

Unify Your Retail Operations: Experience the Power of Unified Commerce



What you'll learn:

- The crucial distinction between omnichannel and unified commerce
- Why real-time data integration is essential for modern retailers
- How unified systems boost efficiency and customer loyalty
- Key technologies needed for a unified approach across channels and teams
- How BigCommerce empowers businesses to achieve true unification

Today's customers expect seamless experiences — everywhere they shop. Whether online, in-store, or through social channels, they want the same consistency.

Yet many retailers struggle to deliver it. When systems don't talk to each other, friction follows: missed sales, mismatched inventory, and frustrated shoppers.

There's a better way: unified commerce.

And it's not just a buzzword — it's becoming the foundation of modern retail.

The [2024 Manhattan Associates Retail Benchmark report](#) reveals a stark reality: Retailers face significant challenges in inventory accuracy and order fulfilment, directly impacting customer satisfaction.

However, the report also indicates that top-performing retailers are prioritising unified inventory visibility and flexible fulfilment options, leading to superior customer-facing experiences and operational agility.

This guide will explain unified commerce, how it differs from multichannel and omnichannel setups, and why it's essential for your business. We'll show you how [BigCommerce](#) empowers merchants like you to connect every touchpoint and unlock unparalleled growth.

What is unified commerce?

Unified commerce connects everything: your sales channels, your backend operation, all on a single platform.

Imagine a single brain for your entire business. That brain is your unified commerce platform. It's the foundation for true omnichannel. Every customer interaction. Every product detail. Every management system, all in sync.

This centralised platform gives you a complete view. Consolidated data. Real-time insights.

Why does this matter?

You serve customers better, you adapt faster, and your business grows smarter.

For example, [Forrester's 2023 retail trends report](#) highlighted that retailers prioritising real-time data integration for inventory and customer insights are significantly outperforming competitors in customer satisfaction and sales conversion.

This ability to make informed decisions across channels is a hallmark of unified commerce solutions.

You track performance across channels, across regions. You make informed decisions. You prepare for the future.

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Unified commerce vs. omnichannel commerce

The terms often get mixed up, but their distinction is critical.

Omnichannel: Connecting customer touchpoints.

Omnichannel retail focuses on the customer journey — offering consistent experiences across multiple channels including your website, social media platforms, in-app, and in-store. The goal is a unified *front end* where shoppers can browse, buy, and engage anywhere.

However, behind the scenes, systems often remain separate. [POS](#), [CRM](#), and inventory platforms might share data in batches or with delays, creating silos and inconsistencies that impact both employees and customers.

Unified commerce: Integrating systems and data.

Now, envision unified commerce. It goes beyond the customer's view and integrates everything, front-end and back-end, creating a single, centralised data platform. That's the core.

All systems communicate in real time. Your POS talks directly to inventory. Inventory updates immediately to your website. Your CRM knows every purchase online or in-store.

This eliminates data silos, meaning no more disjointed information. One source of truth.

The result? Seamless communication across your entire organisation, true consistency, and better insights.

Why it matters for customers.

The difference is tangible. In an omnichannel setup, the experience can break down: an item added to a cart online may be unavailable in-store, or loyalty points might take hours to update.

With unified ecommerce, everything syncs instantly. Customers can buy online and return in-store, and loyalty rewards update in real time. Features like [Click and Collect](#) and BORIS (Buy Online, Return In Store) only work seamlessly when systems are unified.

Technology stack requirements.

Omnichannel systems can often be stitched together, but unified commerce requires a more modern, integrated architecture—built for real-time communication.

That means:

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- **API-first platforms** that make integrations smooth and scalable
- **Composable architecture** that allows you to mix and match best-in-class tools
- **Systems designed for collaboration**, not isolation

The payoff? A flexible, future-proof foundation that grows with your business.

Why unified commerce matters now

The retail landscape is unforgiving. Customers demand perfection, and competitors are evolving fast.

Unified commerce isn't optional anymore – it's essential, especially for growing or complex retailers.

It addresses core challenges, unlocks new opportunities, and is foundational for survival and success.

The hidden cost of disconnected experiences.

