

A JITTERBIT EBOOK

Achieving Connected Commerce in Retail

Integrating, Automating, and Thriving in the Midst of Disruptive Change





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Embracing the Uncertain: Retail Leaders Flexibly Adjust Amid Ongoing Disruption

Shifts in consumer shopping behavior were driving digital disruption throughout the retail industry well before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Businesses were already transforming their IT operations to keep pace with customer expectations for service across an ever-increasing number of channels.

But when the spread of the virus pushed more consumers online than ever before, digital commerce capabilities became newly vital for retail companies to remain in business. Organizations already engaged in digital transformation doubled down on their efforts while businesses lagging behind had to pivot quickly.

Which isn't to say that brick-and-mortar operations are disappearing—consumer behavior indicates that customers still seek in-store shopping experiences. After a steep decline in foot traffic during the initial phase of the pandemic, shoppers began returning to retail locations in growing numbers. Down 45 percent at its lowest ebb in April 2020, foot traffic bounced back again by 30 percent in just three months.¹

As conditions within the pandemic continue to fluctuate, consumers will also continue to adjust their use of and reliance on in-store and digital commerce channels accordingly. At a moment in which predicting the course of future events is uniquely challenging, one thing is certain: now more than ever, retail merchants, brands, and suppliers need integrated technology enabling them to quickly and flexibly adjust in the midst of ongoing disruption.



In 2020, the sharp decline in foot traffic significantly impacted retail businesses, leading to mass store closures. But by early 2021, openings of new retail locations were already outpacing closures.² The lesson for retail companies? Rapid, disruptive change is the constant.

Seamless Omnichannel Service is Critical, but it's Only One of the Challenges

Linking the in-store and digital shopping experience is top of mind for retail companies operating in the current climate. A customer finding it difficult to perform a task across channels—applying an online offer or promo code to a purchase at a retail location, for example—is likely to start shopping elsewhere. But along with seamless omnichannel service delivery, retail businesses face a complex set of additional challenges.

Ensuring accurate inventory data with EDI. Offering goods across multiple channels and locations requires businesses to make sure that inventory information is both accurate and readily accessible across the supply chain. To do so, many organizations must now implement and use electronic data interchange (EDI), a system for virtual data exchange between trading partners. Designed to easily and efficiently share inventory-related information, EDI is often required for suppliers serving large retail companies.

Accelerating processes. Businesses that once relied on manual data entry may have fallen behind during the mass shift to digital commerce during the pandemic. For instance, companies that spent hours entering data from online orders into their core systems may now need to automate order management processes to keep up with demand.

Working with big-box retailers. Many small-to-medium businesses quickly learn that a passion for making or offering a product isn't enough. If these merchants are selling through big-box retail giants, they have to work within a complex framework of rules, timelines, and regulations.

Choosing the optimal e-commerce mechanisms. Although Amazon Marketplaces is the leading online sales channel, shopping cart applications like Shopify, BigCommerce, and VTEX also offer viable options for sellers. To thrive, businesses need to identify the e-commerce platforms best suited to their specific needs and demands.

Engaging and selling on new platforms. To remain competitive, retailers have to move quickly and learn how to sell products through new digital channels as they become relevant. Today, that means engaging with customers effectively on Instagram, TikTok, and other social media platforms.

Gaining insight for direction. With so many channels in play, businesses need to capture and sift through performance data to understand which avenues are proving fruitful and which require further attention.

Attracting and retaining employees. In the current economy, workers have an abundance of opportunities for employment. Retail companies need to offer tools, support, and benefits that will attract new employees and encourage retention.

