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# direct commerce

RELIABLY INFORMING THE ENTIRE DIRECT COMMERCE COMMUNITY



The official publication for the DCA

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No sooner do the stores re-open amidst the promise of life returning to 'normal,' we see countless numbers of our fellow citizens wetting themselves with excitement at being able to book and take overseas holidays. Never mind that we have somehow admitted numerous carriers of the 'Indian' variant into our country and never mind that international travel is enabling this virus to spread like wildfire. Never mind either that many other countries are way behind the UK with their vaccination programmes and are facing their own challenges to contain the spread of both old and new variants. Couldn't we all just hang fire for another season while we sort out our border controls and get a proper grip on it all? One would hope so.

Meanwhile, on cue, the sun puts in another of those rare Bank Holiday appearances to bring a ray of hope to us all, thereby prompting mass migration to our coastal resorts and to the countryside. The media coverage of the traffic jams & assorted chaos, traders in these areas rubbing their hands with glee as their store shelves are stripped bare, pubs and cafes running out of stock. Nothing quite like a day, a weekend or a week away, and no matter how long the journey time it was a damned sight shorter than getting through the shenanigans of airport departures/arrivals.

Now we await the next phase of panic buying. Mass media is finally picking up on what retailers have been warning of. Namely a shortage of goods across many categories as stock is taking an age to cross the seas, get through customs, out into the local supply chain. Expect a big run on garden sheds, DIY materials, garden furniture and homewares, as landed supplies run perilously low. Freight costs are hitting the roof too, which means that new stock coming in will have cost a great deal more than expected. Some retailers are already hiking their prices as they are near impossible to absorb.

Whether we are looking at behaviour reminiscent of the Covid panic buying frenzies that saw (usually) sensible people buy all manner of products they have never in their lives discovered a need for. Or 'just in case' stockpiling. It could get messy.

Already businesses like Cox & Cox and other homeware specialists are warning that their AW results could be adversely affected by a shortage of stock. Conversely those with stock on the ground, even that from past seasons, should be in for a field day. This will be the time to clear it.

Finally, take a look at the DCA Annual summit programme. On June 17th, it is virtual event covering all the issues that matter and you can be involved without leaving your office. It is free too, for DCA members. Check it out on pages 32-42.

**JRH**


## M&S to close 30 stores after £201m loss

Marks & Spencer is set to close 30 stores after reporting a £201m loss thanks to the pandemic. The loss...

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## Pet food brand Bella & Duke secures £7m funding

Scottish pet food brand Bella & Duke has 'successfully' raised £7m from a consortium of investors.  The company, which makes...

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Verity Brown, who joined The Specialist Works in 2015 has been promoted to the role of managing director...

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Animal, the iconic British lifestyle brand, makes an eco-friendly return just in time for 2021's staycation summer...

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Tempur Sealy has executed an agreement to acquire Dreams, the leading speciality bed retailer in the United Kingdom, primarily from...

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Increased pet ownership during the pandemic sent retail revenues at Pets at Home soaring to £1.1bn. Total group revenue for...

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## N Brown suffers further drop in revenues & profits

N Brown which trades across the JD Williams, Simply Be and Jacamo brands experienced a significant decline in business...

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Steve Masterton has joined as director of online trade, Stephen Spencer will join in July as director of store of...

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## Made.com plans £1bn stock market float

Online furnishings seller Made.com is planning to raise £100m via a stock listing expected to value the company at more...

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Sales at Portmeirion have risen by more than 50 per cent across the first four months of 2021 compared with...

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H.I.G. Capital, LLC, a leading global alternative investment firm with over €36 billion of equity capital under management, has announced...

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The Agency team at Velocity Commerce, an Amazon Agency based in Cambridge, has made a number of new hires over...

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Wilko which was able to operate its 414 stores during the assorted lockdowns, having qualified as an 'essential retailer', suffered...

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Electra Private Equity has announced its intention to float Hotter Shoes on AIM later this year. This follows its disposal...

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Lord Wolfson Lord Wolfson is to take up the additional post of chairman of fashion business Reiss, replacing founder David...

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## Dunelm revises full year profit forecast

Dunelm says its sales rose by 59 per cent in the seven weeks to March 28th and have since performed...

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## Wolf & Badger certifies as B Corp

Wolf & Badger has become the first online marketplace to be certified as a B Corporation. It joins a number...

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## Celtic & Co welcomes new MD as it posts year of growth

Celtic & Co, which specialises in ethically sourced, natural and sustainable knitwear, footwear and outerwear has announced a year of...

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## TOTM engages more2

TOTM, the sustainable period care brand, has chosen more2 to support its growth plans. TOTM is dedicated to breaking down...

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## Icelolly.com to merge with TravelSupermarket

Palatine Private Equity backed Icelolly.com is to merge with TravelSupermarket to create a standalone holiday comparison business. Both brands will...

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Ares Management Corporation has announced that a fund managed by its Private Equity Group has signed an agreement to...

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Boosting its strong digital sales, Joules shoppers reportedly keen to get back out post-lockdown have boosted revenues for Joules. Online...

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Pure Pet Food which manufactures personalised pet food using natural ingredients has secured multi-million-pound growth funding. The business raised the...

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## THG agrees deal with Softbank

The Hut Group (THG) which is to acquire Bentley Laboratories, a US beauty care business, has finalised a deal with..

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The planned launch of a new concept retail brand, JTF Central, brings ambitious and optimistic plans to inject life back into the UK high street...

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Pandora, which has enjoyed a 136 per cent boost in online sales during its first quarter, has launched a new...

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JD Sports has acquired Manchester based Oi Polloi, a retailer of menswear from a number of upmarket brands. The founders,...

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## Loaf seeks buyer

Furniture specialist Loaf has briefed Grant Thornton to mount a sale process for the business. Loaf has been in existence...

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## Georgina Hewitt appointed CEO of more2

more2 is delighted to announce that Georgina Hewitt has accepted the position of CEO. Georgina (pictured) is taking over the...

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## Castore relocates to Manchester

Sports fashion brand Castore says it will be creating 300 new jobs over the next two years as it relocates...

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# Why the future of digital commerce is more open than you think

**By Steve Tzikakis (@Tzikakis), CEO, Sitecore**

**After such a whirlwind year, it is easy to lose sight of the scale of change underway in digital commerce.**

In all, eCommerce surged 27 per cent in 2020, eclipsing 17 per cent of global sales for the first time amid a down year for retail overall. While Amazon accounts for an outsized portion of that growth and seems like an unstoppable force - capturing nearly one-third of all eCommerce in the UK - everyone from grocery stores to other large retailers are also reporting record digital numbers as terms like "curbside pickup" enter the mainstream.

Given the changing market dynamics, an increasing number of consumer brands are assessing what - if any - direct-to-consumer digital commerce strategy to take in a post-COVID world. Some are understandably hesitant to get distracted by an eCommerce play, not wanting to undermine existing retail partnerships or brand equity with a poor online shopping experience - let alone cannibalise sales or compete in a crowded field dominated by Amazon and a coterie of digitally-native upstarts.

They may want to reassess that calculus for several reasons. For one, consumers are offering a rare opening. A majority in the UK surveyed by Sitecore say they are more willing to make online purchases from new brands compared to a year ago - and over one in five did just that in the past year. These newly-diversifying digital buyers are also surprisingly forgiving: 89 per cent are willing to give a company another chance if a curbside pickup or eCommerce order goes awry.

From a technology and operational perspective, there has never been an easier time to go direct online. The revolution in technology adoption in the past year by both everyday people via their smartphones and businesses means brands can truly deliver a connected and consistent experience, powering the full buying cycle from order fulfillment to service beyond the sale through a rich and expanding ecosystem of partners. The alternative is the status quo, where most online shopping experiences are at least partly divorced from the rest of a brand's advertising, marketing, loyalty programs and customer service.

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For many luxury or lifestyle brands, selling directly online has long been part of their toolkit. But others are seeing the unique opportunities it provides from IKEA to Nike, taking digital destiny into their own hands by going direct to offer a great experience through things like furniture assembly services or personalised shoes - and winning back customers from no less a competitor than Amazon in the process.

Therein lies the key to winning in direct eCommerce for brands: not just offering the option, but making it part of a broader experience that is authentic or exclusive to the brand. The best digital experiences frequently do not begin with a buy button; they begin with content - an app that lets customers find a perfect cosmetics match for every skin tone, an article about a brand initiative that moves someone to tears, or a retro cereal box promotion with designs from decades past that sparks a beloved childhood memory. These starting blocks of powerful digital experiences that move buyers down the funnel and back again are reinforced by every other touchpoint, from email to customer service.

To deliver on that vision, brands need a technology stack that connects all of these dots from content to commerce on any screen. But getting marketing technology perfect is not necessarily a prerequisite to experimenting with direct eCommerce, especially since most brands are not yet set up for this type of customer life cycle marketing. Even where customer data is spotty and platforms are disparately connected, brands often instinctively know their customers better than anyone and can tap into decades of built-in trust to create shopping experiences that are an organic outgrowth of existing brand initiatives or values.

That gives enterprises time to get the broader integrated technology stack right, and early data to guide success - first fruits in an expanded first-party data relationship with customers that will serve as an important foundation for future experiences, even if most sales continue to take place offline or via other online retail partners.

Despite increasing consumer expectations around privacy generally, personalisation is actually what consumers want from brands they choose to interact with. Over 70% in the UK now view shopping as an experience. Most want brands to know their shopping history and provide a consistent experience online and offline, catering to them as unique individuals and rewarding their loyalty in deeper ways.

Are brands ready to offer it to them? There has never been a better time to say yes.

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# The power of in-depth relationship brand planning and social networks

**By Stephen Sumner, Retail Growth Consultant**

**I was talking to a few people in retail the other day about how eCommerce has forever changed the retail landscape and the way people today go about shopping.**

We all agreed that it's been one of the key innovations that's come from the early days of the internet and as we now know has upended many a laggard in the retail sector around the world.

The conversation was mainly around how today the whole industry spends most of its time obsessing about ways to get customers to the eCommerce website, ensuring that the onsite journey is easy, and hoping that journey turns into a commercial sale.

So much so that most websites (mobile and Apps) try and automate everything in order they can reduce any real human interaction which in turn can keep cost down.

BUT, it got me thinking - is this all at the cost of commoditizing a void between real human interaction without the building a relationship?.

With the huge growth in eCommerce I think we've subconsciously become disconnected from the customer. Every bit of evidence suggest that whilst brands obsess about getting us to the site and then to the checkout in a friction-less manner they've forgotten to 'listen'.

Its all very 'functional and transactional', it's bland, it's solitary, and as a result has it managed to isolate brand and customer?

As we've slowly forgotten to 'listen and engage' I believe we have managed to disconnect ourselves from the social aspect of shopping that became so enjoyable back in the day.

Would you have the same conversation with someone you just met as you might have with someone you've known for sometime?

Rhetorical questions always sound pretty dumb don't they?

If it's such a rhetorical question why is that many brands seem to forget this fundamental principle when it comes to nurturing consumers in the online space, and in particular on 'social media'.

For brands to be successful they need to reinforce why the brand personality fits with the intended customer, and this includes recognising where each party is in that 'getting to know you' journey.

If I'm looking around for a new car there's

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certainly no shortage of choice, they all get you from A to B, they all have 4 wheels and varying number of passenger capacity.

So why is it we choose one brand of car over another?

Price has something to do with it, but great retailers understand the principles of a pricing structure based on;

- Good
- Better
- Best

Utilising a price structure simply allows the consumer the choice of 'buying' into their brand of choice based on how 'relatable' the brand is to them.

Many people confuse building a brand with building awareness. Making the right people aware of you is a big part of brand marketing, of course, but it's not the only thing you have to achieve. There's far more to it than that.

The art of building a brand involves moving people through several different stages of consideration, having different conversations at different moments, and with different purposes in mind.

There's a lot of nuance to how you address the varied audiences that will decide the success of your products, and the objectives that you have in mind when you do.

Today It seems that the most relatable retail brands have taken a serious look at 'social media' and chosen to leverage it in order to build a tribe, get to know that tribe, listen to that tribe, educate and inform that tribe.

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# Welcome to the new normal high street

By Koen Vanpraet, Group CEO, PXP Financial

**Covid has accelerated the retreat from the traditional high street with many famous retail names, such as Topshop, Oasis and Burtons, pulling down the shutters for the last time. Consumers have shifted their purchasing power online, due to both necessity of the pandemic but also because of the flexibility and ease of shopping online.**

But recent research from PXP Financial - looking at the consumer habits across the UK and five other European countries, demonstrates traditional retailers still have a fighting chance - as long as they embrace the power of fintech. Forward-thinking merchants and payment players will adapt to the "new normal" by using innovative payment technologies to replace cash usage. By working together to better understand consumer behaviour, retailers and payment players can capture consumer imagination with personalised promotions and value-added services that will deepen customer loyalty.

### Surviving past the point of no-return

Starting with the bleak news, when combining answers from respondents across all the countries featured in the PXP survey, over 42 per cent agree that the high street is past the point of return and online shopping will continue to take over. Respondents in Germany (50 per cent), Spain (50 per cent) and Italy (48 per cent) rank the highest in believing high street retail will become a thing of the past, closely followed by more cautious UK respondents at 44 per cent.

However, people were still using the high street throughout the pandemic based on the contactless payments data from the survey. Contactless payment is primarily used in bricks and mortar retailers, so the huge surge in contactless use in 2020 and through 2021 proves that people are still purchasing on the high street.

The survey results show that the new appetite for contactless won't subside as the retail landscape moves to a new normalcy. Respondents stated that they were now more likely to spend money at retailers that offered contactless/contact-free payment options than before Covid-19, with 65 per cent of all respondents saying yes.

Looking solely at the UK results, Covid-19's impact on eCommerce has been dramatic, even as the situation extends into 2021. Figures from Capgemini show that UK online sales grew 74 per cent year-on-year in January 2021, the largest rate of growth since the start of the first lockdown in March 2020. Omnichannel retailers enjoyed a 99.8 per cent year-on-year rise in sales across their online channels compared to their online-only counterparts, while mobile eCommerce sales soared by 169.1 per cent.

It's not a surprise then, to see that when asked if they would be more likely to spend money at a retailer that offered contactless than before Covid, over 61 per cent of UK shoppers answered positively, while nearly 30 per cent said it had no influence on where they chose to shop.

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UK respondents are already savvy online shoppers and will expect merchants to offer more incentives and rewards for frequent purchases. In an increasingly crowded online marketplace, merchants and payment players need to get much more creative in their marketing to stand out.

### Forging partnerships with your payments

Retailers and payment organisations need to work together to understand what their customers need in this new normal, and how they can ensure continued customer loyalty even as the face of retail changes in line with the widening array of payment methods. Added-value services like loyalty schemes, promotions and in-store rewards through QR codes are all valuable tools that retailers can use to offer their customers convenience, speedy footfall and payment security.

If merchants use solutions which can generate data insights from customer payments, they can quickly identify how best to optimise the retail experience for their customers – whether that's through targeted personalised promotions, in-store-only redemption of rewards, or online discounts. Only by getting a deeper understanding of their customers will merchants be able to foster deeper loyalty and greater sales volume.

