, according to Gartner.

Before we explain why unified commerce is a strategy you should employ in your quest to create these experiences, let's define the different strategies that a business might use to reach its customers.

Multichannel is the general use of multiple channels for customers to interact and shop with your business. For example, you may have a brick-and-mortar store and an online store. They may not share inventories, but they are two different ways for your customers to shop with your business.

Omnichannel refers to a coordinated and consistent look and feel of all your channels. From the customer's perspective all of your online and offline channels may look like they are working together seamlessly. In this situation, if you post products on your Instagram page that link to your online store, or run promotions in store that translate over to your e-commerce channel, that would be considered omnichannel.

Unified commerce is omnichannel taken to the next level. It is a fully integrated approach to your commerce channels, in that all of your systems and software integrate on the back end. You manage your channels through one centralized platform — a point of sale — and use one payments solution across all of them. This gives you less to manage and, more importantly, provides a holistic view of your business that empowers more informed decision-making.



The Unified Commerce customer journey

You may run your business in channels, but your customers don't think that way. In fact, it's better for your business if they don't think about your business as fragmented channels, but instead think of it as one unit that they can purchase from through different mediums that all work together.

Your business should offer all of the items you sell across your inventory channels directly, or through other shipping methods like a warehouse or dropshipping. If you have limited space to stock your inventory in store, that shouldn't cut you off from the ability to sell additional inventory to your customers through your other channels. This is often referred to as an "endless aisle."

Customers today look for retailers that provide these options when they are shopping. According to Forrester research, 73 percent of consumers become frustrated when retailers fail to offer convenient interaction methods and 59 percent of customers are unsatisfied when they can't access the information they want in their preferred channel.

With a unified commerce approach, your back-end system integrates all of your channels to make this possible. The goal is to allow any number of combinations so your customers can shop and buy.

Customers should see the same inventory in a brick-and-mortar store, on a mobile device, and on a website. They can purchase in store, purchase online and send an item to a store for pickup, purchase in store and have an item shipped to their home, or purchase online and have items shipped directly to them. Also, both in-store and online returns or exchanges can be processed on either channel.

This seamless journey not only benefits your customers, it benefits you as well. According to the same Forrester research, 53 percent of consumers say they make additional impromptu purchases when they buy online and pick up in store. And if you're afraid that offering all of your merchandise online will take away traffic from your store, don't worry. A KPMG study found that 51 percent of shoppers return their goods in store, regardless of where they were purchased.

When it comes to an integrated customer experience, the biggest player in retail right now is Amazon. What started as an online bookstore has grown into a multichannel retailer that has redefined the way customers shop and the experience that they expect.

Amazon has been able to grow quickly by meeting its customers where they are—online and, now, in person — and providing unique customer experiences informed by the data they receive from all of their channels. With so many touch points and channels that work seamlessly together, they are able to create both a holistic view of their customer data and an individual channel view when looking for new opportunities to engage customers.

For example, Amazon recently went back to its roots and launched brick-and-mortar bookstores. The catch: No matter how many books you purchase while you're there, you'll still walk out empty handed. Amazon purposely keeps inventory limited in the bookstore — partly as a way to push eReaders and other gadgets, and partly to keep from overwhelming customers in store. With Amazon's huge online inventory for shoppers to reference, if they can't find a book in store, they can have it delivered to their door with the push of a button.

These locations also enable Amazon to get the best kind of customer engagement: face-to-face conversation. By creating physical locations, faces can be put to their large company. And for eight in ten customers, human interaction is still important when they are shopping, according to a survey by PwC. For the customers who still keep to themselves, integrated sensors detect items picked up off a shelf, so Amazon can collect information around which products piqued their customers' interest.

As Amazon has exemplified, a connected back end provides you with the customer data you need to get to know your customers better. That, in turn, helps you create the shopping experience your customers want.

Shake hands with your customers

Customer data should fuel your business. Without understanding who your customers are, how they shop, and what they're buying, you won't be able to create the customer experience that drives your business forward. And fragmented data makes it difficult to get an accurate understanding of your customers' pain points, which is why it's important to have a holistic view across your business.

By connecting your channels and technology on the back end, you'll get a view of your buyers that can shape your customer experience on the front end.

Recognize your customers

When all of your payments are processed through one platform, it opens up your ability to understand who your customers are and how they shop on different touchpoints.