When systems don't sync, the consequences add up fast:

- **Order errors:** Items show as available but are out of stock.
- **Inconsistent pricing:** Different prices across channels create confusion and mistrust.
- **Manual data entry:** Time wasted, errors introduced.

According to [PwC's 2023 study](#), 32% of customers will leave a brand they love after just one bad experience — and nearly 60% after multiple. Disconnected systems are often at the root of those experiences.

Real-time data for real-time decisions.

In unified systems, every data point updates instantly—sales, inventory, fulfilment, and customer insights. Retailers can:

- [Adjust pricing dynamically](#) based on live demand.
- Reallocate inventory between locations.
- Deliver personalised recommendations that combine online and in-store behaviour.

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This agility helps businesses forecast more accurately, respond faster, and stay ahead of shifting trends.

Meeting evolving customer expectations across channels.

Customers expect consistency across every interaction: same products, same branding, same prices, same support.

Unified commerce delivers exactly that. It gives customer service teams a 360° view of every shopper's history, so issues get resolved quickly and experiences feel personalised. That consistency builds trust — and lasting loyalty.

The business benefits of unified commerce

Unified commerce doesn't just eliminate problems; it creates measurable value across operations and customer experience.

Streamlined inventory and fulfilment.

One of the biggest headaches in retail? [Inventory management](#). Where is everything? How much do we have?

Unified ecommerce solves this disconnect, providing a single, real-time view of inventory across all locations, including warehouses, stores, and fulfilment partners. No more guesswork, no more overselling.

Orders are automatically routed to the optimal location for cost and speed. This powers capabilities like ship-from-store, BOPIS, and curbside pickup, reducing costs and improving satisfaction.

Consistent cross-channel branding and personalisation.

Unified data keeps your brand storey consistent everywhere: website, app, store, or social channel. With a complete customer view, personalisation becomes meaningful and timely.

A shopper who browses shoes online and buys a belt in-store might later receive a tailored handbag recommendation. This kind of contextual marketing builds loyalty and drives conversions.

Operational efficiency and lower total cost of ownership.

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Managing multiple disconnected systems is expensive. Unified commerce reduces IT overhead, minimises manual data reconciliation, and automates workflows across departments.

With a single source of truth, teams move faster, make clearer decisions, and save both time and money.

Stronger customer retention and loyalty.

When experiences are consistent and personalised, customers trust your brand. Integrated loyalty programmes and accurate inventory strengthen that trust and turn one-time buyers into repeat advocates.

Unified commerce does more than just improve transactions. It deepens relationships.

Essential technology for a unified commerce strategy

Unified commerce relies on modern, interoperable systems designed for constant communication. Here are the vital pieces of the puzzle for a truly unified system.

API-first commerce platforms.

This is the cornerstone.

APIs (Application Programming Interfaces) are like universal connectors, allowing different software systems to talk to each other.

An [API-first platform](#) like BigCommerce prioritises this. It's designed to be open to integrate easily with any other tool or function, making it easy to connect your POS, [ERP](#), and CRM without complex workarounds.

Why is this essential for unified commerce? It creates flexibility and scalability for future growth.

Unified POS and ERP systems.

When [point-of-sale \(POS\)](#) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems sync in real time, inventory and financial data stay accurate across all channels. Every sale, whether online or in-store, updates instantly, powering better fulfilment and reporting.

CRM integration for a 360° customer view.

Your CRM holds your customer data: their purchase history, preferences, and interactions. But often, this data is fragmented. Online purchases are in one place, in-store visits in another, and

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support tickets somewhere else.

A unified commerce strategy changes this by integrating your CRM with every touchpoint. This creates a single, complete customer profile. It captures every interaction and purchase, allowing you to deliver personalised experiences that strengthen relationships.

Real-time inventory and order sync.

This is a non-negotiable for modern retail. No more lagging updates. No more syncing once a day, or even once every hour.

Real-time synchronisation means every sale, return, and inventory adjustment is reflected instantly across all sales channels and all warehouses.

This prevents overselling and supports advanced fulfilment options like BOPIS and ship-from-store. Real-time visibility also improves forecasting accuracy.

Product information and feed management.

Managing product data gets complicated fast, especially with extensive catalogues or multiple sales channels.

A [Product Information Management](#) (PIM) system centralises all product data, including descriptions, images, SKUs, pricing, and attributes.