This new retail landscape that retailers and consumers find themselves in doesn't have to mean the end of the high street. It can also offer a prime opportunity for merchants to join with payment organisations to promote safer, quicker and more efficient cashless payments. At the same time, European retailers can gain valuable insights into their customers, enabling them to adapt to changing consumer needs much more quickly and efficiently than before.

The make-up of the high street may change in the future, but merchants can always count on the continued loyalty of their customers by offering them quick, secure and enjoyable payment experiences.

## Lettershop leads on sustainability with EcoVadis Silver Medal

Lettershop, part of YM Group, have received a Silver Medal for printing and service activities relating to print using the respected EcoVadis CRM assessment framework. This assesses policies, procedures and achievements within environmental, labour rights, ethics and sustainable procurement and provides a score against.

Alistair Ezzy, Managing Director, comments, "At Lettershop, we've always prioritised sustainability – many of our innovations are linked to reducing impact on the environment – and we wanted to benchmark our performance. Using EcoVadis meant we were assessed rigorously across all key metrics. We're extremely pleased to have received an EcoVadis Silver Medal and to be recognised for our sustainability efforts. This reflects on our overall ethos, product development and the commitment and hard work of our team."

This is part of an ongoing organisational policy of improving sustainability. Innovation includes initiatives such as the production of ecoMLR packaging, which are fully recyclable mailers, and Paperwrap, which replaces polywrap with paper, reducing the use of single-use plastic.



# Five top tips to ensure your shoppers' cyber security this 2021 From Fasthosts

With eCommerce fraud predicted to rise by 18 per cent this year, it has never been more important for retailers to keep their customers safe online.

### 1. Stop stockpiling personal data

The most straightforward way to improve your site's cyber security is by regularly purging old data. This means establishing a procedure that deletes customers' personal and payment details as short a while as possible after a transaction has processed. By erasing information when it's no longer needed, you're immediately minimising the chance of a breach.

### 2. Make high-strength passwords your priority

No matter how sophisticated your on-site security measures are, a hacker will almost always decipher a weak password. To get around this, encourage uses to choose a complex combination of characters, including a capital, lowercase, number, and special. A poorly chosen password will unlock a world of possibility for a hacker, with personal and financial details on display, so it's important to insist on an uncrackable phrase.

### 3. Keep on top of outstanding security updates

Third party apps can help to offer an immersive and attractive online experience, but they're also a haven for hackers, and are constantly being probed for weaknesses. App developers regularly release updates to improve security, but it's often up to eCommerce business owners to action these updates.

### 4. Ensure compulsory PCI compliancy

The Payment Card Industry has a series of Data Security Standards, more commonly known as the PCI DSS, that businesses should abide by to keep passwords and payment details secure. Adhering to these standards goes a long way towards ensuring cyber security for customers. All businesses that process even one card transaction should comply with PCI standards.

### 5. Double down and encrypt your data

Ensuring your site is encrypted means that, even in the event of hacking, breached data is often rendered useless. Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) is a measure that protects you and your customers' information through 256-bit encryption. You'll know if a site is SSL certificated immediately because you'll notice a padlock in the address bar and the URL will begin with 'https://' rather than 'http://'.

# Accelerate data maturity to become more resilient post COVID-19

**Strong data maturity is helping 62 per cent of consumer product and retail data masters achieve scale with their AI and analytics proofs of concept, and 73 per cent derive quantifiable business value from their data.**

This is according to the latest Capgemini Research Institute report, 'The age of insight: How consumer product and retail organizations can accelerate value capture from data', which signals that data masters in the sector – those organisations which can create, process, and leverage data proactively to fulfil their corporate purpose, achieve their business objectives and drive innovation – enjoy 30 per cent higher operating profit margins than the industry average.

Consumer product and retail (CPR) organisations that entered the pandemic with strong data foundations were able to thrive in response to the new digital-first environment, as compared to those who didn't have a data mindset. Consequently, they were able to add new revenue streams through new products, services and business models, stay relevant for their customers and pivot offers as per market needs – all powered by data – gaining an important competitive advantage.

Only 16 per cent of consumer product (CP) organizations qualify as data masters, in line with the cross-industry average of data masters, but only 6 per cent of retail organisations clear the benchmark. These leaders show the way forward for the industry to tackle challenges in achieving data mastery.

More importantly, CPR data masters enjoy 30 per cent higher operating profit margins compared to the industry average. They do so by implementing better data hygiene or superior data management practices – such as automating data collection, combining external data for analysis, and considering data quality from design, among others.

Data masters are also able to work through key obstacles faced by most CPR organisations. They are able to spot gaps in their data and quickly make changes when required by having full visibility of both consumers and operations, cites the report. This lens is more acute for retailers who are at the forefront of consumer interaction.

Tim Bridges, Global Head of Consumer Goods and Retail at Capgemini explains, "There's clear evidence that in today's fast-changing environment, being data powered is fundamental to the success of consumer product and retail organizations. As competitive intensity increases both from within and outside the sector, companies need to foster a culture that enables them to gain insight and act fast. CPR organizations need to modernize their data platforms, strengthen trust, and empower data-driven decision making to progress towards data mastery and drive sustainable competitive edge."

Overcoming data obstacles to become future-ready

The report reveals a variety of challenges standing in the way of CPR organisations on the road to data mastery. The most prevalent include data silos, a skills shortage, and a lack of trust.

Functionality and integration were found to be the most critical obstacles, with most CPR organisations (57 per cent) stating they are still trying to work around legacy systems that innately prevent the use of automation and AI.

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# Rapid growth retailers face the danger of crashing to earth

**By Julian Grindey, Partner, Sigma Efficiency**

**Possibly the most rewarding signals for a retailer is rapid sales growth; confirmation of your customer acceptance of the proposition. Your business model is working.**

Retailers like Aldi, Boohoo, ASOS, Ocado, Action, and Pepco have enjoyed meteoric growth over recent years, but few could claim they haven't wasted sales and profits in the process.

Nobody wants to slow down growth – the moment may never present itself again, but growth can also be costly in sales and profits. With the right awareness, preparation and experience, recognising the signals as you grow will help address them before a steep ascent turns into a 'stall'.

There are 7 'stall' warning signals retailers must look out for, before it's too late:

- operational in-efficiencies start creeping in.
- your customer experience begins to suffer.
- cashflow comes under severe pressure.
- employee burn-out leaves those remaining stifled under the pressure.
- you are outgrowing your infrastructure, supply chain, sales channels and offices.
- you are outgrowing your work processes – they might even now be obsolete.
- you are starting to feel a loss of control.

There are 9 preventative measures retail leaders need to keep sales and profits on track in the rapid growth phase:

1. **Understand the cause of growth**
   What is the 'secret sauce'; those things you do so well for your customer and for your business. Define it and then keep this at the core of your business model and protect it from all the distractions that are crossing the leadership desk.
2. **Prioritise the customer experience**
   Protect and nurture this revenue stream at all costs. Develop ways to measure and improve these interactions; when you struggle with the volume of customer feedback, find a way to distinguish between 'a sound' and 'a signal'. Act on the latter!
3. **Choosing your people is the most important decision you will make**
   Don't be afraid to hire smarter than you; look for tomorrow's skills today. Blend the innovators with the controllers. Stretching your people budget now will save losing customers and costs – it's more important than building stores, DCs or offices.

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4. **Set periodic reviews for your structure and technology**
   Your people won't function properly without an organised structure that can achieve growth and control. Combining structure with the right KPIs will control costs and harvest economies of scale.
5. **Resource planning**
   Outsource, automate and engage interims to support your core team. Don't let great people burn-out and don't believe the skills that got you here are the same as those needed to achieve your future state.
6. **Communication**
   As the situation requires the senior team to transition from operational management into leaders, communication must replace instruction. Choose your words, symbols and actions carefully if you want them to be followed.
7. **Prudent cash planning**
   Long range budgeting may not be appropriate but short interval cash planning is crucial. Develop plans for several scenarios and be ready to jump between them at short notice. Ask suppliers to play a strategic partnership role in your growth, their response will help you separate the transactional from the sustainable.
8. **Learn to love continuous change**
   Look for leaders who are comfortable feeling uncomfortable and can inspire others to take risk without fear of recrimination, if things don't go perfectly the first time.
9. **Find a good mentor**
   Set aside your ego. High growth can be stressful. Learn from others who can offer you an equal measure of empathy and guidance.

## Conclusion

Well trained pilots look out from their cockpits to scan the horizon. Their awareness is confirmed by the readings from their instrument panel. They are prepared to change their behaviour and direction to face the uncertainties flight can bring.

Retail leaders facing rapid growth also have to change their field of vision from the narrow operational focus to a broader scan of the horizon. Their instrument panel should read customer and commercial behaviour and at their control is people, systems and processes.

Strong leadership skills, experience and awareness will ensure the journey is exhilarating.

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# Six steps to improving eCommerce supply chain sustainability

By Dominic Potter, general manager, International, Logistyx Technologies

**It is undeniable that the pandemic accelerated eCommerce growth beyond even the most optimistic predictions in 2020 – up 61 per cent year on year according to the Office for National Statistics.**

Simultaneously, consumers have increasing doubts about the impact on the planet of shopping online, with particular concerns about excessive or unsustainable packaging and the environmental impact of 'last mile' delivery. During Covid-19, many consumers' attitudes to sustainability shifted: McKinsey found more than 60 per cent of respondents reported going out of their way to recycle and purchase products that come in environmentally friendly packaging.

Retailers and their carrier partners are increasingly conscious of their responsibility to reduce their carbon footprint and be more eco-friendly, and technology can play an important role in supporting this.

### 1. Place inventory closer to customers

Placing inventory closer to customers ¬by using local stores as mini distribution centres can significantly reduce long journeys from far flung central distribution centres. However, this is not always a simple process.

Successful ship-from-store requires omnichannel visibility - a real-time picture of where stock is located throughout stores and warehouses. For example, if a customer walks in and buys a skirt from a store, there is one less skirt available for an eCommerce delivery.

One example of a retailer that benefited from putting the necessary technology in place to gain omnichannel visibility and execute ship-from-store fulfilment is US department store Belk. With almost 300 branches in 16 states, the privately owned retailer thrived as e-Commerce orders surged during the pandemic, having already invested in supply chain technology enhancements, including multi-carrier shipping software. This allows Belk to know where its inventory is located and provides Belk with instant access to carriers and services offering the best rates for each specific location, enabling quick and cost-effective online order fulfilment from anywhere in its network and access to easily accessible real-time shipment tracking and delivery transparency.

### 2. Offer click and collect

An even more environmentally friendly option is allowing customers to click and collect from their local store, picking up their order when convenient and eliminating missed deliveries and repeated delivery attempts.

Again, a prerequisite is inventory visibility. If a product a customer wants is not in their local store, it can be fulfilled from a warehouse in batch and delivered to the store, significantly reducing emissions when compared to individual parcel deliveries.

### 3. Go slower: Give customers the option to wait longer for their deliveries

Increasingly, customers are realising it's more sustainable if they are prepared to wait a little longer for their deliveries. This is the principle behind "Amazon Day," which lets customers choose a single day of the week to receive all their orders. Combining multiple orders into one carton, delivered on the same day, helps

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> **the cost of returns has been estimated to be between 20 per cent and 65 per cent of the value of the goods sold, making it a business imperative for retailers to reduce returns.**

reduce delivery journeys, decrease packaging and lessen the chance of missed deliveries.

Multi-carrier shipping software makes it easy to identify and automatically process shipments that are going to the same destination - as well as selecting the 'right' way to ship any package from a range of carriers and couriers based on a variety of key metrics.

### 4. Offer green delivery options

By offering customers the choice of greener shipping options, retailers can reduce their carbon footprint. Some carriers have invested greatly in making inner-city deliveries more eco-friendly. Green Courier and DPD offer more sustainable options, using bikes and electric vehicles to deliver parcels, particularly for the 'final mile'. Many shippers use multi-carrier distribution to provide greater choice and adding green deliveries to the mix is a sensible decision.

### 5. Reduce returns

Alongside the huge uptick in eCommerce orders – recent research shows UK consumers are now receiving an average of two extra deliveries per month since March 2020 – has come a corresponding increase in returns. It's estimated that approximately half of Brits have returned items bought online during the pandemic. Some 12 per cent of shoppers say they are returning more since they cannot try on items in store, with 9 per cent actively choosing to use home deliveries as a 'try on' service, ordering multiple sizes/colours with no intention of keeping them all.

As well as increasing the environmental impact of ecommerce, the cost of returns has been estimated to be between 20 per cent and 65 per cent of the value of the goods sold, making it a business imperative for retailers to reduce returns. One way is to ensure customers have all the information and images or videos - including augmented reality (AR) to provide a 'try before you buy' experience – necessary to make the right decision when ordering.

Equally important is identifying and addressing the causes of avoidable returns. Using analytics within multi-carrier shipping technology can help identify and address weak links in fulfilment, such as carriers that trigger more returns because inadequately packaged items are damaged en-route.

### 6. Embrace re-usable, recyclable packaging

Recent research from UPS found that 54 per cent of consumers expect sustainable packaging from large brands and 50 per cent from smaller brands. This may encompass recycled or recyclable materials, or even re-usable packaging made from materials with greater durability, that can be cleaned if necessary and reused repeatedly until finally recycled. It is likely to be easier and more feasible to introduce returnable packaging when shipping to business users since they will be open and able to return the packaging at the time of the delivery.

Building sustainability into the supply chain has many facets: the choice of the raw materials and where they are sourced; factory locations; how goods are manufactured, packaged, and transported; and recycling policies. Much of the time, it is the aggregation of many small steps that counts, and often by improving transportation efficiency, technology can help eCommerce shippers take these steps at scale every day.

# How Fortnum & Mason keep its organisational values, culture and sense of joy alive during the pandemic

**Fortnum & Mason has a simple goal: to make joy. Delivering extraordinary food, exceptional service and unforgettable experiences takes passion, amazing ideas and talented people. But, when the global pandemic hit, Fortnum's was forced to make rapid changes.**

Many of its employees had to open or close stores with very little notice, others had to take on different responsibilities to support a changing business model, and office-based employees had to adapt to working from home. Facing all this change, how could they continue to perform at their best? How could Fortnum's keep its organisational values, culture and sense of joy alive at a time of immense uncertainty? That's where Meee came in.

## Being the best you

"We want everyone who works at Fortnum's to be their best, and above all to be their true selves," explains Alexandra Buxton, Fortnum's culture and lalent director. "If we can embrace each other's differences and share common values, we can achieve extraordinary things."

This was music to the ears of the Meee team. Meee is founded on the idea that everyone is unique and, by using our values and natural strengths, combined with support from others, we can thrive in all aspects of our lives. Sometimes all we need to achieve this is a shift in perspective, a nudge to reset our thoughts and mindset.