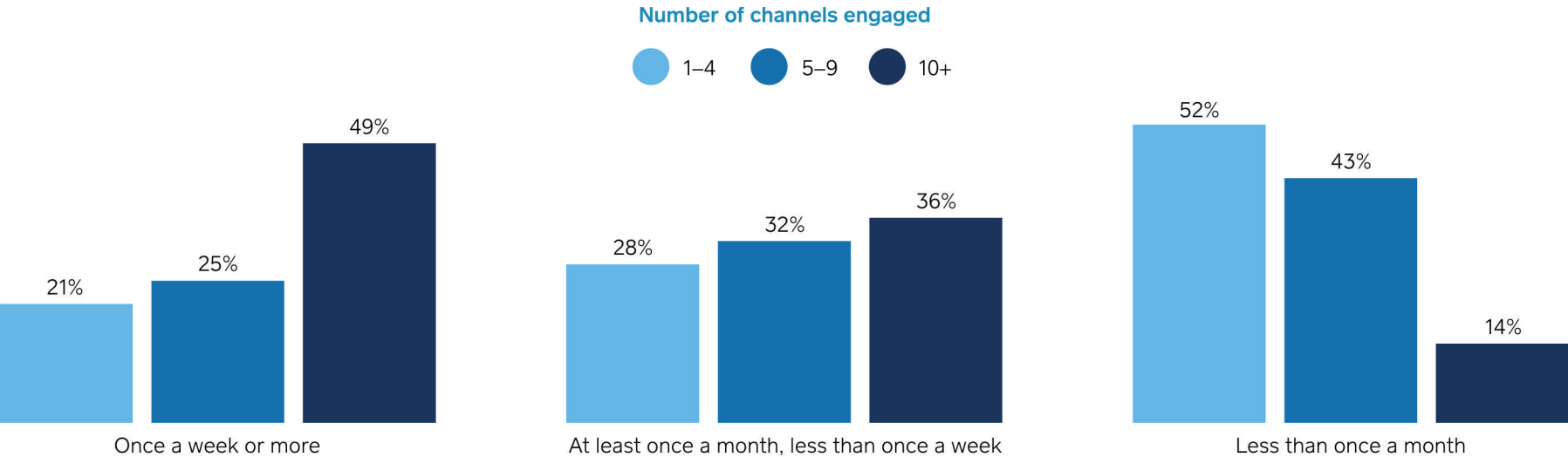
Why do you want this information? Keeping all of your channels on one platform makes it a lot easier to track customers across multiple touchpoints. You will also be able to recognize return customers and provide them with a unique experience tailored to their shopping preferences.

Examples include remembering account passwords, suggesting relevant products through web experiences, and a big one is storing payment information. You can improve this experience even further by integrating additional payment methods like Apple Pay and Google Pay.

Another recent marketing trends report from PwC found that a whopping 73 percent of buyers point to customer experience as an important factor in purchasing decisions. Streamlining these aspects of your channels will eliminate the disruptions to customers' shopping experience that may cause them to drop off.

Shoppers that engage with retailers on multiple channels make purchases more often.

Survey: How often do you make purchases from your favorite retailer's website?



A data-powered business

Aggregated data from all of your channels should shape how you run your business. Data from your integrated payments and point of sale can inform more than who your customers are — it helps you identify how they shop, when they shop, where they shop, what products are popular, what products are not, what processes are working, and where you should invest more in your business.

The data you glean from a unified commerce platform makes it quicker and easier to make connections between all of the touchpoints in your customer journey. When your systems are all integrated and working through a centralized commerce platform, the robust data you receive helps to create a more effective strategy—one that moves the needle.

Planning and strategy

Tracking purchasing behavior across channels and touchpoints also helps businesses get a deeper understanding of what products your customers are buying. Then when it comes to planning, creating a product roadmap, or identifying which areas of your business to invest more in, you can reference that purchasing behavior to make the decisions that reflect what your customers want.

Purchasing behavior will also help inform staffing needs. By looking at peak shopping times you can adjust your staffing and determine how many employees need to be in stores on certain days or during specific shifts. Sales online may also help you determine how to staff up your marketing or plan your shipping needs.

Marketing and communication

When marketing to your customers, it's crucial to provide them with the information that they want, when they want it. When your POS integrates with a CRM (customer relationship management) tool and a loyalty program, you can get an even more built-out picture of each customer. These customer profiles can be used to inform everything from social media to email marketing and promotions.

Sales data can help you understand what your customers want to hear about, what they respond to, and what channels they are frequenting the most. You can then prioritize which channels you invest more marketing dollars in.

Inventory management

It can be difficult enough for retailers to keep track of inventory and orders through one channel (75 percent of retailers have inaccurate inventory levels in their store). When you add in multiple channels, keeping track of your inventory is pretty much impossible if your business is broken up and not managed by a central system. When your channels operate in silos, you increase the chance of creating discrepancies that affect your customers, and in turn, your bottom line. Having a tight lock on your inventory can also set you apart from competitors.

All of your channels should drive back to the same inventory management system to avoid discrepancies for the customer and your business. According to a study by IHL Group, overstocks and out-of-stocks cost retailers \$1.1 trillion globally in lost revenue. \$222.7 billion of that can be attributed to data issues, including not sharing information across systems and channels.

