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# Creating an omnichannel retail experience

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Our insights into ways of achieving a true omnichannel retail experience using the API technology stack.

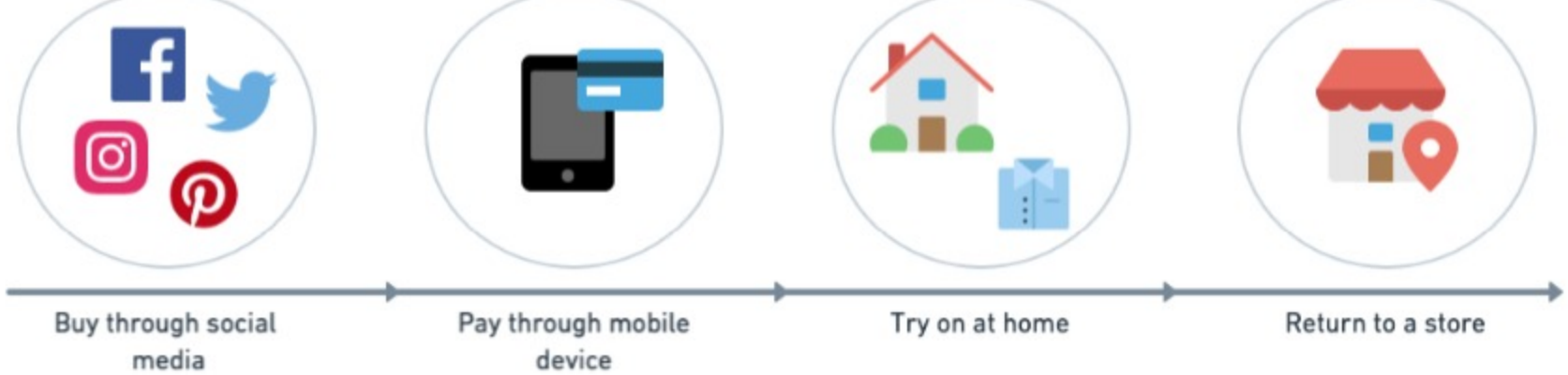
Even though the term omnichannel has been buzzing around for quite some time, retailers still prefer to invest in a **multichannel experience**. Back in 2017 only **22%** of the U.S. businesses engaged in any sort of omnichannel effort.

Fortunately, most businesses come around and recognize the importance of omnichannel, which is no longer a nice-to-have but a mandatory requirement imposed by customers themselves.

## What is omnichannel, and why do customers demand it?

Omnichannel, as opposed to multichannel, provides a customer with a seamless consistent journey on any device with which they wish to connect with a brand. This is what makes omnichannel so enticing for customers. They don't want to be told how to shop, they just want to buy a product then and there, right at the moment of interaction with your business.

The graphic below shows one of the many omnichannel-oriented paths your customers could take to purchase your product. They don't want a disjointed journey multichannel experience typically offers; they want a unified way of shopping through multiple touchpoints without unnecessary friction.



## Why is omnichannel important to customers?

Nowadays there's little you can do without omnichannel. Technology is everywhere. An average household has and actively uses **3.56 touchpoints**. These typically are devices like smartphone, smart TV, laptop/desktop computer, tablet, or ever-so-popular IoT devices like Alexa or Echo. Consumers are surrounded by and spoiled by technology, they know what they want and exactly how they want it.

In 2020, the number of connected devices per person is expected to be **6.58**, resulting in about 50 billion connected devices in total.

Is then such overabundance of technology bad for a retailer? Not at all, investing in omnichannel allows a growing business to cut through media buzz with a unique and consistent customer journey in an otherwise overwhelming digital landscape.

Unforgettable and seamless customer experience is the real metric by which your business is measured by your customers. This is the exact point where brand loyalty is born.

## Create a truly omnichannel retail experience

Whether you want it or not, consumers have the biggest say. Customer-oriented retail model imposes on retailers the way they have to perceive their customers. Retailers must allow their customers to purchase on their own terms, be in tune with customer demand, and show acute awareness of the customer lifecycle for every customer at any point. Communicate too early or too late means losing their focus. An unfocused customer turns their attention to a different brand, different product, and different experience.

To cater to this challenging model, retailers need to embrace omnichannel. True omnichannel **merges physical and digital touchpoints** into one unified journey. Having a great website, engaging social media campaigns and huge discounts in brick and mortars is great, but if they don't work together, you are on a good way to leave your customer confused by overloading them with multiple seemingly disjointed pieces of information.

A unique omnichannel experience infrastructure is not an easy endeavor. First of all, you'll need to start working closely with several departments and develop a strong strategy. At a minimum, make sure the following departments follow the same business objectives, are aware of each other's efforts, and communicate on regular basis:

- Marketing
- Sales
- Customer Support
- Customer Success
- Development

## Technology is your friend

It's time to face reality. Even if your **brick and mortars are successful**, there's plenty of in-store customers that prefer to go to the physical store to view the product, but would rather bought it online due to the convenience of free shipping or quicker checkout. Technology is already the customer's best friend. It's time you befriend it as well.

The main reason retailers abstain from investing in an omnichannel experience is the cost of implementation due to its complexity and fear of change. A typical retailer with a physical presence will likely to have an antiquated POS system that won't allow for any fancy integration, whereas digital store owners would probably stay content with a static site that responds to 3 screen sizes, desktop, tablet, and mobile. Today, customers will likely call you out on using old or clunky technology that impedes their customer journey.

Besides, investing in technology doesn't need to be costly. Don't tear down your existing platform but rather **innovate on top of it**.

Granted, creating a truly omnichannel experience is demanding for retailers, it expects from retailers to abandon their black-and-white solutions: encourage inter-departmental cooperation and invest in **new technology**. There's still a long way to go, but those who entered the path to true omnichannel are those who are on their way to become retails winners.

For inspiration, take a look at some retailers that excel at omnichannel, such as **Stance** who offers a truly unique in-store experience providing their customers with a possibility to **check out on their mobile phones**. The mobile self-checkout is hooked to their existing POS system and inventory and unifies multiple touchpoints (mobile, website, store) to provide a seamless customer journey. And that's what omnichannel is all about.



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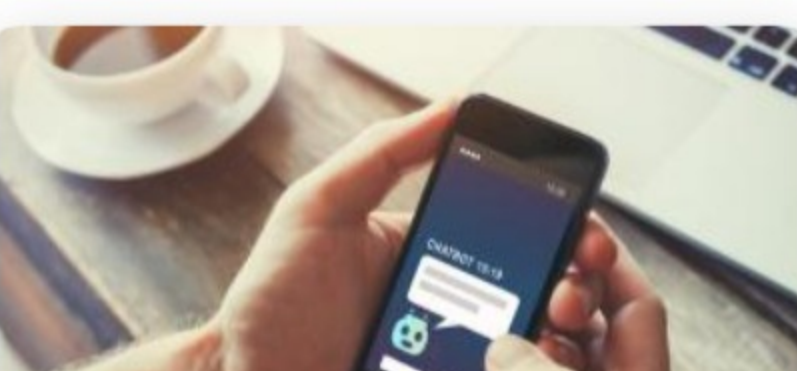
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