So, working closely with Fortnum's, Meee tailored a virtual version of its Be The Best You programme that enables each employee to understand their unique qualities and how these can help them perform at their best more of the time. Online modules, including Meee Values and Balanced Meee exercises, helped each team member identify their unique talents. Meee also created customised content that helped employees understand how they can bring Fortnum's values to life.

Supporting these exercises, Meee ran a series of small group virtual workshops which allowed the team to share insights and ideas, while also creating an all-important sense of connection. Meee also trained a number of Fortnum's employees to be programme facilitators and roll out the programme across the organisation.

## Engaging, energising and enabling

Meee's powerful digital platform underpinned the programme, which gave

Fortnum's valuable insights into progress both before and after the virtual workshops. Employees could see how they had developed afterwards, as well as having access to supporting resources, articles and videos. Meanwhile, Fortnum's Culture and Talent team could use the aggregated and anonymised data to understand how colleagues were performing and quickly identify where more support was needed.

### Making an impact

At a time of huge anxiety, the programme had a tremendously positive impact. Participants have gained new insights about themselves, built stronger connections with colleagues and the organisation, and left the workshops feeling more energised and positive.

After completing the programme:

- 93 per cent felt that they can achieve more together with their colleagues at Fortnum's
- 91 per cent felt closer to Fortnum's purpose and values
- 90 per cent felt they had a better understanding of how to help and develop others
- 88 per cent felt they had a better understanding of how to deliver a wonderful customer experience

Some feedback from Be The Best You participants:

"This has helped me understand myself and others better. And how to be a better friend."

"Communicate with each other. Get to know more people. Share experiences and knowledge to bring us closer together."

"I'm going to talk more about our values - to customers, colleagues, family. And give more positive feedback."

### More joy

Fortnum's is now planning to incorporate the values work in other areas like recruitment, onboarding, recognition, learning and development. And that all adds up to more purpose, positivity and ultimately more joy.

"Sid, Joss and the Meee team have been an immense asset to our work in the last few months. We wanted our people to feel we were investing in and supporting them as best we could at a very challenging time. Colleagues at all levels – from our customer-facing colleagues to our back of house teams and our Executive Team members – have had an extraordinary experience on the programme and been raving about what it has done for them personally. Collectively, the programme is helping us bring our values to life and reinforce our culture, while connecting our people and boosting their resilience." said Alexandra Buxton.



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# I Fired Myself – Revisited

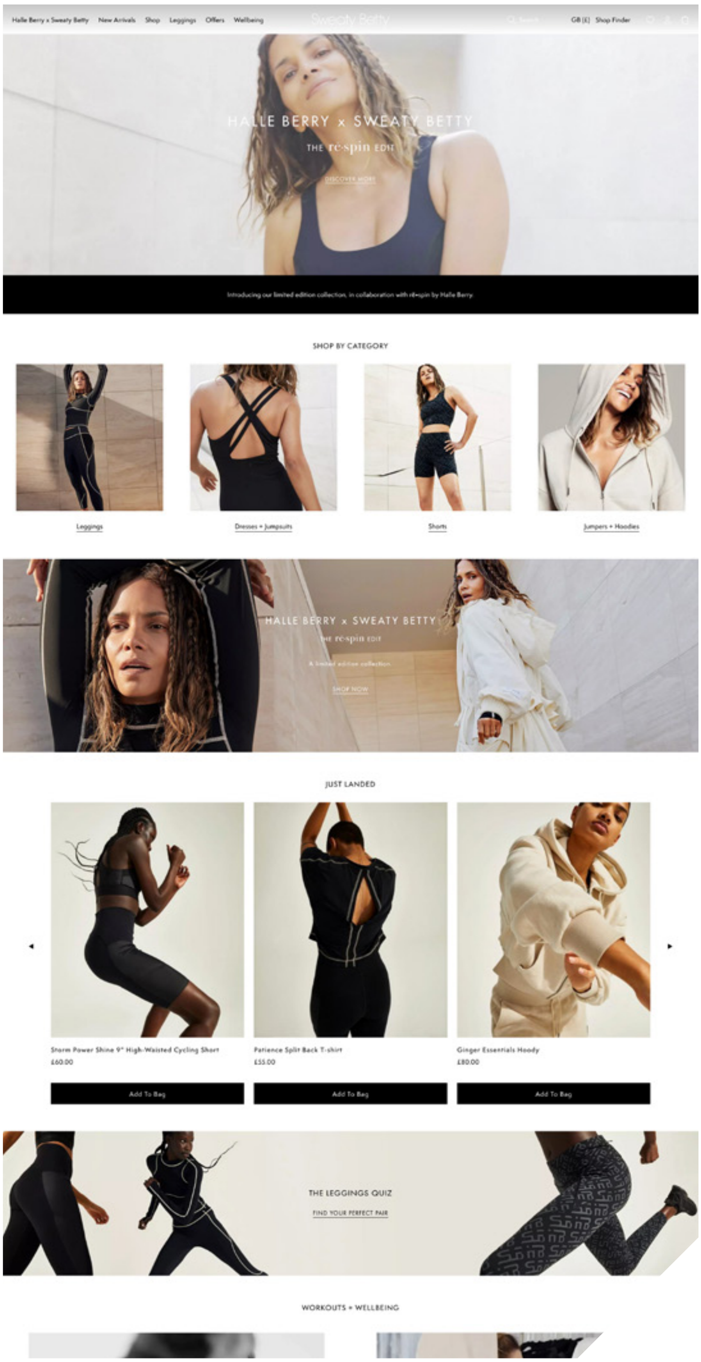
## By Bill La Pierre, Datamann USA

One thing that I find particularly annoying in this industry are all the articles from agencies and consultants that tell you how to either rebrand your company, or how to re-invent your business to be more competitive, that then cite companies like Apple, Nike, and Patagonia as examples of companies to emulate.

How helpful is it to be told to copy a company with a bazillion dollars in sales?

That's why I'm revisiting a posting I wrote in the fall of 2019 (I Fired Myself) which told the story of how one of Datamann's clients had successfully transitioned from being almost exclusively a catalog company to being almost exclusively an online company (with a strong retail presence too). More importantly, they grew their sales at an incredible pace while executing this transformation.

At the time I wrote the original article, the client asked to remain anonymous, although a few sharp observers in London immediately recognised the company, even though I altered a few facts to hide the identity of the client, including the gender of the person behind the story. But this time around, the company chairman gave me his blessing in telling this story.



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## Sweaty Betty was in the right place at the right time to benefit from the pandemic. But, they had spent the prior five years transforming the company to be there at the right time.

The company is Sweaty Betty, a Datamann client for almost ten years. They started small and have grown tremendously (I won't reveal exact numbers, but theirs is a genuine success story).

Here are two key paragraphs from the original posting:

> "I also admit that I never liked the catalog. I realized it was targeting an upscale female customer, but to me, the catalog was too edgy, too weird, and certainly not mainstream. They were using over-the-top-creative to promote the brand, instead of focusing on the merchandise. But I was not the target customer, so I chalked it up to "I simply didn't get it."
>
> How did we change? First, I recruited a digital native to run our business (30+-year-old female who had previously worked for years in .com consumer businesses). Then I fired myself(50+ year old retailer) so I now work a couple of days a week. Second, I made changes at the Board level which reduced our average Board member age by 10 years. Team, tactics and technology are the things that this new person has invested in – all related to digital marketing and website optimization.

This marketer/retailer knew that he had to step aside. His replacement, the CEO he hired, was willing to change the previous focus of the company's creative/branding – edgy, funky, outlandish – to focus instead on the merchandise alone. (What a concept!)

Just by chance, we had an exchange of emails last week regarding a recent blog posting I had written and I used the opportunity to congratulate him on a new line of products I had seen advertised online.

Here is what I wrote: "I was thinking of you two weeks ago, when I saw a Sweaty Betty posting on LinkedIn, for your new 6-color skin-tone underwear, in many, many sizes. It was not the variety of colors that impressed me, or apparently that the models are all Sweaty Betty employees. It was the fact that you were now offering so many sizes. You've come a very long way since the days of your early catalogs [when every model was wafer-thin]."

Here was the reply "The skin tone campaign has been incredible – mostly because the customers love it. It was incredibly brave of the models [all Sweaty Betty employees] to do this. They were all super nervous. I am especially proud of Emma/ET who has been our Retail Director for 18 years and is 55 years old. Customers were telling us they were in tears because of the campaign.

So I was right to fire myself and put a Digital Native in charge. She has done a wonderful job and continues to do so. Yes, we benefitted from COVID but we had spent let's say 5 years preparing to be a Digital business and it paid off. Thanks for continuing to post your wisdom and insights. Happy for SB to be featured by you when you think appropriate."

Here's the point: you don't have to be a huge corporation like Apple to change. You don't have to emulate some giant brand. You need your own imagination and your own voice. You also need the nerve to pull the switch that throws out – over time – everything you've done before and slowly work in the elements of change that will transform your business. Sweaty Betty was in the right place at the right time to benefit from the pandemic. But, they had spent the prior five years transforming the company to be there at the right time.

The power to change your business – no matter how big or small – is in your hands. Don't wait.

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# Catalogues – the force behind your online & store sales

**By Jane Revell-Higgins**

**It is staggering when you look back over the member list of DCA (formerly Catalogue Exchange) and count the number of previously successful niche businesses which have disappeared without trace. Some were sold on and absorbed into larger groups. Some became victim of ill-considered 'digital transformation' projects led by new blood. There's a story behind everyone.**

What all DCA members used to have in common was a shared respect for direct marketing which included judicious use of off-the-page advertising, mailed and inserted catalogues, PLUS open minds when it came to testing new media and emerging channels to market. It is not surprising that many of our members were amongst the very early adopters of eCommerce and were trailblazing testers of email marketing. After all, with the rich assets of great products, strong copy & photography (AKA content) coupled with deep customer knowledge accessible via expertly developed databases AND direct marketing skills, our members were light years ahead of traditional store only retailers.

Within the past fifteen years or so an increasing number of bright sparks in finance departments followed their other shortsighted contemporaries in determining that catalogues were an expensive overhead. That sales were coming in online. That email marketing was as cheap as chips. And by cutting out the direct mail and those costly catalogues, as well as the team who worked on them, the savings would drop straight to the bottom line. Short term, they were right. The numbers looked great. And if anyone wanted to buy, all the

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products were right there on the website.

Except. They knew nothing about attribution. They didn't consider that customers were used to receiving their catalogues regularly and used them to choose what to buy next. These customers weren't necessarily the types to search online and nor were they that keen on travelling to the high street. Lots of them had plenty of money to spend. But to the finance team, they weren't worth a jot. Until sales began to fall off a veritable cliff. No amount of site re-platforming, investment in stores, or other such costly exercises could reverse the downward spiral. If this sounds familiar then you've probably been tracking the same businesses that I have. The ones that closed down brands and flushed decades of hard-earned customer loyalty down the pan. The ones that floundered, ditched CEOs, brought in yet more new blood, yet failed to reverse those destructive, some might say, suicidal decisions. Even if they had sought to reactive catalogue and DM programmes, they had no one left in their teams with the required skills to do it.

Meanwhile, those who stuck to their guns and continued to produce and distribute catalogues whilst also focusing on eCommerce & digital as well as social marketing, have received a massive boost in their trade. Having picked up where their former competitors left off, become ever more expert at data mining and targeting, they are expanding at a higher rate than ever.

Many of the newer entrants into the DCA member fold are digital native businesses who, doing well online, are now leveraging fellow DCA member expertise. Using it to produce catalogues to encourage repeat purchasing from existing customers and, importantly, for targeted new customer acquisition. Full circle.

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# Enabling a seamless customer journey

By Chris Griffiths, Managing Partner, customer experience & enterprise systems, REPL Group, Part of Accenture

**It goes without saying that the ongoing growth in eCommerce accelerated over 2020. But even across categories for which online had previously been a minor channel there have been significant increases in online activity. In grocery, for instance, that growth reached 33 per cent across 2020 in the UK, with 'big four' operator Asda swiftly building up online capacity to cope with the sudden demand surge.**

Moving forwards, shoppers won't merely expect greater sophistication in online purchases. They'll also expect a seamless buyer journey between online and offline retail and consistency of experience and execution whether shopping in their high street or online. To achieve this, retailers will need flexible platforms that allow a rapid response to business needs and deliver compelling customer experience across all channels.

Where retailers are constrained by legacy architecture, there are three areas they should prioritise to capture the engagement and loyalty of tomorrow's shoppers: unified commerce; composable enterprise and business agility.

### Unified commerce: one experience, multiple channels

Shoppers no longer expect to browse and purchase in siloed channels. Post-pandemic 84 per cent plan to purchase via retail apps, 80 per cent by social media networks, 77 per cent on company websites, and 78 per cent will continue to head into stores to collect online orders, according to Accenture research. Retailers' digital infrastructures need to reflect this multichannel shopping experience. Enter unified commerce.

Unified commerce enables the delivery of a consistent front-end experience across all customer-facing channels, by connecting backend systems. This set-up supports seamless omnichannel journeys, and provides shoppers with a unified view of interactions, products and management systems. Moving forwards, consumers will expect a seamless buying journey from sales to fulfilment and delivery. At each step, retailers need to inject innovation into the delivery of unified commerce.

- **Sales:** Look beyond mobile and desktop to engage shoppers across social networks, video streaming and IoT. This applies as much to bricks and mortar stores.
- **Fulfilment:** Support the full range of customer purchase journeys with distributed order management to access inventory from multiple channels, creating real-time overview of stock availability and fulfilment options.
- **Delivery:** Integrate convenience and flexibility into delivery by adding greater variety into the options made available to shoppers, across all channels. This could include established

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methods, like doorstep deliveries and curb side pick-up, but also options like drive-through and secure lockers in third-party outlets.

## Composable enterprise

Rather than replacing end-to-end solutions, retailers can best achieve a unified commerce infrastructure by embracing composable enterprise. This allows retailers to pick and choose the tools and business functions that best meet their needs, and 'compose' their IT architecture of these individual best-of-breed blocks.

Digitally mature retailers have been embracing this approach for some time now - in some cases via strategic cross-channel partnerships. Moving forwards, responsiveness to changing consumer needs will be key to commercial success. Using composable enterprise, retailers will be able to scale digital programmes up and down in line with fluctuating demand, plus deploy new business functions using extensions or add-ons rather than overhauling complete systems.

To support any move to a composable architecture though retailers should first ensure they have the right operational infrastructures in place. That includes addressing any technical gaps in expertise in their workforce, creating new methodologies around management and decision-making to enable rapid change, and, where appropriate, have in place partnerships with external technical expertise to facilitate scaling up.

## Business agility

By enabling a unified commerce experience, facilitated by composable enterprise, organisations can achieve business agility. In simple terms, an operating environment that allows a business to pivot, to change pace and to respond to the evolving demands and expectations of consumers.

This approach supports:

**Quicker go-to-market for new propositions.** The biggest hurdle in taking new innovation to market is the conversion of idea into commercial-ready product, a process that requires deep dives into consumer data, collaboration across the supply chain and lean systems for management and decision-making. With business agility prioritised, each of these steps becomes easier and quicker.