Providing your customers with the availability to view your entire (accurate) inventory will help to maximize your sales. If you're sold out of something in store or have other colors available online, you should provide a medium for your customers to interact with your online channels, even if they are already in your brick-and-mortar store. If your business also works with other businesses, you may have a slightly different customer experience to consider. A unified commerce system also enables B2B companies to centralize orders and manage inventory from one system.

Shipping and delivery

A unified commerce experience doesn't stop once the order is placed. The importance of having all aspects of your company managed through one platform is played out through shipping as well. When your payments are centralized, it makes it easier on you and your employees to support a cross-channel shopping and delivering journey.

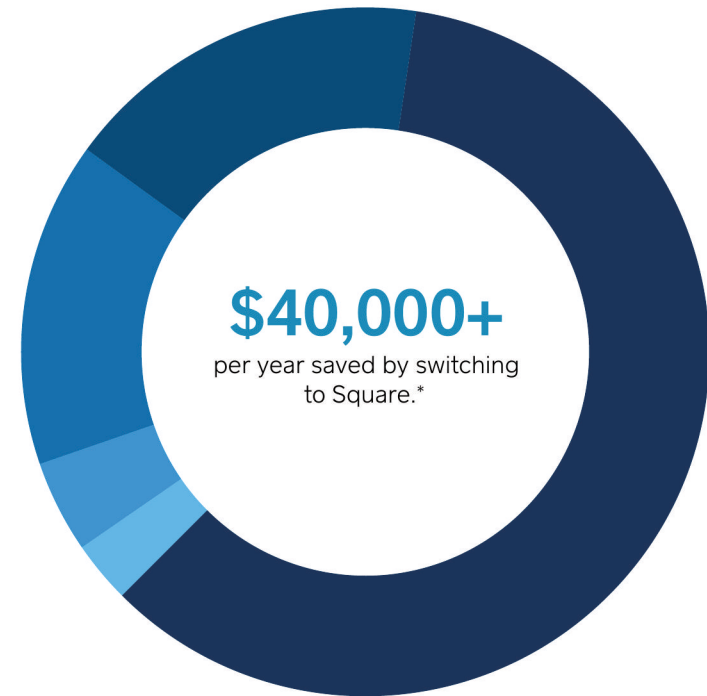
For your customers, a big part of their experience includes how they receive the items they've ordered and how quickly they receive them. Your items should be sourced and shipped from one of multiple locations, determined by the most efficient route, in order to meet your customers' demand for a speedy delivery.

Choosing the right partners to enable the strategy

To implement a unified commerce strategy you need a single payment processor that you use across channels. And like all of your other tools, your payment processor should help you run your business efficiently and increase your bottom line.

In order to do that, you need to evaluate more than the processing rate. Look at the total cost of your processing payments and what is included in that cost. You should aim to work with a payment processor that gives you access to the following:

- **The payments platform.** Finding a payment solution that can process your scale of payments with a competitive rate can be difficult. Look for a payments processor that can process all of your payments, across all of your channels, or integrates easily with partners to create a custom solution for your business.
- **PCI compliance.** Maintaining PCI compliance records can be a full-time job for a member of your staff. It's time consuming and costly to stay on top of the records and regulations required for PCI compliance. Look for a payments processor that handles PCI-compliance management for you and takes on the responsibility of being the merchant of record. This will help protect both you and your customers.
- **Data security.** End-to-end encryption protects your customers' payment data and makes sure it never touches your servers or devices.
- **Fraud risk.** Managing and analyzing your risk often takes a team of data scientists and risk analysts. You can employ those people on your staff or look for a payments platform that keeps you ahead of fraud.



- **\$1,200** to ensure PCI compliance
- **\$1,800** in monthly fees (deposit fees, handling fees, security fees)
- **\$6,353** in chargeback fees
- **\$7,219** in refund and processing fees
- **\$25,000** in employee time saved from responding to disputes, ensuring compliance, and managing vendors. All of which can now be spent growing the business.

Leverage and enhance current services

Customers no longer differentiate between online and in-store shopping. They expect to browse, buy, and receive products wherever they are, whenever they want.