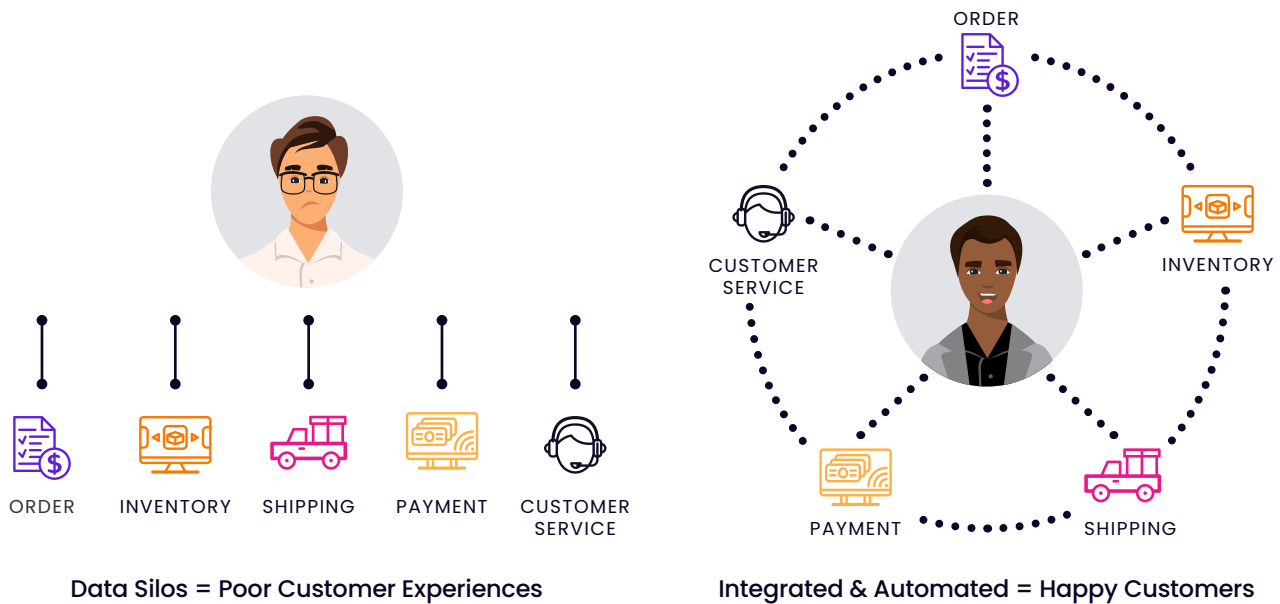
The stakes are high: **63%** of consumers will shop elsewhere after a single unsatisfactory experience with a brand.³ Seamless service delivery is just one of the complex set of challenges retail companies currently face.

A Way Forward: Hyperautomation with Integration at its Core

A way forward in addressing current challenges in the retail industry? Hyperautomation. Named by Gartner as a top technology trend for 2022⁴, hyperautomation is a strategic, disciplined effort by an organization to identify and automate every possible business and IT process. In doing so, a company is preparing to move and innovate at the hyper-speed demanded by the current digital landscape.

At the heart of a hyperautomation initiative lies integration—connecting the multitude of cloud, on-premises, and legacy applications, systems, devices, and other technologies that enable companies to sell and deliver their products to consumers. Full-scale IT orchestration provides retail businesses with the agility and companywide alignment they need to survive. Plus, it positions them to accommodate changes down the road—updating ERP platforms, adding new storefronts, or incorporating point of sale (POS) systems, for example.

An organization without sufficient integration may experience the impact in unexpected ways. For instance, negative Internet reviews—which can destroy a retail operation—can often be traced to a systemic lack of integration. When ordering and shipping systems aren't in sync, processes aren't automated, and customer service reps don't have access to real-time data, a whole host of issues across the business can result in poor customer experiences that are shared online.



The Gartner 2022 Top Technology Trends eBook reports that after being buffeted by unexpected events, companies are newly focused on the **promise of digital business to outperform competitors**; this increased focus has brought the need for better, more widespread IT automation to the forefront.


When Integration is What it Takes to Automate, Why do Companies Lag Behind?

For retail businesses to survive in the long term, they need agile, integrated, and highly connected IT infrastructure. Still, many companies are relying on disparate technology and disjointed processes to support their operations. Why?

Overwhelmed IT organizations. Traditional methods for creating a more connected infrastructure require time and resources that are currently in short supply. IT organizations were already struggling to meet their project commitments before the pandemic; after it hit, the volume of digital initiatives doubled.

Skills gaps. Along with facing overwhelming demands, internal IT teams often lack the specialized skills to adequately address the need for connectivity across enterprise systems or perform version updates to connected systems without impacting automations.

The limitations of custom coding. Organizations with the skills and resources to create custom-coded integrations between systems may still be hesitant to perform these projects internally. For one, a company may lose the ability to modify a custom-coded integration if the personnel implementing it leaves the organization. And, unlike an integration platform offering reusable components, a custom-coded integration is a single-use solution.



For many overburdened IT teams, operating in survival mode has resulted in **“tech debt”**—the burden created when long-term strategic needs are pushed aside to tackle the most pressing projects.

With Integration, Businesses Gain the Agility They Need to Thrive

To create automated, integrated infrastructure, businesses are embracing an innovative approach to connectivity—one based on application programming interface (API) architecture. A set of web-based instructions facilitating communication between systems, an API defines routes for connection between a company's internal applications and with third-party services or functions. By compartmentalizing capabilities and functions into reusable API-led building blocks, an increasing number of businesses are becoming highly connected organizations with the flexibility to shift with change and disruption as it occurs.

While API-led automation is gaining momentum, EDI integration remains a key underpinning for retail commerce. It provides seamless connectivity with outlets that require EDI transactions, including big-box retailers Costco, Best Buy, Target, Walmart, Home Depot, Kroger, Lowe's, and more. In addition to streamlining processes and boosting efficiency, this tried-and-true data exchange method provides retailers, wholesalers, and suppliers with additional avenues for growing their businesses.