**Enhanced consumer engagement.** Consumers respond to businesses that respond to their needs. Organisations that prioritise

Continues overleaf >

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business agility are well-placed to create differentiated consumer engagement that nurtures these relationships, and quickly responds to changing expectations or needs.

**Empowered business teams.**
By providing team members with the means to identify opportunities or problems, and execute solutions swiftly, organisations can empower talent, avoiding delays between idea and execution.

**A boost to the bottom line.**
Research shows that companies with organisational agility see improved financial performance of between 20-30 per cent

Given all this, it's perhaps unsurprising that it was those companies with a focus on business agility that were also in a better position to respond and adapt to seismic market changes during the pandemic, according to a 2020 Accenture analysis – with this fraught climate also pushing more and more organisations to prioritise the maturity of their own business agility.

As they implement a framework of business agility across their organisation, retailers should note that the biggest strategic benefits come when change is applied holistically. That means implementation across strategy, structure, process, people and technology – changes at only one level will see less impact.

## Future-proofing retail

The past year has changed consumer shopping habits for the long-term. Shoppers will move forward with newly-formed expectations around where, how and when they can shop. For retailers looking to future-proof their organisation that means prioritising an investment in digital and physical infrastructures that create seamless, friction-free transitions between channels.

For those retailers with legacy architectures this can seem daunting. But by creating unified commerce, with a composable enterprise structure, businesses of all shapes, sizes and specialism can deliver much-needed business agility – setting themselves up for a 'new normal' in which change and a need to respond may be the only certainty.

direct commerce awards 2021

# the shortlist

Our 2021 Judges have completed their work and we are delighted to release the list of winning entrants. With many first time entrants this year competing alongside previous winners, our Judges had a challenging time studying and marking each entry. To find out who will emerge victorious, which no one will know until the announcements are made, you can **register** to the attend the Awards which take place virtually on June 17th 1pm-2pm.

Georgina Hewitt, recently promoted to the role of CEO at More2, has kindly agreed to reveal the winners, category by category, & we will all raise a virtual glass of bubbles to celebrate with them.

If your company is named on the list, then you & your colleagues will receive your invitations to join us as VIP guests. If you are a supplier or partner to any of the shortlisted companies then **contact us** if you'd like to attend.

Do look out for our next issue which will contain a write-up for each of the winners!

**Shortlisted Companies:**

* AMARA * Aspace * BrandAlley * Cartridge People * Christies Direct *
* Cox & Cox * Danetti * Ellis Brigham * Fairfax & Favor * Fruugo *
* Happy Puzzle Co * Hippychick * Home Leisure Direct * Hotter Shoes *
* Huboo Technologies * Iceland Foods * Intersoft Systems * Jaques of London*
* JPS Ltd * Khaos Control * Leprosy Mission Trading * Mark-Making *
* Muck Munchers * Office Power * Ohh Deer * Perennial Trading * PushON*
* ProCook * Rockett St George * Scotts & Co * Silver Cross * Taking Care *
* Tiger * TOTM * UniFida * Victoria Plum * Vitra Bathrooms * Watco *
* Weird Fish * Wentworth Puzzle Co * Whistl * WoolOvers *

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# Dear member colleague

It has been a fair while since we were last able to gather as a group and I've really missed sharing insights and exchanging ideas with you all. Rather than wait until we can safely stage a live event and with so much that we need to catch up on, we thought we'd try holding the **DCA's Annual Summit** as a virtual event and are doing so on **17th June**. It is all-day affair offering opportunities to hear from lots of great speakers and to get involved in the debates. There'll be Q&A sessions, as well as the opportunity for private one-to-one chats with experts and peers.

For my part, I am delighted to be kickstarting the day with a round up of the key issues which members have raised with the DCA in recent weeks. These include details of how to make the most of the various incentive support schemes that Royal Mail currently has on offer, and news of upcoming changes to the way that Royal Mail prices Advertising Mail. We also need to exchange ideas on how we should address the immense challenges presented by escalating freight costs and congestion at UK ports. I'll be happy to tell you what we at Scotts are doing to minimise the impact of these logistical challenges if you'll share your ideas in the spirit of information sharing that has become the hallmark of the DCA.

I've heard it said by some of the larger direct retailers in our sector that the Direct Commerce Association is now mostly focused on the needs of catalogue and online retailers under £10m in sales. That may be their perception, but I observe several of these bigger catalogue and online retailers still making rookie mistakes which they would have avoided if they'd been sharing ideas with their DCA colleagues. Scotts is now at over 6 times that £10m level yet we still derive massive benefit from exchanging ideas with our colleagues. I showed an industry colleague recently how to save between £300k and £500k p.a. He has implemented that change and has begun to save as a result... and yes, that colleague is a direct competitor to Scotts. I don't believe that helping our competitors damages our sales as despite the massive surge in orders most of us have witnessed over the past year, I still believe that we are only scratching the surface of what direct retailing can achieve. We have lower fixed costs than bricks-and-mortar retail, our products tend to be more innovative as we refresh our range at a faster rate than most conventional retailers, and we can deliver direct to our customers' homes faster than most of them. Not only that but our catalogues stay in the homes for weeks unlike online messaging which is read, absorbed and discarded within minutes. All of our stats show that paper is still far more cost-effective than digital advertising. But this view of the DM world does depend on how you allow your orders to be attributed between channels. And there's another fruitful area for debate. Is your digital agency deploying smoke and mirrors to convince you that your digital ad spend is cost-effective?

In the spirit of the DCA, I would like to invite you to pre-submit any questions or topics that you would like aired and opened up to others for discussion. Between us I am sure we can find solutions and very possibly also find ways to work together to achieve the best results for all member companies. Those of you who have attended our client-side members 'behind closed doors' sessions in the past will however know that we welcome and encourage active participation. I would urge you all to not just be takers, but givers too. Pitch in your ideas, and shoot me down if you think I'm wrong, but above all get involved with the debate. It can and should be fun!

To pre-submit your question(s) or to raise an issue you'd like to have discussed please send it to victoria@directcommerce.biz

I am really looking forward to our day together which has presentations from some really interesting speakers, including Kevin Hillstrom. I understand too that, thanks to DCA sponsors, places are being offered free of charge to member company executives which we hope will encourage a strong turnout. To register your team members please contact victoria@directcommerce.biz

**REMEMBER** there is no charge for DCA member company executives and you may dip in and out of the event, choosing the sessions that most interest you.

I look forward to extending a warm welcome to you and your colleagues.

Very best wishes,

Nigel Swabey

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| 09.30-10.30 | |
|---|---|
| **THEATRE 1** | **Welcome, Opening Session**<br>*Nigel Swabey, DCA president emeritus & CEO, Scotts & Co*<br>In the two years since we were last able to gather for the DCA Annual Summit, it has been tumultuous, to say the least. We have all had to be super- agile in our response to the Covid pandemic. Some of us have traded off the scale throughout the lockdowns. Others have fared less well, with demand for their products plummeting, due to customers working from home rather than the office. Those with stores have faced extraordinary challenges. But, now that we are beginning to see the world return to 'normal', we are finding that there is little that has stayed the same. We have all had to adapt and having polled members to ascertain which issues are of most concern, we will address them one by one in true DCA spirit – opening the floor to those who are happy to share their experience and to those who can offer advice or solutions. Join this opening session to get up to speed with the issues that really matter. |

| 10.35-11.00 | CHOOSE FROM |
|---|---|
| **THEATRE 1** | **What you need to know about the 1st July EU VAT reform, and to sell successfully to customers in Europe**<br>*Hakan Thyr, Fruugo*<br>Hakan will highlight the key changes that are being implemented and discuss what actions businesses need to take to get ready. You'll learn:<br>• What is changing and why these changes are being implemented<br>• How VAT requirements will change, both for direct sales and for marketplace sales<br>• What practical steps businesses need to take to be able to continue selling into the EU |
| **THEATRE 2** | **Dealing with huge unplanned sales during a global pandemic**<br>*Siobhain Goodall, MPLcontact & Gavin Ucko, The Happy Puzzle Co*<br>Hear how The Happy Puzzle company managed to fulfil unprecedented customer sales and an excellent customer experience whilst simultaneously changing their supply chain, managing cost and all within the unknown environment of a global pandemic |
| **THEATRE 3** | **Social Media – The changes you need to know about**<br>*Luan Wise, marketing consultant*<br>The world of social media is changing constantly - from new features to trends and behaviours. In this session chartered marketer and social media expert Luan Wise will share insights into key updates from the last 12 months, and share advice on what to keep a close eye on this year. This will be fast-paced with lots of top tips and actionable takeaways. |

| 11.05-11.30 | CHOOSE FROM |
|---|---|
| THEATRE 1 | **Customer Economics as an enabler of digital growth**<br>*Chris Simpson, more2*<br>Chris Simpson will talk about the transformative impact of understanding your customer economics and how, alongside your customer data, they can be applied to accelerating your online growth. He will draw on more2's collective experience of working with hundreds of direct and omnichannel brands. |
| THEATRE 2 | **No Luke! I am your Mentor....**<br>*Alex Pratt, Founder & CEO of Serious Brands*<br>Learn how Serious Brands grew its business by 60 per cent in 2020 partly by re-imagining its place in its customer story. |
| THEATRE 3 | **7 Steps to Sustainable Print Marketing**<br>*Alistair Ezzy, The Lettershop Group*<br>Consumer pressure is growing, forcing companies and organisations to consider new technologies, materials and ideas to reduce their impact on the environment. Print and paper is inherently recyclable and sustainable and is an essential part of the marketing mix driving revenue and engagement. To help you consider your impact on the environment, Alistair Ezzy, Managing Director, Lettershop, part of YM Group, presents 7 Steps to Sustainable Print Marketing. These 7 steps are designed to help print and mail users to continue to evolve their print marketing to increase efficiency and improve sustainability. |

| 11.35-12.00 | CHOOSE FROM |
|---|---|
| THEATRE 1 | **Keep Optimising – the Latest Digital Marketing Tips & Tactics**<br>*Chloe Thomas, eCommerce Masterplan*<br>Bestselling author and award-winning podcast host Chloë Thomas will be bringing us a run down of the latest and greatest digital marketing tips and tactics.<br>Join this session to find out the clever and innovative new strategies that being used to successfully increase both new customer acquisition AND customer retention. From quick tips through to big picture strategy Chloë will be sharing a wide range of a tactics taken from recent podcast interviews with retailers and marketing experts. Expect plenty of examples! |
| THEATRE 2 | **How Covid-19 has highlighted the enduring strengths of direct marketing**<br>*Mark Davies, Whistl*<br>A lot has been reported about how the pandemic accelerated digital transformation but audiences at home during Covid-19 engaged with the postal marketing channels like never before and digital brands were leading this charge. The case studies reported in this presentation will subvert advertiser expectations and challenge the prevailing wisdom of a marketing world that is ever more digital. |
| THEATRE 3 | **The Changing Face of Consumer Credit**<br>*Rob Beattie, Klarna*<br>As consumers, we've drastically changed the way we shop, pay, save and engage with brands. Hear from Klarna who'll be sharing insight into the changing landscape of retail and payments, as well as the rise of BNPL |

| 12.05-12.30 | CHOOSE FROM |
|---|---|
| THEATRE 1 | **Getting your data right to succeed in global eCommerce**<br>*Martyn Noble, Hurricane Commerce*<br>Martyn Noble, CEO of Hurricane Commerce, will talk about the huge opportunities for retailers and brands to scale their international eCommerce – but only if their data is best-in-class.<br>He will consider the ever increasing regulatory landscape – including Brexit, US STOP Act and EU VAT Package / Import One-Stop Shop (IOSS) – and the pressures this is placing on businesses. But he will also discuss how quality data – from product descriptions and HS6 codes to import and export codes – can make the difference between success and failure in the world of global eCommerce. |
| THEATRE 2 | **Made better in 5 Steps**<br>*Matt Booker, COUSIN*<br>How to maximise the impact of your printed collateral by looking at alternative:<br>• Formats – Newsletter style within Letter format, interesting and efficient one piece DM formats, bound-in inserts, short trimmed sections, cover flaps.<br>• Papers – sing high bulk coated papers to reduce mailing weight. Mixing papers within a catalogue for change of pace, to highlight a specific range or to reduce weight. Uncoated vs coated and mixing the two. Reducing paper lead times. Specialist papers with a special story.<br>• Processes – Digital vs sheet-fed vs web offset. Getting the best from imagery on uncoated paper. Personalisation.<br>• Technologies – Dynamic content. Trigger mailings for customer reactivation and welcome programmes.<br>• Partnerships – Collaboration with complimentary brands. Parcel insert swaps. |
| THEATRE 3 | **Marketing automation in the age of multichannel communications**<br>*Sophie Grender, Royal Mail MarketReach & Oliver Spark, Sweet Analytics*<br>In a complex and multichannel marketing environment retailers are more focused than ever on retaining and maximising the value from existing customers. Print has the power to cut through and drive value from those customers. And automation brings the ability to create any communication as part of a seamless customer journey in a timely and relevant way. See how mail can be part of your customer journey and how Sweet Analytics marketing automation platform for retailers can facilitate the management of a multi-touchpoint and highly segmented approach to customer communications. |

| 12.35-13.00 | CHOOSE FROM |
|---|---|
| THEATRE 1 | **Making AI driven omnichannel marketing attribution a reality!**<br>*Julian Berry, UniFida*<br>Attribution has never been more crucial and this session sets out to explain why and how this essential marketing function should and can be informing your crucial decision-making. Embracing the digital channels like social and email – with the offline channels like catalogues and DM, this session illustrates how the performance of each arm of each channel can be precisely measured. Add the power of real-time reporting filtered to review specific customer or product groups and enjoy the clarity!<br>Julian will explain how AI provides the means to weight the different events that occur prior to an order being placed so that, for instance, a catalogue receipt three weeks before an order is evaluated against, say, a click-through from social media on the day before an order.<br>Clever stuff that will instil greater confidence in your future marketing investments. |
| THEATRE 2 | **Why you should outsource your fulfilment and how to find the right partner**<br>*Martin Bysh, Huboo Technologies*<br>With the sustained boom in eCommerce, many SMEs in retailing have outsourced their fulfilment so that they can cut storage and shipping costs and focus on their key business.<br>Retailers of all types and sizes can benefit from the expertise of a fulfilment specialist, but you should check that your potential partners can tailor their service to your business's current stage of growth and that they can grow with you. Martin Bysh, CEO & Co-Founder of fulfilment company Huboo Technologies, shares his expert advice on why you should outsource your fulfilment and how to find the right partner. |
| THEATRE 3 | **The principles of offline persuasion**<br>*James Wheele, Paper & Pixels*<br>Insight into how to produce the most compelling offline creative that utilises the principles of persuasion to increase response. We'll explore:<br>• The principles of persuasion and how they can be applied to offline channels<br>• The craft of an effective headline and the science of the flow to a CTA<br>• The customer journey from paper through to pixels and the different stages of an offline acquisition<br>• Why we think we know best, but ultimately it's all in the test – the art of stepping back! |