On the other hand, feed management tools like [Feedonomics](#) optimise listings for each marketplace or ad platform. This ensures accuracy, consistency, and visibility everywhere you sell.

How BigCommerce enables unified commerce

Implementing unified commerce requires the right foundation, and that's where BigCommerce excels.

API-first and headless flexibility.

BigCommerce provides the backbone for connected retail, linking your checkout, merchandising, and order management systems with ease. Everything talks in real time, and no data gets locked away.

We support [headless commerce](#), too. Build your storefront however you want while BigCommerce handles transactions, inventory, and fulfilment behind the scenes.

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The result? Creative freedom up front, reliable power in back. Your business runs as one connected system.

Deep integrations with POS and ERP systems.

Unified commerce lives or dies on [seamless system integration](#).

Your online store must link with physical operations. BigCommerce offers deep compatibility here through native apps, APIs, and a broad partner network.

The platform links directly to major ERP and POS systems, keeping every channel in sync.

Your in-store and online channels synchronise perfectly. Every sale updates inventory instantly, and orders flow directly to your ERP.

This comprehensive connectivity eliminates data silos and manual reconciliation. Financial reporting becomes straightforward, and you can make accurate decisions across your entire operation.

Feedonomics: Unified product feeds across all channels.

A unified commerce strategy demands that your product information matches perfectly across your website, marketplaces, social channels, and ad platforms.

Feedonomics, a BigCommerce company, [centralises and optimises your product data feeds](#) to make this happen. Accurate details reach every platform, whether on marketplaces or social media platforms. It simplifies complex requirements. Manual updates disappear, and errors drop dramatically.

This centralised approach:

- Reduces listing errors
- Keeps product visibility strong
- Powers personalised marketing
- And boosts conversions

Open SaaS and composable commerce readiness.

BigCommerce gives you flexibility without the headache. This means enterprise-level security and performance — without managing infrastructure.

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We built BigCommerce for [composable commerce](#). That means you can pick the best tools for each job: use our commerce engine, your preferred content system, and a separate product database.

Our architecture and APIs let you mix and match components that fit your business. This approach helps you stay nimble and swap tools when better options emerge. Respond quickly to market shifts, and build a tech stack that evolves with your needs.

The final word

Unified commerce isn't just a retail trend — it's a strategic imperative.

It connects every system and channel — from physical stores to mobile apps — creating a single, real-time ecosystem.

With BigCommerce, you get the infrastructure and integrations to make it happen, from API-first architecture to Feedonomics-powered product visibility.

The result is a business that runs smarter, scales faster, and delivers the unified experiences today's shoppers expect.

FAQs about unified commerce

What is the difference between unified commerce and omnichannel?

Omnichannel focuses on the customer journey — offering consistent front-end experiences across channels — but backend systems often remain disconnected. Unified commerce integrates those systems so all data flows in real time, eliminating silos and inconsistencies, and creating a seamless shopping experience.

What are the benefits of unified commerce for retailers?

Retailers gain operational efficiency, real-time insights, reduced manual work, and improved customer satisfaction. Unified commerce strengthens brand trust, optimises fulfilment, and boosts retention through consistent, personalised experiences.

Is unified commerce only for enterprise businesses?

Not at all. While large enterprises benefit greatly, small and midsize retailers gain scalability and simplicity. Unified commerce helps growing brands manage complexity as they expand into new channels.

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How does BigCommerce support unified commerce?

BigCommerce's API-first platform integrates seamlessly with POS, ERP, and CRM systems. Feedonomics centralises product feeds, while Open SaaS and composable architecture provide flexibility for future growth.

What systems need to be integrated for unified commerce to work?

Achieving unified commerce requires linking several key technologies. These systems must communicate flawlessly and combine to create a single source of truth: Commerce platform: This forms the central hub for online sales. POS (Point-of-Sale): Manages all in-store transactions smoothly. ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning): Oversees back-office operations like accounting. CRM (Customer Relationship Management): Stores every customer interaction and detail. Inventory management: Tracks product stock levels across all locations precisely. Feed management: Optimises product data for various marketplaces and ads. These integrations combine to form a truly cohesive retail ecosystem.

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