API and EDI integration are at work all around us. For example, when a consumer makes an online purchase, chances are good that the merchant has integrated UPS, FedEx, or USPS shipping functionality directly into its storefront with API-led connectivity. If a customer locates and reserves a retail item for in-store pickup on a website or through an app, EDI integrations are likely involved. And when a shopper uses a loyalty card at a drugstore or supermarket, APIs are often enabling these stores to provide coupons based on previous purchases or preferences.



Implementing a connected commerce solution that is equipped to accommodate both API and EDI connectivity positions retail businesses for success—over 60% of companies in the U.S. now use EDI⁵ and 96% of organizations worldwide currently use APIs.⁶

What Does Connectivity Look Like Across the Retail Value Chain?

Connectivity allows businesses to flexibly integrate their systems, services, applications, and devices across the entire retail value chain, enabling them to:



Forecast and gauge demand.

An integration strategy connects previously siloed information, improving data visibility and access across retail operations. With trusted data at their fingertips, businesses can improve the accuracy of their forecasting and planning, helping them better gauge future demand for products.



Buy and manage inventory.

Connectivity links the disparate platforms and business functions involved in purchasing inventory to provide a single view of sales, purchase orders, and stock levels. With visibility across front-end and back-end systems, buying teams can place orders based on real-time stock and inventory data.



Ship and deliver goods.

Retail companies working with dynamic, complex supply chains are linking systems across logistics, inventory management, and distribution with integration to quickly move goods in multiple ways—including direct to customer through dropshipping or direct to retailer—and meet expectations for smooth, rapid product delivery.



Connect with and sell to customers.

An integration strategy enables businesses to engage seamlessly with customers across today's myriad digital touchpoints and offer a convenient and personalized shopping experience.



Retain staff.

Integration allows retail companies to provide employees with the tools, technology, and training they need to succeed in their roles from day one on the job, improving satisfaction and boosting retention.

Retail companies establishing a **flexible and easily adaptable digital foundation** through data, application, and business process connectivity unlock value across the enterprise—for their customers, partners, and employees.

Retail Integration in Action: A Textile Business Transforms Disjointed Legacy Applications into Fully Connected Operations

A Bath and Bedding Company Seeks a Digital Overhaul

A family-owned business for three generations, Matouk handcrafts and sells luxury bath and bedding textiles. The 88-year-old retail company relied on a disparate set of enterprise systems for its core operations; its manufacturing data was stored in an MRP system, its financial data in an ERP system, and its customer data in a CRM system. To improve efficiency, enhance service, and establish visibility across the business, Matouk wanted to create a flexible, fully connected IT environment.

Integration Seamlessly Connects Cloud-Based and On-Premise Applications

Designating the cloud-based Salesforce platform as its system of record for inventory, sales order processing, manufacturing, and purchasing, Matouk deployed a powerful Jitterbit Harmony API integration layer to connect the application with its website, EDI trading partner systems, and on-premise accounting platform. Plus, the business leveraged the Jitterbit technology to launch a cloud-connected mobile app for its employees working on the manufacturing floor.

Greater Efficiency, Better Service, and Product Creation in Just Half the Time

With its newly integrated infrastructure, Matouk provides a faster, better service experience. Instead of searching through multiple systems for data, the company's service representatives access a comprehensive order snapshot to quickly provide customers with information and status updates.

And with manufacturing, purchasing, and invoicing functions now seamlessly connected, Matouk efficiently processes thousands of transactions each day. Plus, visibility into how its products are moving through various stages drives greater productivity: what used to be a four-week cycle for creating a custom item is now a two-week process.

“This [Jitterbit integration] enables all departments to react to the data immediately, driving efficiencies in all corners of the business. What used to be a four-week cycle time to create a custom product was shrunk to two weeks—after just five months.”