| 13.00-14.00 | CHOOSE FROM |
|---|---|
| THEATRE 1 | **Direct Commerce Awards presentations**<br>*with Georgina Hewitt, more2* |
| THEATRE 2 | **Real life War stories of growing multiple eCommerce business to £10 million & beyond**<br>*Ian Hammersley, SmarteBusiness  pre recorded*<br>Over the last the 17 years Mark and I were exposed to the equivalent of several lifetime's worth of eCommerce experience. We've been in a virtual bunker, the control room so to speak; eating, sleeping and breathing eCommerce growth over hundreds of eCommerce businesses. We're not smarter than anyone, we've just seen so much; at first hand we've experienced some spectacular growth, but also many disappointing failures; it was through this exposure we learnt so much. We became fascinated with understanding the attributes the successful eCommerce businesses had in common, and why others struggled to grow.  This is a talk about the fundamental discoveries that all the successful eCommerce |

| 14.15-14.40 | CHOOSE FROM |
|---|---|
| THEATRE 1 | **Creating Customer Loyalty & New Revenue Streams**<br>*Andy Huggins & Greg Radford, Rocket Marketing Group*<br>Andy Huggins and Greg Radford  will be discussing and showcasing various forms of customer loyalty and the impact of customer engagement for brands within the Commerce/Retail space. This will include a brief case study on a couple of clients for both Revenue Generating and Non-Revenue Generating programmes. |
| THEATRE 2 | **Paper School – Smart strategies to mitigate the rise in material costs**<br>*Bridget Petty & Fiona Maurice, JPS Print*<br>Paper is a hot topic amongst offline brands following news that prices are on the increase driven by the global rise in pulp prices, energy costs and transport. The situation is made more challenging by the imminent closure of two high profile paper mills which will impact on choice and supply of papers to the UK market. |
| THEATRE 3 | **Managing rapid growth in difficult times**<br>*Steve Sneath, Intersoft & Lauren Juster, Biscuiteers*<br>Join Steve & Lauren as they discuss what a 12-month period of continuous peak shipping volumes meant to Intersoft & Biscuiteers, including:<br>• What were some of the main challenges through the last year?<br>• What strategies and tactics did you implement to overcome these challenges?<br>• How did you manage growth whilst maintaining covid guidelines?<br>• What were some of the highlights of success (%) from the tactics/tools/processes implemented?<br>• The future of eCommerce as the world begins to emerge of covid? |

| 14.45-15.10 | CHOOSE FROM |
|---|---|
| THEATRE 1 | **Surviving in today's digital marketplace**<br>*Julian Grindey, former Trading Director at Studio Retail*<br>Take a look at the competitive retail landscape and how cataclysmic events have accelerated technologies and shifting customer behaviours. Learn what the key emerging factors impacting eCommerce are and who is best placed to take advantage of them. |
| THEATRE 2 | **Coming out of the Pandemic, what do you need to consider?**<br>*Wendy Slater, Breedon HR*<br>As Pandemic restrictions ease, more businesses will get back to work, but what does that look like now?<br>Are your staff returning to the workplace and if so, what measures do you need to put in place?<br>There is no 'one-size fits all' as you need to adopt an approach that works for your business and your staff, but this session will give you some key points to consider. |
| THEATRE 3 | **Recruiting New Affluent Over 55's customers from the national press... at a Profit**<br>*Paul Hendrick, DJH Advertising*<br>What if it cost you nothing to recruit a new customer? The holy grail of customer acquisition? Well its entirely within your reach using an off-the-page campaign in the national press....and if you're looking for the affluent 65's the national press is where to find them. The mature market controls 80% of the spending power of the nation, over £12.8 trillion. As recruitment from traditional list sources has been ravaged by with market and GDPR pressure...Off-the-page has seen a resurgence. If you think the press is an old maid media then think again. It still has a critical mass of affluent wealthy ABC1s with disposable incomes. They are loyal, responsive and PROFITABLE. |

| 15.15-15.40 | CHOOSE FROM |
|---|---|
| THEATRE 1 | **Lessons from a pandemic: Why YOU should own your customers**<br>*Chris Carpenter, Royle Printing USA & Wayne Doleski, Black Bee Marketing*<br>Join Chris Carpenter & Wayne Doleski as they share catalogue success stories from US companies during the 2020 pandemic. |
| THEATRE 2 | **The role of a DPO and who needs one anyway?**<br>*Rob Bielby*<br>*Data Protection Officers are mandatory for many organisations and with data processing a 'core activity' for most DM businesses, you'll need a DPO resource. Find out what the job entails, why DPO's have to be independent and how to plan your DP strategy to avoid fines and manage ICO referrals.* |

| 15.45-16.10 | |
|---|---|
| THEATRE 1 | **How to Americanize your Direct Marketing**<br>*Todd Gawronski, Royle Printing USA*<br>Consultative market strategies that maximize direct marketing investment and comply with all print, postal and logistical guidelines. In this session, Todd will cover:<br>• Suggested best practices as it relates to translating Euro direct marketing piece to an effective U.S. direct marketing piece<br>• Optimal calendar<br>• Efficient formats<br>• Industry symposiums (NEMOA, ACMA)<br>• Customer Profile Analysis, Database Hygiene and Management<br>• Postal, Recommendations, Regulations and Current Market Conditions<br>• Paper Market Conditions and Acquisition Strategies<br>• Measuring your results, owning the name |

| 16.15-17.30 | |
|---|---|
| THEATRE 1  | **Modern Customer Development**<br>*Kevin Hillstrom, Mine That Data USA*<br>In this session, Kevin will explain why Customer Development is so important in a post-COVID world. Kevin will address the five key stages in Customer Development, namely Acquisition, Welcome, Emergence, Loyalty, and Retirement. Learn how to address whether your brand is able to develop customers in a manner that leads to sales gains and profit improvements. |

DIRECT COMMERCE ASSOCIATION

# ANNUAL SUMMIT

*virtual*

17 JUNE 2021

## Speakers


Alex Pratt


Alistair Ezzy


Andy Huggins

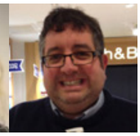

Bridget Petty


chloeThomas

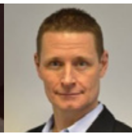

Chris Carpenter


Chris Simpson


Fiona Maurice


Gavin Ucko

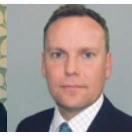

Greg Radford


Hakan Thyr


Ian Hammersley


James Wheele


Julian Berry


Julian Grindey


Kevin Hillstrom


Mark Davies

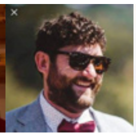

Martin Bysh


Martyn Noble


Matt Booker


Oliver Spark

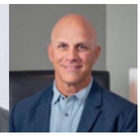

Paul Hendrick


Rob Beattie


Siobhain Goodall


Sophie Grender


Steve Sneath


Todd Gawronski

## Companies

AMARA
a space
Biscuiteers
Cartridge People
Christies Direct
MADE BY COUSIN
Cox & Cox
danetti
djh.
eCommerce MasterPlan
ellisbrigham MOUNTAIN SPORTS
FAIRFAX & FAVOR
fruugo
The Happy Puzzle Company
hippychick
Home Leisure Direct
hotter
huboo
Hurricane
Iceland
INTERSOFT
JAQUES LONDON
jps limited
KHAOS CONTROL
Klarna.
The Lettershop Group
more2
mpl contact
Muck Munchers
OFFICE POWER
OHH DEER
Paper& Pixels.
Perennial
PPP Taking Care
ProCook
Royal Mail MarketReach
Rocket
ROCKETT St GEORGE
ROYLE PRINTING
Scotts & Co.
Serious Readers
Silver Cross
Sweet
tiger
The Leprosy Mission
TOTM
UniFida
Victoria Plum.com
VitrA
watco
Weird Fish
WENTWORTH WOODEN PUZZLES
whistl
WoolOvers

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# Offering premium products with precise personalisation

**SportPursuit is focused on using email to find new customers and communicate personally with its existing customers.**

"Our big thing is personalisation," reports Andrew Bell, head of CRM. "We send a lot of emails because we have so much new merchandise on-site on a daily basis, and we have a lot to talk about."

SportPursuit offers exclusive sale events for members each day, where they can get up to 80 per cent off premium sporting brands. Most deals only last one week and at the end of the sale period, SportPursuit purchases inventory from its suppliers and ships it to customers. This model enables the online retailer to deliver unbeatable value to customers. Plus, while the pandemic significantly impacted brick-and-mortar retailers, SportPursuit was well-positioned to support the increased demand for outdoor activities.

Email communication is the key way SportPursuit connects with customers to inform them of deals. "We don't want people to miss out on the best deals because the best offers sell out fast. We have a savvy customer base who knows a good deal when they see one — and snap stuff up quickly."

To regularly be in touch with the latest offers, the typical customer receives at least one email per day, while some customers can receive up to two. "With that sort of frequency, if you're not staying relevant, you're going to suffer."

### More targeted messages with less work

To achieve its goals, SportPursuit has been using Acoustic Campaign, which enables it to build, run, and measure the results of highly targeted campaigns without inefficient manual processes.

Bell comments, "We're constantly testing, from a macro-level to the subject line. Everything we've seen points to increased personalisation leading to better conversion. Our emails are highly personalised based on user behaviour. We want to present members with products relevant to them, in their size and following their sport interests. Our browse abandon retargeting emails are some of our highest performing sends. We base them on the products customers have viewed in the last week — that we think they're most likely to convert on — and build out an email campaign for that user with related products."

SportPursuit uses the Programs features of Campaign to help with lifecycle management and run automated campaigns that are triggered by customer actions. "The way it's set up allows us to use machine learning models and complex algorithms to build out personalised customer content."

"We utilise the relation table and child relation table features in Campaign to do this — which enables us to very efficiently deliver as much personalisation as we need, from basic segmentation to true one-to-one personalisation where you're building all of the content within that email for the individual." Daily "one size fits all" emails would soon be blocked; truly personalised emails are engaging and generate sales.

As its personalisation has become more precise, SportPursuit sees even more opportunities to improve Campaign and has sent that feedback to Acoustic. "We've seen developments for Campaign come through, things we've asked for that help personalisation efforts like the child relation tables. Campaign can deliver high-level personalised campaigns for us in a reliable way, which we really like. We can plug

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in complex automation and algorithms, and it utilises that data. We find it really consistent for getting personalised campaigns built and in front of the customers quickly and efficiently." And that means delivering 45 million emails per month, across over 150 distinct campaigns, built and sent by a team of just three people.

Campaign not only helps with more precise targeting, but also with the efficient delivery of those messages. "The relation tables are fantastic, enabling us to do the personalisation efficiently. We have been automating some of the more repetitive tasks to allow us to focus on other things. You can build a relatively complex, segmented email, and deliver it to customers in minutes in some cases. The way we use Campaign enables us to operate really efficiently."

### Boosting sales and creating loyal customers

While sales are made through the SportPursuit website, 85 per cent of revenue comes from members who have subscribed to its marketing emails.

Sales were up 50 per cent in 2020, due both to the pandemic demand and the increasingly personalised email campaigns. "We've been increasing revenue from long-time members in the past year, which goes against the grain for what you normally see, but we've been able to grow long-term engagement from our members. We lean on Campaign a lot for that."

SportPursuit also has remarkably high retention metrics among key customer groups, showing that customers appreciate the offers and personalisation. Even with a high volume of email, people want to stay on the distribution list. "Being able to send A/B tests enables us to optimise our strategy for whatever we're looking for, whether that's reducing unsubscribes or getting clicks. The ability to test in the platform is super easy for us."

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# 5 post-Covid trends for eCommerce startups

## By Augustin Prot, CEO and co-founder, Weglot

Even though it may seem Covid is almost coming to an end (in the UK at least) and retail stores reopen, it remains hard to tell if the eCommerce bubble will ever burst.

eCommerce sales accounted for 34.7 per cent of all retailing in March 2021 according to ONS data, and even though this was actually down from 36.2 per cent in February, it was still significantly higher than March 2020 figures of 23.1 per cent.

According to research from eMarketer, China will become the first country to see eCommerce sales surpass 50 per cent of total retail sales at some point during 2021 as more consumers in the region shop online.

Although this is an extreme example - the next-highest country is South Korea with 28.9 per cent predicted total sales through eCommerce in 2021 - it highlights the international trend of online retail growth.

But when the cake is so big, everyone wants a slice. Starting an online business is easier than ever before, and differentiation will mean survival in a new, highly competitive environment.

In a post-Covid eCommerce world, there are significant strategies companies can take right now in order to be successful.

### 1. Subscription-based eCommerce

Subscription-based eCommerce, where consumers pay to receive products or services on a recurring basis, is growing in popularity, especially with direct-to-consumer (D2C) brands such as Dollar Shave Club, Harrys, Hello Fresh and Gousto.

According to McKinsey, 15 per cent of online shoppers have already signed up for one or more eCommerce subscriptions to frequently receive products on a recurring basis. The model represents a convenient, highly personalised, and often cheaper one that they would not typically receive elsewhere. Everything from beauty products and food to wine and clothing can be ordered, many of which offer 'surprise' picks to add another layer of excitement to consumers.

This appeal twinned with long-term revenue and customer loyalty means we are likely to see various other eCommerce verticals adopting the subscription model post-Covid. Important, as research shows that customer loyalty actually took a hit during the pandemic.

### 2. Green consumerism

For a brief moment during initial lockdown measures, nature healed and our eyes opened to areas of 'greening' that were previously never thought of before.  Green consumerism, where consumers make purchasing decisions based on environmental concerns, is a growing trend in this regard. Businesses of all sizes are starting to announce ambitious net-zero carbon targets and investing in more sustainable business practices such as green delivery, digital receipts and reusable packaging.

Half of digital consumers said environmental concerns impact their purchasing decisions, and 43 per cent are more likely to shop with a rival retailer if they offered a greater range of sustainable delivery options. In a post-Covid world, more eCommerce brands will need to think about their operations and adopt more sustainability practices, as green consumerism not only helps attract consumers but retain and nurture them.

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Green consumerism will have a big influence on the ecommerce landscape of the future, meaning sustainable businesses will remain one step ahead of the competition.

### 3. Voice commerce

Smart speakers such as Alexa and Siri have been a part of our lives for a long time now. But although people have primarily used them to listen to music or look up information, online shopping is also becoming increasingly popular via the channel.

43 per cent of smart speaker owners use the technology to shop, according to a Review 42 study, with this number only set to increase as voice assistants become a bigger part of our lives. Retailers are thinking big on voice commerce, as an Adobe study found 91 per cent are making significant investments in voice and 94 per cent plan to increase their investment in the coming year.

However, although homeware, food, and low-cost electronics are popular purchases through voice assistants, consumers seem to be reluctant to purchase high-end products as a Microsoft study found 41 per cent of users report concerns around trust, privacy and passive listening. The protection of consumer data and privacy should obviously be ensured, but this shouldn't put online retailers off as more than half of voice assistant users believe digital assistants will help them make retail purchases within the next five years.

### 4. Bitcoin payments

Payment is a crucial part of the customer journey, and the more payment options you offer, the more chances you have at conversion. But when it comes to Bitcoin, Dogecoin or any other type of cryptocurrency, what value is it for retailers?

