

Presented by Internet Retailer

# 10 QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE SELECTING AN E-COMMERCE PLATFORM



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# The unified commerce platform advantage: Customer-centric commerce

As consumers move freely between online and offline shopping channels, they expect retailers to provide consistent and relevant experiences. For some consumers that may mean being able to view in-store inventory online, while for others it may mean buying online and picking up in-store. For others, it may mean another type of omnichannel experience.

Most retailers, however, are struggling to keep pace with consumers' rising expectations for an omnichannel experience because each department within its company, such as e-commerce, retail stores, marketing, etc., has purchased technology specific to its needs. Consequently, intra-departmental legacy systems are incompatible with one another, essentially leaving the customer and back-end data needed to create an omnichannel experience on data islands.

While retailers have tried to stitch all this siloed data together, it's a piecemeal solution that requires continual upgrades to ensure compatibility as new features are added to each platform.

To solve the problem, retailers need to move to a single, unified commerce platform, rather than trying to keep everything patched together. "The traditional commerce model is built on individual sales channels with their own solution to service the customer, which creates data silos that inhibit the sharing of information across the enterprise," says Andy Lloyd, general manager, commerce products, for NetSuite Inc., a SaaS commerce and business system platform provider. "It's a model that no longer works, because commerce is now a continuous, cross-channel customer journey and more customer-driven."

Orienting operations around the customer through a single platform that connects the supply chain with the front-end customer touch points requires retailers and suppliers to rethink and redesign their core infrastructure, according to Lloyd.

The benefit from this single commerce platform approach is that it unifies e-commerce and point-of-sale with a retailer's back-office inventory, customer history and financial systems. That way a retailer can access the data it needs to provide great customer experiences across all sales channels.

Retailers that have a 360-degree view of a customer's behavior, her transaction history, purchasing frequency and product and brand preferences in each channel can create product recommendations and offers personalized to her taste and channel preference. Delivering these kinds of



Andy Lloyd, general manager, commerce products, NetSuite Inc.

experiences produces a happier, more loyal customer, increases sales, and maximizes the lifetime value of that customer relationship.

NetSuite's commerce platform, SuiteCommerce, provides front-end ecommerce and point-of-sale systems natively unified with order and inventory management, CRM and financials. On the back-end, SuiteCommerce gives

retailers visibility into available inventory as each order is placed, which helps managers better orchestrate order management and fulfillment. A retailer that sells both online and through stores may opt to fill an online order from an e-commerce warehouse close to the customer to reduce shipping costs or from a store where that particular item is selling slowly. With a unified system it's not a problem for a store associate to access a customer's online order history and process a product return in a store, or to place an order from online inventory for an item out of stock at that location.

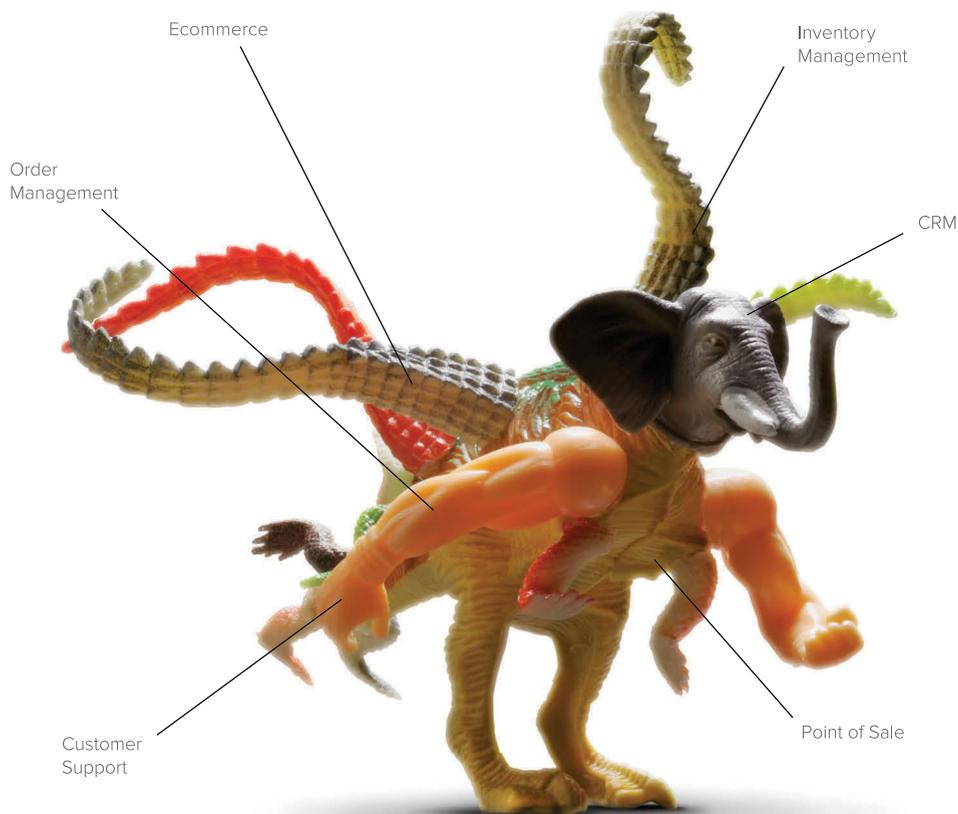
B2B suppliers—those that sell not to consumers but other businesses—can also benefit from the data-sharing capabilities of a unified commerce platform. Sales representatives can access available inventory and client order histories in the field to quickly let a customer know if the products he needs are available, and to make offers personalized to his buying patterns. B2B suppliers can also provide a client a consolidated view of his company's online order history, as opposed to just what his department has ordered.

"The payoff from this type of modern commerce infrastructure is that retailers and suppliers can build their business around the customer and his expectations, not the transaction, and seamlessly deliver a personalized, relevant and consistent customer experience through every sales channel," says Lloyd. ○

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HOW TODAY'S COMMERCE RUNS

\*If you run more than 6, we can help you too.

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