— **Stuart Kiely**

VP OF DIGITAL, MATOUK

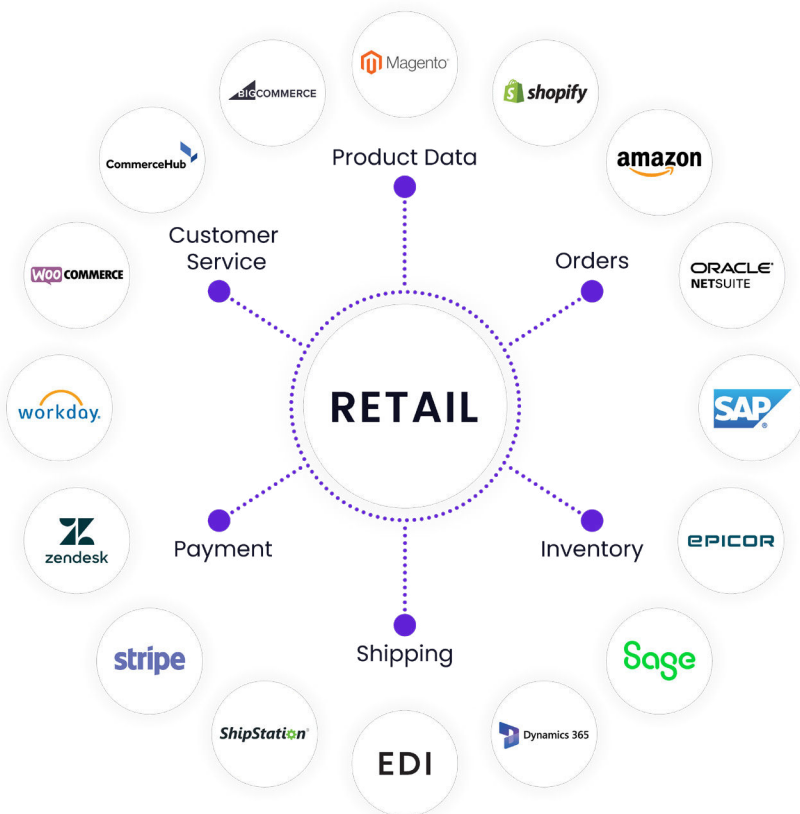
[Read the case study →](#)

Learn More

In the midst of continual change, retail businesses need agile, highly connected technology underpinning their operations to rapidly shift, adapt, and evolve. Connectivity enables companies to seamlessly integrate IT—both internally and with third-party systems—and automate processes across the business, allowing teams to move and innovate at hyper-speed.

A prime example? Jewelry and watch company **Red Luxury** acquired multiple brands, each with its own legacy ERP, finance, and HR systems. To streamline processes across its operations, the business implemented Jitterbit Harmony, integrating eight acquisitions in a NetSuite environment and connecting its Magento e-commerce platform. In addition to eliminating silos and bottlenecks, the Jitterbit solution frees valuable time and resources for Red Luxury to focus on innovative ways to grow its business.

To learn more about how Jitterbit can help your organization implement or advance an integration strategy, [visit our website](#).



“Everything is connected with Jitterbit, including our e-commerce selling channels, helping us to better manage inventory and sales. It works perfectly, and we know we can always add solutions in the future.”

— Romain Benichou

CO-FOUNDER AND CEO,
RED LUXURY

[Read the case study →](#)

About Jitterbit

Jitterbit helps businesses make faster, more effective decisions by enabling them to unify and use data from all sources. Founded in 2004 and headquartered in Alameda, California, the company maintains locations in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Australia, Latin America, and India.

Jitterbit Harmony, the company's cornerstone API integration solution, enables organizations to rapidly connect SaaS, on-premise, and cloud applications, and instantly infuse intelligence into any business process. Intuitive API creation technology allows them to reuse business-critical applications and data, bringing new offerings to market in days, not months. And best of all, Jitterbit's industry experts work side by side with companies to accelerate innovation beyond anything they previously thought possible.

To learn more, [visit our website](#).

Footnotes

¹ Cara Salpini, "What 6 charts say about the pandemic's impact on retail," Retail Dive, January 19, 2021, <https://www.retaildive.com/news/what-6-charts-say-about-the-pandemics-impact-on-retail/593102/>

² Gabriela Barkho, "After coronavirus losses, retailers are betting big on new store openings this year," Modern Retail, April 6, 2021, <https://www.modernretail.co/retailers/after-coronavirus-losses-retailers-are-betting-big-on-new-store-openings-this-year/>

³ "63% of Consumers are Likely to Stop Shopping a Brand if they have an Unsatisfactory Experience, According to New BRP Report," Cision PRWeb, February 19, 2019, https://www.prweb.com/releases/63_of_consumers_are_likely_to_stop_shopping_a_brand_if_they_have_an_unsatisfactory_experience_according_to_new_brp_report/prweb16111128.htm

⁴ "Gartner Top Strategic Technology Trends for 2022," Gartner, <https://www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/insights/top-technology-trends>

⁴ "Gartner Top Strategic Technology Trends for 2022," Gartner, <https://www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/insights/top-technology-trends>

⁵ Shannon Sickmon, "EDI: What It Is and Why You Need It Right Now," Aptean, December 7, 2021, <https://www.aptean.com/en-US/insights/blog/what-is-edi-and-why-you-need-it>

⁶ Wendell Santos, "Research Shows Organizations Increasingly Appreciating the Business Benefits of APIs," ProgrammableWeb, April 2, 2021, <https://www.programmableweb.com/news/research-shows-organizations-increasingly-appreciating-business-benefits-apis/brief/2021/04/02>



Jitterbit empowers businesses to optimize their connectivity and scalability through a single integration and workflow automation platform. Our mission is to turn complexity into simplicity so your entire organization can work faster and more efficiently.

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