Tesla was heralded as one of the first and biggest businesses to accept Bitcoin as payment, but others such as Microsoft, Expedia and Shopify have also jumped on the bandwagon. Customers and business owners may prefer payment via Bitcoin for several reasons, such as immediate exchanges, low transaction fees and high security on the blockchain. All these factors are crucial for offering a seamless shopping experience to online customers.

Bitcoin users are between ages 25 to 44 and predominantly male, but this demographic is expected to broaden in the future as its popularity widens. eCommerce businesses that accept Bitcoin payments may well unlock a broader range of customers willing to pay via the currency post-Covid.

### 5. Globalisation needs localisation

Cross-border eCommerce and localisation need to go hand-in-hand, as although there are no borders in the eCommerce world, consumers still crave information and websites in their native language.

We've seen an increase in consumers shopping internationally during the pandemic, with cross-border sales increasing 21 per cent between January and June 2020 compared with the same period in 2019. Cross-border eCommerce offers attractive opportunities for merchants to reach out to previously untapped global audiences, but only if personalised to meet their needs.

Localisation goes beyond simple translation, adapting products, services, or offerings to a specific market so that it makes sense and feels familiar to the target audience. For example, adapting images/videos, adjusting content to suit cultural preferences, and converting to local currencies or units of measurement.

The ultimate goal here is to make your target audience feel like your content was made specifically for them. Efforts made in this way pay off in the long-term, as content that is locally targeted has six times more engagement than posts that were designed for a global market.

The pandemic has permanently affected eCommerce, and it's likely that the shift in the way we buy products online will only continue to increase.

While many companies have been battling to survive, the pandemic has also presented a significant opportunity. Businesses that invest in their online channels and in some of the strategies highlighted above are likely to emerge as market leaders in a post-Covid world.

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# Machine learning has huge role to play in ecommerce businesses of all sizes, says STX Next

**ML innovation doesn't need to be reserved for major players like Amazon and Netflix**

Major players in areas including eCommerce and entertainment - such as Amazon and Netflix - are often lauded for their investment in machine learning (ML) technologies to improve the customer experience. While these global titans have the funding to support ambitious technology projects, such innovations also have huge potential for smaller businesses. According to software house STX Next, implementing ML need not be as big an undertaking as many think.

Some of the perceived barriers to implementing machine learning are that it requires huge investment in terms of time, money and manpower, and that it could threaten the role of existing human staff. While making the most of machine learning does indeed require significant effort, there are ways of approaching it that make it accessible to all eCommerce companies.

Łukasz Grzybowski, head of machine learning & data engineering at STX Next, said: "The applications for machine learning technology are becoming more widespread every day. At present, ML is used in areas such as recommender systems employed by major retailers or streaming providers, alongside other customer-centric innovations like chatbots and digital body language tracking. Behind the scenes, it is also being used for tasks such as automated A/B testing and dynamic pricing. All of these applications are great in increasing customer conversion, decreasing bounce rate and improving customer satisfaction through better personalisation.

"Integrating all of this into an eCommerce platform might seem like an excessively painstaking task if you're not a behemoth like Amazon, but there are ways of approaching it that make it viable.

"Firstly, it's important to realise that implementing ML in processes like customer segmentation means digging more deeply into data than ever before, and ensuring the ML algorithms you use are underpinned by a comprehensive understanding of this data. Simply taking superficially similar customers and grouping them together when recommending products won't go far enough.

"Secondly, it's about going a step further and preparing the business to be compatible with machine learning in the long run. For example, business

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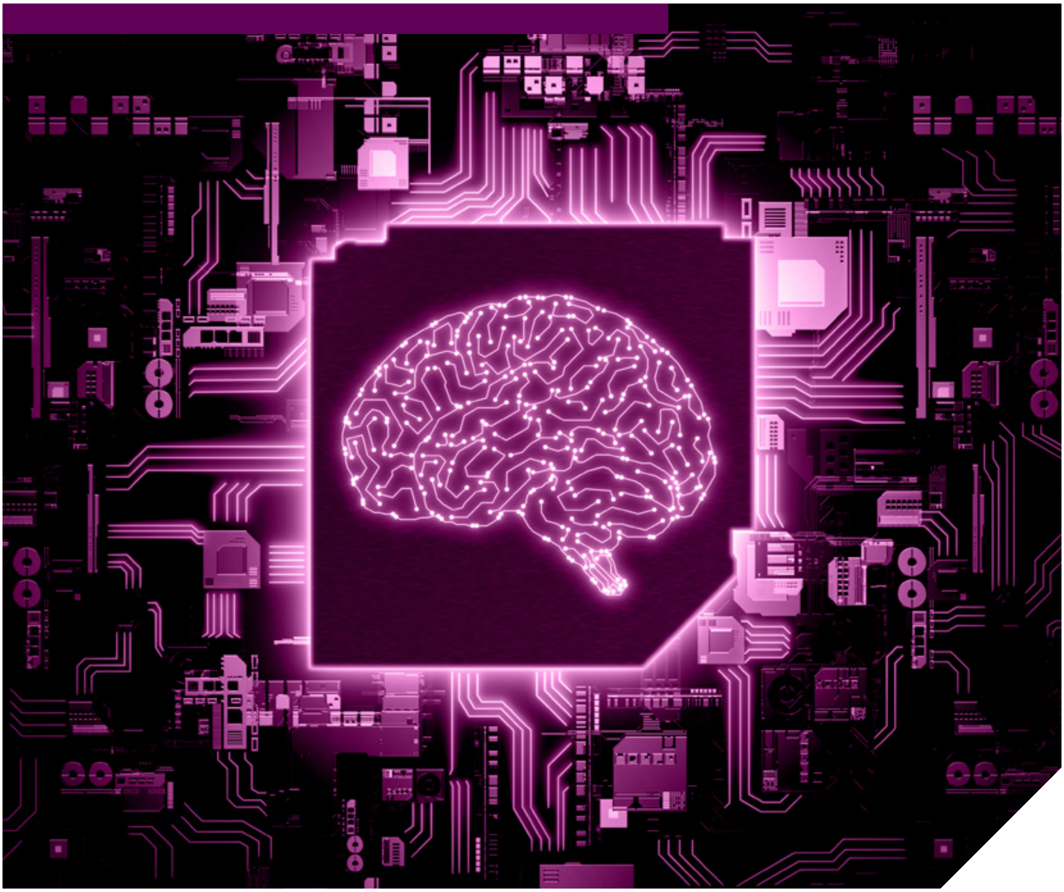

problems where ML could be useful should be identified early on, and companies should get into the habit of preparing their data so that ML can be integrated without too much difficulty. Crucially, organisations should also identify relevant machine learning experts who can drive such projects forward, either internally or through outsourcing or external recruitment.

"Finally, something that often comes up in discussions about ML innovation is that it threatens the role of human staff due to increased automation. In our experience, this isn't the case. Instead, it frees employees from some of the more time-consuming, mundane tasks, and enhances their roles by giving them quicker access to data and insights that can help transform the customer experience."

Grzybowski concluded: "There's no need for smaller eCommerce companies to be left behind in the machine learning revolution. With the right approaches, there's every reason to believe that any business can boast the innovations that have made the Amazons of this world such a success."

"There's no need for smaller eCommerce companies to be left behind in the machine learning revolution."

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# How does a direct-to-consumer strategy drive post-pandemic sales for manufacturers?

**By Martin Lloyd, Manager UK & Northern Europe, commercetools**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, shoppers have moved online en masse which has opened the potential to overhaul the customer-manufacturer dynamic. Rather than a challenge, this unexpected shift can be an opportunity for B2B companies in the manufacturing sector to drive sales post-pandemic.

By adopting a direct-to-consumer (D2C) strategy, which cuts out the distributor, wholesaler and retailer middlemen, manufacturers can get ahead of their competitors and create new sources of revenue.

The tried-and-tested B2B model still works today, but now more than ever, manufacturers must adapt to radically changing customer demands. Investing in direct-to-consumer gives them greater ability to do so, but to be successful, manufacturers need the right technology platform. When choosing a modern commerce technology solution, they need to consider several key elements.

### Ability to customise

Manufacturers typically have little control over the sales model. Now, by embracing a direct-to-consumer approach, manufacturers are opening the conversation with their end-customers directly. This gives them the chance to develop relationships with each customer and personalise interactions which can improve loyalty. However, to do this well, manufacturers need to be able to collect quality data on customers' needs and analyse it in a meaningful way. Outdated, rigid eCommerce architectures stop brands from capitalising on data to improve shopping experiences over time, unlike modern commerce technology.

A 'headless' commerce platform allows for a brand's commerce back-end to be separated from the front-end. That means data collection is integrated natively and manufacturers can make more informed decisions, customise experiences to suit customer needs and boost customer relationships. Furthermore, consistent service can be applied across all touchpoints, from a website to a mobile application to a voice assistant, making shopping easier and boosting satisfaction. Since one back-end is separate from the front-ends retailers can connect as many front-ends to the same back-end as they want.

### Freedom to experiment

Manufacturers entering D2C sales will be new to engaging end-customers to begin with, but customer expectations are growing at a rapid rate too. For the best chance of capturing consumer spend, consider an ecommerce solution that offers freedom to experiment and roll-out new shopping features more frequently to find out what works.

Unlike traditional monolithic commerce systems, which require fiddly and time-consuming coding at the back-ends of each shopping channel, a headless platform allows developers to make improvements to front-ends (such as a transactional website or app) quickly and easily. They can also make improvements to digital commerce without fear of 'breaking' anything which could disrupt sales. No downtime means no unnecessary loss of sales.

### Adaptability

By choosing to interact with customers more directly via digital channels, manufacturers

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have an opportunity to disrupt the market. Achieving speed and agility should be the goal, so that they can ensure their brand can effortlessly keep up with changing preferences on an ongoing basis.

Because front and back ends are decoupled in a headless infrastructure, teams can work in parallel to complete deployments faster. Taking an agile approach to development gives them the overall benefit of efficiency, ease of maintenance and the ultimate benefit of vastly reducing time to market.

With freedom to experiment, headless commerce systems allow brands to implement new user interfaces much more quickly than if they chose to use full-stack or all-in-one software that can be costly and laborious to be installed and maintained.

### Limitless scalability

The aim of D2C commerce is to grow business. To make it worthwhile, choosing a robust and reliable commerce system is key. For example, growing websites like consumer electronics brand Glen Dimplex, which added 30 more sites to its pipeline as part of a white-label approach to D2C commerce, need to handle large amounts of traffic. This is especially the case during seasonal peaks like holidays which require real-time data flow between front- and back-ends to avoid the website crashing.

Since B2B commerce applications typically have larger and more complex data models than B2C, scalability is even more important. Intelligent machine learning-driven features allow data to be simplified for easier handling. With leaner, more efficient data sets, developers can achieve faster-loading experiences, higher rates of uptime for customers, and ability to capture more sales and revenue potential.

Ability to expand interaction opportunities with innovative services

Modern technology also allows organisations to boost engagement by expanding the possible touchpoints for customers to interact with their brand. Considering the variety of devices and channels available today, without a modern platform, manufacturers could be faced with a software "zoo" that is difficult to manage and impedes functionality across all touchpoints.

With headless, multiple frontends are easily managed via a single set of APIs which make up the underlying systems. With this strategy, adding new touchpoints and channels can be done with ease.

B2B businesses already operate across a variety of channels and devices which represent significant sources of revenue. More efficient software maintenance will enhance opportunities to seize a sale, save money and cut deployment time during the process.

### The way forward

B2B customers are moving online fast and their expectations for shopping are growing. With the right strategies in place, B2B brands can transform traditional sales routes, like air handling and plant management specialist Trox did with myTrox, by digitising the process and inviting the end-customer into the process with self-service options.

D2C strategy is emerging as a route to success for manufacturers, but they should be wary of missing out on the opportunities by not having the right technology in place first. A headless solution provides them with the ability to meet customer demands and adapt over time quickly and easily. With stronger connections to customers, more efficient ordering processes and commanding brand presence, D2C manufacturers enjoy access to untapped revenues and a confident market position post-pandemic.

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# 2021: The Year B2B marketplaces go mainstream?

By Alexander Graf, Spryker

**Gartner has predicted that by 2023 that at least 70 per cent of enterprise marketplaces launched will serve B2B transactions. In B2C eCommerce 1.0, businesses owned the whole inventory, stored it in their warehouse and sold it to customers. In eCommerce 2.0, there is a mixed model. Otto and Amazon are good examples, selling around half their inventory direct to customers while making 50 per cent of revenue from commission taken from vendors selling out of the marketplace.**

eCommerce 3.0 is typified in B2C by etsy or Alibaba. These marketplace owners don't own any merchandise, they're just offering a platform for other people to use. The inventory risk is removed while marketplace owners take a percentage commission from the sale.

Historic eCommerce models worked best for high turnover products, where companies sold thousands of products a day from their own inventory. High value, low demand, products—so-called long tail items—were less commonly sold online. Now, these long tail items are seeing increasing online demand. Previously niche markets are seeing huge growth, creating opportunities to build marketplaces that tap into a critical mass of interest for vertical markets.

### B2B marketplaces

Individual countries cannot support too many multi-category B2C marketplaces such as Amazon or Otto. But there is scope for a much larger number of specialised B2B marketplaces. B2B buying behaviour is very different from B2C. In B2B, there is no single dominant vendor, there's no Amazon. There is room for hundreds of smaller Amazons, serving each vertical and niche market.

In B2B, a marketplace is not just an opportunity to sell more products. The key is to offer associated services and subscriptions. Compared with B2C marketplaces, B2B marketplaces can offer a more sophisticated approach to providing product data, addressing security issues or offering insurance. The offer might include integrated services, because when businesses are buying 1000 printers they want to buy the service, not just the product, from installation to ongoing ink supply.

### Technology and culture transformation

The transition to a setup where businesses sell services or products that they don't own brings with it technical and cultural issues. It introduces lots of variables that the ERP systems

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## “In B2B, a marketplace is not just an opportunity to sell more products. The key is to offer associated services and subscriptions.

usually cannot handle. B2B marketplace systems need to be able to check availability, update pricing, factor in currency exchange rates, for example. Many B2B businesses are sales driven and they may have a hard time getting their sales force to accept that there might be components in a deal that they don't control. Or there might be a sale made over the marketplace, where the sales team did not have a call with the customer so not generating commission earnings. A cultural shift may be harder to mitigate than the tech shift.