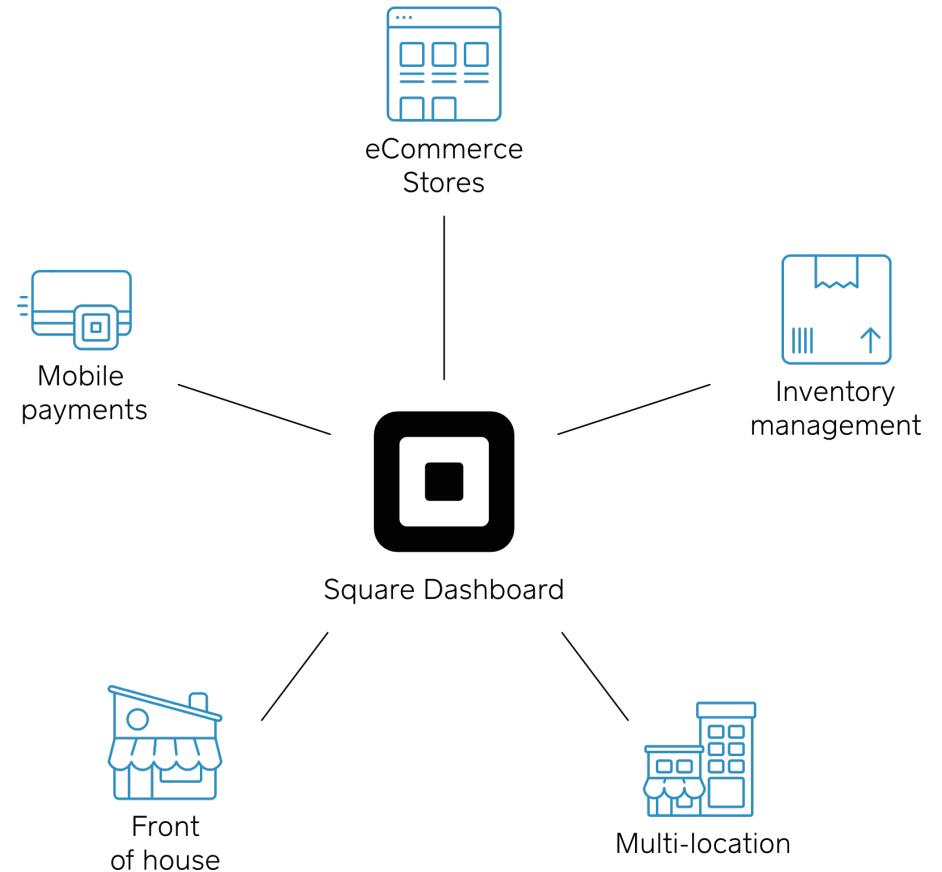
To provide the integrated and seamless experience your customers are asking for, you cannot treat your channels as separate entities. In order to be successful, you need to prioritize operating your business through one central system that can tie all of your channels together on both the front end and back end.

If you're at a stage in your business where you have already chosen and set up most of your management systems, the idea of moving towards unified commerce might be daunting. But you don't have to drop everything and overhaul your current system.

Many leading software programs are evolving to accommodate unified commerce. It's likely that many of the systems you use for inventory, accounting, invoicing, point of sale, and e-commerce can integrate with each other, whether your business is B2C or B2B, or both. You may need to switch one component or use a developer resource to complete the integration, depending on the complexity and requirements of your current system. But this is easy to identify.

To get started, you should think of your payment processor as the center of your system. Also think about your e-commerce platform: Does it integrate with your payment processor? What about your point of sale?

Then search partner apps, marketplaces, or integrations for your main customer-facing platforms. Magento, BigCommerce, or WooCommerce are popular platforms you might be using. To find out more, they all have marketplaces that list their integrations (Magento, BigCommerce, WooCommerce) and Square is a payment processor you'll find listed.





Grow your business with Square and partners.

Sell online and in person through one unified system

Why have separate systems for online and instore sales?

The Square extensions provides an all-in-one point-of-sale solution that elegantly integrates your eCommerce and in-person sales, for B2B and B2C businesses. Your customers get an improved unified commerce retail experience, while you get a synchronized inventory, customer, and sales data for streamlined processes and real-time business intelligence.



Sell online with Square payments.

- Flexible, secure, and PCI compliant, with fraud protection, end-to-end encryption, and a dedicated disputes team
- Save cards on file for future changes
- Full support for transactions, refunds, voids, and cancellations



Sell in-person with Square hardware and apps

- Accept all kinds of payments
- Use affordable, scalable hardware for checkout counter and line-busting
- Get going quickly with the intuitive Square Point of Sale app or the advanced inventory management tools of Square for Retail



Sync Data

- Update product catalog details between in-store and online locations
- Sync inventory counts across systems to prevent over-selling
- Keep data in sync, from transaction history to cards on file



Payments don't have to be painful

- Square manages the complexity of payments so you can focus on your business
- Clear, transparent pricing - no hidden fees
- Flat rates for online and in-person transactions
- Fast, accurate deposits within one to two business days
- 24/7 access to U.S based phone and email support

Interested in learning more?

Connect with a member of our sales team and find out how Square integrates with leading eCommerce platforms like Magento, BigCommerce, and WooCommerce.

[Get in Touch](#)