### Creating an enterprise marketplace strategy

Here are five starting points to create an enterprise marketplace strategy:

1) Start with a coalition of the willing. Search for the 10 customers that are already having a problem that you want to solve. Search for the 10 people in the company that are willing to create something new. Start with them. Don't make it too big. If you start with too many people you will have too many naysayers.
2) Don't start with cultural transformation. Cultural transformation is an effect, not a cause. A successful project, doing something different, will lead to cultural transformation, because people start to understand when I do it this way, it creates happy customers and a much better work environment.
3) Once you have made quick wins, break down the roadmap into milestones that you can control. Aim to create results within weeks, not months or years. If you spend two years creating a marketplace, too much will change. Maybe the project manager that initiated the project will change jobs, maybe the customer who was initially receptive to the change will put a new person in charge of procurement.
4) Tap into your existing workforce. There's no need for a super highly qualified, online-savvy workforce. Look within for people that want to create something new, be progressive and focus on customer needs. Most companies have been through such a huge amount of change in the past 12 months, and the workforce has proved themselves so adaptable, that now is a really good time to use this adaptability to secure the future of the business.
5) Balance the offer and demand side. Avoiding congestion is about balancing the offer and demand side, so that there are not too many merchants selling, or that demand is growing but not being fulfilled, or the customer is not seeing a wide enough selection of products.

Established businesses will see competition from B2B marketplace innovators and pure-plays mirroring the development of the B2C marketplace sector. Ten years ago, people said 'Amazon is just a book retailer from Seattle, they pose no threat to us'. Then when Amazon grew bigger, people argued it was a Ponzi scheme and when it came to delivering dividends, then the whole scheme would fail. How wrong they were.

The potential of B2B marketplaces is massive. Getting in pole position to benefit from this evolution should be high on the priority list of enterprises in all vertical sectors.

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# Why the new YouTube eCommerce feature could herald a new future for online retailing

By Marcel Hollerbach, CMO of Productsup

**With the pandemic accelerating the proliferation of advertising and eCommerce channels, more platforms are beginning to incorporate in-app eCommerce features to accommodate for the growing symbiosis between content and online shopping.**

The obvious platform for this venture is YouTube which, in many ways, is already a major shopping destination for its 2 billion users across the globe, many of whom tune in to watch a variety of content from unboxing videos to product reviews. Add to this the YouTube algorithm which recommends similar videos to users on their homepage, the potential for accelerating sales through integrated eCommerce solutions is very promising indeed and may have a huge impact on the entire eCommerce ecosystem.

It's no surprise that the Google subsidiary has been testing a new feature that will make it easier for users to make purchases without leaving YouTube, following in the footsteps of Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms that have already expanded their shopping features and capabilities.

Creators participating in the pilot will tag products that appear in their videos, and the pilot has been expanding into the US market since March 2021. Viewers will be able to browse and buy those tagged products by clicking a shopping bag icon in the corner of the screen, which leads them to the product listed and, of course, onto the payment page.

While the feature is still only being tested on a limited number of videos, the fact that a behemoth like YouTube is diving into video selling shows that this new and innovative way to shop is here to stay. The affiliate link market is booming, and this new move signals a shift in the way that eCommerce is integrated into the online user experience. Here's what you need to know about video selling — and how you can make the most of the trend in order to boost your visibility and profitability.

### The Advantages of Video Selling

The traditional pre-roll ads that play before YouTube videos have multiple disadvantages. First, 67 per cent of viewers skip them if given the option, and many viewers have ad blockers installed that keep them from seeing video ads to begin with, or even sign up to a YouTube premium subscription to avoid sitting through ads. Second, pre-roll ads aren't always relevant to the content they're attached to, a disconnect that likely contributes to viewers tuning out quickly.

By solving these two issues, YouTube's new shopping

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feature has the potential to boost ad revenues on the platform — as well as pay-outs to video creators — overnight. By integrating eCommerce into YouTube videos, users are able to consume content without having to leave the app. In addition, syncing Google Merchant Centre feeds to creators' videos allows YouTube to be included in Google Ads attribution reports, which lets advertisers tie ad views directly to conversions.

### Three Tips for Successful Video Selling

Whether it takes place on YouTube or another similar platform, the basic principles of video selling are similar. Be sure to follow these tips in order to maximise your video selling success:

**1. Target the right audience**

While TikTok and Instagram host short-form content, YouTube is known for long-form videos that explore niche topics, from cooking to gaming to arts and crafts. This presents a unique opportunity for retailers looking to sell their products to specific target audiences. The brands that get the most out of video selling will build strong relationships with creators in their space, ensuring their products get tagged in relevant videos.

**2. Tailor your approach to the platform**

As with any new social media ad opportunity, it's important to test what type of product data works best for engaging users on the particular platform you're using, as each audience segment has differing interests and values. In this case, brands should experiment with using product descriptions that match YouTube's style to help develop a more authentic, personal relationship between the brand and consumer. Featuring celebrities and influencers could also help your brand stand out as video selling becomes more commonplace when online shopping.

**3. Ensure that your product information is up-to-date and accurate**

This sounds basic, but it is a common hiccup for brands in video selling, and in social commerce more generally, to overlook product content optimisation. When consumers are excited about a product, it's extremely disheartening to click "buy" and discover it's not actually available in the size or colour they originally wanted. Putting technology and processes in place to ensure that product information is updated in real time, that it accurately reflects stock, will protect your brand's reputation and avoid customer frustration, meaning that you are more likely to gain a repeat customer owing to the user-friendly experience and accurate data.

YouTube is the second-most popular search engine after Google, with users collectively viewing over one billion hours of video content every day. Add to this the fact that 79 per cent of internet users say they have their own YouTube account, there is a heightened need to more organically integrate relevant eCommerce options into video content. Getting started with video selling can seem intimidating, especially when there are so many other channels and platforms already demanding time and resources. However, with some careful optimisation of your product feeds, expanding into this new and exciting area will yield big dividends. Your audience is out there — don't miss out on the right video selling opportunity for your brand.

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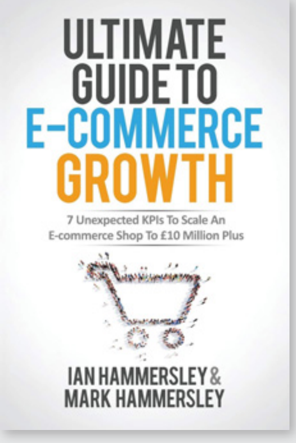
# Ultimate Guide to Scalable eCommerce

## PART 5

By Ian & Mark Hammersley




### WHERE TO INVEST A CASE STUDY

Once you have the knowledge of your top worst performers, now it's important to decide where exactly to invest your money to make the biggest impact.

Here's a quick example that perfectly illustrates how this all works together and why KPIs are so critical:

Here we have an online health supplement company that came to us and said, 'Hey, we're really worried about our checkout. We heard the checkout is the easiest way to improve revenue.' When we had a look at their stats, we were able to easily discover what part of the sales process would be the most beneficial.

### LET'S REVIEW

Remember, we are checking all stats against the following facts that we covered earlier.

On average:

- 11 per cent of visitors will add a product to their basket.
- Of that 11 per cent, 55 per cent will proceed to checkout.
- Of that 55 per cent, 84 per cent will place an order.

They actually weren't lagging in the checkout-to-order rate because they were at a healthy 85 per cent checkout-to-order ratio.

On the other hand, their add-to-basket rate was 6 per cent, which was less than half of what it should be. This is where to invest. If they would have tried to improve their checkout to order, they may have made an extra 10 grand a year. But by investing the same amount of money in the area where they were lagging so far behind average stats, which was their add-to-basket ratio, they could end up gaining half a million in revenue annually.

Now, this is just one example and every client is different. Maybe you do need to invest in your checkout to order. That's why using all the KPIs is so critical.

### FIND THE WORST-PERFORMING SEARCHES

Another thing to think about when investing in add-to-basket KPI is your website search. Using Google Analytics, you can actually track what visitors are looking for. It works well for B2C (business to consumer) and

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B2B (business to business) websites as well.

Most e-commerce platforms onsite search is rather poor out-of-the-box, but there are many ways in which it can be improved. When tracking this information, you can easily see things like your search exits, which is essentially your bounce rate. You'll also be able to look at the search refinement or people who are looking for a product and immediately changing their original search, refining it so it is more specific to what they want. For instance, your potential customer may search for a blue jumper at first but then refine their search quickly to a navy-blue jumper.

Just as you'll be doing with the product and category pages, you want to look at the top ten worst-performing searches. Let's say you had a unique search of over 100 in a week. Look for the lowest conversion rate, and you'll easily be able to see where your weakest searches are.

Seeing this should prompt you to action. It would be the equivalent of a customer walking into a shop on High Street and asking, 'Do you have this product?' Even though you say, 'Yes, we do!' the customer immediately turns around and walks out of the store without buying the product. This would scare most shop owners. They would wonder what was wrong:

- Is the product in the wrong colour?
- Is it the wrong size?
- Is it the wrong price?
- Was it too hard to locate?

By looking at the conversion rate, you'll know what products to look at so you can make the right changes to increase your add-to-basket KPI.

To improve you website's search, use some third-party improvements. Many can really dive into your customers' searches and better track your business. Options are available for creating your own search system within your site, tagging popular searches and linking Google Analytics to your store. Tagging popular searches can help you provide customers with trending search options, which many emotional-purchase buyers are looking for. The Google Analytics APWE linked to your site can help you construct category pages that work based on each page's value.

## BROWSER ABANDONMENT—AN EASY/QUICK WIN

Browser abandonment. Behavioural and abandonment messaging is a quick and easy way to increase revenue by up to 10 per cent on average, just by nudging them along in their journey through your website.

Browser abandonment tools help encourage visitors to take the next step and the next, until the sale is complete. Essentially, a pop-up comes on the screen when the mouse moves to exit the browser page. This is especially helpful with new customers, who are much less likely to add something to their basket than

a returning customer. They don't know you and don't know if they can trust you or your products yet, so you have to work a little bit harder to motivate them to complete the checkout. Behavioural and abandonment messaging determines automatically when a new customer enters the site and can provide them with a new customer discount, such as 20 per cent or 30 per cent off their purchase, especially if they are moving their mouse towards abandonment. At the same time, it can tell if a customer is a returning one and offer a completely different promotion or none at all. Through our experience with browser abandonment, a simple yet precisely placed pop-up can result in higher revenues.

By using a tool like ScentTrail, you can target different segments with different offers. For instance, new customers get 10 per cent off with free delivery but existing customers might only get free delivery.

## A PRODUCT PAGE DESIGN CHECKLIST

So you can get quickly started optimising the raising of your add-to-basket KPI, here's the checklist we use to quickly find any friction points on the product page. Go through this list with your product page in front of you and see how many items you need to fix. This checklist

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came together as the result of many split tests we have run when optimising the add-to-basket KPI.

1. A common mistake is not putting the Add to Basket button above the fold, i.e. making a user scroll to see the Add to Basket button on some of the most used screen dimensions. Make sure the product options and Add to Basket button is shown first then the description.
2. Delivery information should be clearly displayed near the Add to Basket button. It's no good having it in the header or footer. It needs to be where the person is looking. Delivery should mention that it's free (if it is) and how fast it is.
3. Reviews should be prominently displayed underneath the product title or near the title. Again, where people are looking. Reviews should be done via a reputable third-party review system, e.g. Feefo, Trustpilot, etc. Show the number of reviews and invite people to read them.
4. Images should be large and be done well.
5. If the item is jewellery or something that is hard to work out the scale of, have one photo that has the item next to a hand or something people know the size of. This way people can understand how big it is.
6. Make sure there is more than one image—a lifestyle shot, close-up shots, etc.
7. In stock declaration. This should be bold and noticeable in the key eye focus area. If stock is particularly important to a person, i.e. when they 'need it now,' make the stock icon dynamic so it looks like it's looking up the item in the warehouse and then showing it in stock.
8. On the product page underneath the buying information or description, we tend to lose people who the product is not quite right for. So show 'see other products in this category.' For example, if you are selling Gore- Tex hiking boots and the person is on an Adidas Gore-Tex Hiking Boot product page, then show links for 'see other Gore-Tex Boots' and 'see other Adidas Boots,' etc. This will keep them on the site rather than hitting the Back button back to Google.
9. The description should not include any words that people might not have in their vocabulary. Anything hard will shift their thinking to system 2 thinking and we don't want people to think yet.
10. Make the Add to Basket button clickable even if people have not selected the quantity yet. Don't grey it out until they have selected

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quantity. If they click it too early, then show them a message telling them they must add quantity. If you grey it out people won't see it and they might think it's out of stock.

### HOW TO RAISE THIS KPI—ADD TO BASKET RATE

But how can you add to your basket rate?

**Bounce rate and add to basket**

The add-to-basket stat is absolutely linked to the bounce rate. If they don't add anything to the basket, eventually they will leave the site and disappear (and the page they leave on is called the bounce page). The add-to-basket and bounce

rates go very much hand in hand. A bounce rate is simply an exit: a hard, cold exit from the site without doing anything else (e.g. clicking back on the browser button and going back to Google Shopping). As ever (and with all these KPIs), if you compare what's happening online to a physical bricks-and-mortar store, it's easy to see why they are important. In this case, consider the following. A customer walks into a retail shop and starts browsing; they would start to browse the general sections of the shop (these we can call the categories). It's only after this they would start looking at individual products; they might then pick a product up and look at it more closely (or in a fashion store, they might try it on). If they decide they don't like the product and walk out of the shop, the equivalent of this behaviour online would be a bounce. So the first thing to consider is, did they bounce off the category or the product page?

We have four major places visitors can bounce: the home page, the category page, the product page and your search results pages. We're always going to get some of this behaviour; for example, just like a physical store, lots of people leave the store without buying. So it's useful to know how many should be leaving, i.e. what's normal. So let's define this:

Overall (across the entire site) the bounce rate on desktop devices should be less than 30 per cent and for tablet/mobile less than 50 per cent. So, let's call that 40 per cent on average. If the bounce rate is higher, then reducing this and getting more engagement on the site is the first priority. Next, the category pages. They should not be bouncing more than 50 per cent, followed by the product pages, which shouldn't bounce more than 60 per cent. These are the critical stats to consider. All e-commerce sites are slightly different (and bounce stats vary, mostly according to the buying window, i.e. the average amount of time to buy), but in general, these suggested stats are very useful. To confirm, they are:

- Home page—less than 25 per cent bounce.
- Category page—less than 50 per cent bounce.
- Product page—less than 60 per cent bounce.
- Overall—less than 40 per cent bounce.
- Search exits—less than 20 per cent bounce.

**Bounce on home page**

Home pages should be bouncing less than 25 per cent. If you're losing more than this, then something is seriously wrong with your value proposition, or your traffic sources are completely irrelevant.

Home pages are not what they once were. Because of the growth of paid search channels driving visitors to product and category pages, the home page can often be seen quite far down the funnel. There is no one-page-fits- all method here, and the elements mainly depend on whether you are selling rational, problem-solving products (e.g. car battery) or emotional, spontaneous ones (e.g. a summer dress). In each case, the home page should focus on squashing the main anxieties of the shopper; for example, for the rational, problem-solving purchases, it should show massive reassurance promises and focus very much on the methodical buyers—all their problems will be solved by buying from here, all anxiety will evaporate. Whereas with the emotional, spontaneous shoppers it should inspire and make the shopper feel they are going to be transformed into a wonderful lifestyle by buying from this website. In fact, this is true throughout the entire website, and these two different buying characteristics will feature in a large part of the remainder of this book.

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**Bounce on category**
Check bounce rate on the category pages as a whole—on average, this should be less than 50 per cent; if overall average is higher than 55 per cent, then look at each category individually (good idea to do this even if bounce is lower than 55 per cent). You will find that certain categories affect the overall bounce rate much more than others. Focus on the top categories by exits from the site; split test to increase engagement of these pages, especially if they are large SEO landing pages.

A high overall bounce on the category indicates bad merchandising, so implement the visual merchandising tool with simple rules to start (out of stock to the bottom, bestsellers to the top). Individual bounces for categories which are high indicate a generally poor category. Common reasons include:

- The images are poor.
- The selection is poor.
- Not enough products.
- The prices are too high.
- Order of products is wrong, i.e. poor selling products at the top (top two rows are crucial).
- Poor filtering.
- Pagination (page numbers) too restrictive, so visitors can only see a small number: they like to view all, so consider lazy loading; consider split testing removing the sub categories from the navigation and letting visitors easily view all.
- Poor header image that doesn't frame the collection.

**Bounce on product page**
This metric has become much more important with Google Shopping driving a lot more traffic to individual product pages. The visitors no longer go from the home to category to product page; they come directly from Google Shopping and land straight on this page, so it's a critical page to get right. The product pages are the new landing pages. This has made it slightly easier in some respects because it means we can tailor messages more specifically on the product pages, rather than the home page trying to do everything.

Objective of the product page is to get them to either...

- Add to basket.
- Continue on their selection process journey (it's highly likely that this is not quite the right product for them, and they want to see more products; if you don't help them do this, they will bounce off, back to Google).

Check bounce on product page—should be less than 60 per cent on average.

Likely that product page bounces fluctuate widely between products; this is normal.

To reduce overall bounce on product page...

- Spontaneous buyers stay at the top, so make critical buying actions at the top:
  - » Price should be at the top and visible.
  - » Delivery reassurances should be at the top; for example, order now and receive tomorrow, September 3.
  - » Add to Basket buttons big and high above the fold.
  - » Availability of product should be clear.
  - » Critical reassurances (if not too cluttered, e.g. free returns should be above the fold).
- Bigger and better images always help.
- Open out all the tabs so people can scroll easily.
- Include related categories and attributes that this product is in.
- Include related searches this product is in.
- Consider adding scarcity to stock, for example, 'only a few left.'
- Implement improved reviews system.
- Implement Q&A system.
- Customers trust the reviews and the Q&A more than the actual description, so make them visible and open as default.
- Decrease page load time of landing page—if you segment your bounce traffic in Google Analytics and look at the page load time it's often higher than the average. This can indicate that page load is an issue.

A high individual product page bounce can commonly be caused by:

- Poor image.
- Out of stock.
- Price too high.
- Delivery time not clear or

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too slow.
- Poor product name.

**Bounce and search (internal)**

- Internal searches for B2C should be 8 per cent of overall traffic; B2B should be 15 per cent+ of internal traffic. If use of internal search is less than these per cent then this is often due to bad positioning of the search box on the site. Onsite search is a great engagement device and leads to big conversion rate increases.
- Search conversion should have a 4× increase over normal conversion. If the conversion rate of those using internal search is not 4×, then invest in your search tool and manually look at the results pages of your top search terms—redirect these to the best page on the site. If people are searching for products that are out of stock or not sold, take them to an information page explaining what has happened and the replacement products.
- Search exits should be less than 20 per cent—if more than 20 per cent of internal searchers are leaving then you need to review site search using a tool like Mouseflow. What are people searching for, what are they seeing, why are they leaving? What experience would be better for them?
- Add popular searches above the search box—many of the spontaneous buyers need help knowing what to search for, so showing popular search terms on pages can trigger an engagement and the start of a sale.
- Add related searches in the search results dropdown—as people type a search show them what others searched for.
- Add 'other people searched for' on the search results page—when the search page loads, to reduce exits show what others searched for, hence making it easier for them to continue rather than leaving.
- KPI create a custom Google Analytics report that sends every Monday to show the highest search terms by exits, then you can set up a system to check these search terms each week and tweak the search results pages.

The add-to-basket rate is all about convincing someone that they want to buy the item. Increasing the desirability and the sellability of the item is going to put many more people into your e-commerce sales funnel.

The add-to-basket rate is not just about the numbers, you have to add a little sales magic to the process. You need to hone your inner magician.

When we see Derren Brown on TV, he seems like a crazy demigod, bending people's minds to his will. Of course, behind the scenes, there must be many failures where Derren says, 'Do this,' and the subject says, 'No way, Mr Brown, you're a weirdo.' But do you think Derren could become a good conversion rate optimiser? Yes, of course!

Here are some of the techniques that he uses in his performances that we can swipe and deploy on our e-commerce sites.

**1. Focus on those likely to buy.** Like any good hypnotist, he starts with a large group of people and then whittles down to the most suggestive of participants, i.e. he gets rid of the tyre kickers. On our website when analysing data, we first need to remove from our analysis those that will never buy. There's no point watching hundreds of session recordings of people who bounced on the site in under 30 seconds. Instead, we need to focus on the highest potential and the first segment I look at is the 'almost buyers'—people that spend a long time on the website but don't buy. These are the most suggestible group who have the capacity to double your conversion rate.

**2. Gain rapport with the subject.** Derren uses techniques to gain instant trust because he wants the subject to relax and let their guard down. Techniques like:

- Find out where the person is from and say their grandparent is from that town.
- That they went to the same college.
- Say their mother or father shares the same name as them.

On an online store, we can do this with personalisation, by tailoring the home page based on their recent purchases. Shopify and Amazon do this well with

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'because you listened to Jimi Hendrix Blues you might like'... you feel they care more about you than you'd feel from a generic bestseller page.

Also, if you have the data you can tailor the 'Mark in Oxford just bought this' type notifications to only show people who have similar names and similar locations to their IP address, i.e. if we can show people they relate to more who have bought, then we will have much more success than just showing random people are buying.

**3. Act for a small commitment.** Like Cialdini, Derren knows that asking a person to make a big commitment from a cold start is too much of a big step. So he uses small actions in the direction of the behaviour he ultimately wants the person to take. He does not ask them to push a person off a roof immediately; instead, he asks them to commit small misdemeanours first.

On many stores we have split tested putting prices on the home page and not. Often no pricing information works better. This is because we are asking for a sale too early. We need a smaller step first. A great deal of sites make use of an engagement device in the form of a home page wizard or survey (see Naked Wines for a good example www.nakedwines.com). We know if we can get people interacting with a survey, using site search or just starting moving forward towards the checkout, then we will increase conversion.

**4. Social proof.** In the Derren Brown murder show, he gets his subjects to arrive at a black-tie event underdressed. They are NOT part of the crowd, and this is uncomfortable. Social exclusion is one of our biggest fears.

The flip side of this is social inclusion. On a website, we must show there is a buzz around the brand and website that people can gain access to by becoming a customer. This leads on to social media marketing and careful placement of social proof along their journey. Also remarketing should not be just 'you looked at this product, buy it'; instead, we should weave in social proof of a big group of like-minded buyers that they can and want to be part of.

**5. Time constraint.** Again, in his recent murder show on Netflix, where people are brought to the point where some of them commit murder, he introduces a time constraint to induce action. Adding a time constraint forces the brain to reduce its focus to the immediate situation and thus find a solution to that problem.

Luckily, we are not trying to get people to do something horrific. However, we can use time constraints to illicit action. Countdown timers on delivery or offers do work as do loyalty programs with points that are 'about to run out.' Many of our retailers have had great success with Amazon Prime-type services where people pay to get free delivery for a period. As the time starts running out, the conversion rate increases.

## HOW A PRISONER INCREASED MY E-COMMERCE SALES

To increase the desire to add the products to the basket, we can learn a lot from great advertising copywriters. One of our favourites is the late Gary Halbert.

Gary Halbert was one of those rogue copywriters who could print money just using words. But his life was constantly up and down, millionaire one minute and destitute the next. One down period landed him in white-collar jail. It was during this time that he wrote to his son Boron each week and taught him marketing via a series of letters. It's our good fortune that these letters are now published online as The Boron Letters, and anyone can read them for free.

They are a little dated in terms of media, mostly focusing on direct mail advertising, but marketing messaging never changes. We are still trying to sell to the same human brain which has not altered its fundamental needs and desires for millions of years.

Personally, we learnt a lot from reading the letters and started using this on the e-commerce sites we manage. Here are some key insights we took from the letters to apply to e-commerce.

- People are nervous of being sold to, and Gary used handwritten envelopes to get past the rubbish bin. In

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e-commerce on the home page we need to sell less and attract engagement more. People are not ready to buy on the home page; instead, we must invite people on a journey.

- Personalisation is key. Gary made a lot of money sending out the famous 'coat of arms' letter. This letter was personalised to the person's surname. On an e-commerce store people want to have the site and home page personalised to them so that it becomes a lot more useful. A personal shopping approach really helps them decide on what to buy.
- Gary recommended writing out the most successful adverts of all time. I wrote out and copied famous adverts selling Mercedes, perfume, books, etc. Doing this, I started to see things I couldn't see when reading the adverts; writing them out really focused my attention. I noticed the flow, the repetition of key points and the overall voice. Applying this to e-commerce means I study the successful competitors of my clients; I buy from them, pay for user testing on competitors' sites and scan them for structure. I basically slow myself down, so I start noticing exactly what is going on.
- The author and voice/tone of the writer is important. Gary taught me that the person telling the story and writing the copy has a large impact on the subsequent sale. People buy from people they trust, admire, are like them or want to be. With e-commerce adding a personal voice to the website, such as personal guarantees and expert tips and named customer managers, it adds another layer which increases the conversion rate.
- Testimonials are important. Customers' stories are key to selling, and they are much more powerful if they come from people like the buyer. With e-commerce, we can start personalising the reviews that people see to be from similar locations to the buyer.

One of Gary's students was John Carlton, and he introduced us to 'customer detective work.' Many e-commerce sites totally murder their conversion rates by writing poor copy and not fitting offers to customer desires. John Carlton, the legendary copywriter, does something called undercover detective work when putting together a new sales letter.

John knows that talking to the director of a company and asking them how to sell the product is pretty much useless. Of course, he does talk to the director as he's the one paying the bills, but it's very rare that something great comes from this conversation.

So what is this undercover work? It's about talking to customers, talking to frontline sales staff, and looking at reviews and really getting into the shoes of the customers. The trouble is, as soon as you talk to them they start freezing up.

A good example is when a recent new client invited us to lunch to talk about their site. We sat down, all relaxed, and he was talking about his company and his passion; it was great stuff. But as soon as we got back to the office and started trying to increase his conversion rate, he clammed up and started speaking like a textbook. He didn't realise that when he relaxed his natural automatic sales pitch came out, but when he tried to do it consciously it was constrained and false.

So when writing sales copy for products or emails, we need to make sure that we are talking to the right people and secondly that they are relaxed and not aware that we are making notes. We need to get access to the subconscious, intuitive flow that the top sales people have.

Look at your own phone sales team; there is always one person who can outsell everyone else. But asking them how they sell is like asking them what the back of their head looks like. They cannot see it. To get the gems out of the sales star and to translate that into a sales script and product copy, you need to record them. Record them until they forget they are being recorded.

Also, when talking to customers, get them relaxed. Don't ask them why they bought; instead, talk to them about something else, perhaps what they thought of a recent email. Get them relaxed and then subtly get them talking about their

Continues overleaf >

recent purchase. We must get at the unconscious decision maker inside every customer if we want to be able to craft incredible copy and powerful offers.

### BECOME A SPY

Going further with the undercover metaphor and widening it to the whole website experience is important because you really need to get a handle on how a customer views your e-commerce offering.

Everyone wants to understand other people and that's why people seem to like body swap movies. You know those movies like Tom Hanks's Big, Vice Versa, or more recently The Change-Up, Jumanji, etc., where they use a genie or magic to accidentally swap bodies.

Comedy ensues—perhaps we all hanker to try out someone else's life, if only just briefly. If you Google 'Body Swap Movies,' there have been hundreds of movies like this.

Hollywood knows that we like to see different people experience other people's lives.

Of course, these movies always end with a cheesy part where people agree to understand each other more and have a better relationship. But that's just the narrative. What interests us is the experience of jumping into someone else's shoes.

Marketers like us always say things like 'jump into the customer's shoes.' Or... 'think like the customer.' And whilst this is true, it's very hard to get out of our own head and truly see what a prospect sees. Quite often we are in a completely different physical and environmental place.

There was a program running recently called Undercover Boss where the boss put on a disguise and went into the workplace. No matter which company did this, there were always fundamental problems raised at each location, stuff that you would have thought would have been obvious—but it took a silly wig and some false teeth to see the real picture.

With e-commerce, we can't go and work on the cash register and pretend to be a shop assistant. So what do we do to get into the customer's mindset? Here are some suggestions:

- Use a service like 'whatusersdo' and pick typical customer demographics and ask them to make a purchase on your store. Listen to what they struggle with.
- Listen to customer service calls or sales calls. Start your day listening to two or three of these, and you will pick up at least one or two gems a week.
- Read your reviews, especially your middle reviews.

Pay attention to when you feel emotion about what customers are saying or writing. Often the places where we have the most self-deception are the areas where we feel emotion.

You can also pay for 'whatusersdo' to visit your competitors' sites to see how their experience is on those sites. This is especially good to do if you know the competitor is crushing it on AdWords.

### WHY THE BOUNCE RATE DOESN'T BOUNCE

Reducing the bounce rate is all about keeping the visitors on your site. The bounce rate is quite a confusing metric because it should be called the non-engagement rate.

When we think of a bounce, we picture a ball hitting the f loor and immediately bouncing back. But with a visitor, they can remain on the page for an indefinite time and still be classed as a bounce. Why is this?

A bounce on a website is classified as a user that visited your website and took no further action, i.e. didn't click on anything. If you ran a blog, a high bounce rate might be okay, i.e. people come and read an article and then leave. This would be classed as a bounce, but it could be fine. This is not the case with an e-commerce site as a visitor that makes no further clicks is a visitor who has no chance of buying. So how do we improve the e-commerce bounce rate?

The first thing to do is to look at your site page load speed in Google Analytics. Next use a segment to show bounced traffic and note the page load speed for these visitors. If the average page load speed is significantly higher for bounced traffic, this means that a slow site has a large factor in the bounce rate.

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Basically, some of your visitors are encountering a slow loading page, and these people can't be bothered to wait. They know that it takes at least six minutes to find and buy something and on a slow site this could be tripled, and they would rather be doing something else.So check site speed first.

Secondly, bounce rate is going to affect both SEO and paid traffic. When someone bounces, they invariably hit the Back button, and this takes them back to Google. Google makes a note of searches who return from clicking on a search ranking and gives it a little minus point. Get enough minus points, and you will see less SEO and paid traffic. Instead, Google will push websites that tend to get clicked on and don't bounce back.

For key SEO landing pages, you want to be split testing for engagement. Find your top five SEO landing pages and split test the images on the page or the first words seen on the page. The SEO landing page could be a blog page or category, and both have images and titles to experiment with. Increase the engagement of these pages and you will see more traffic.

For product pages, a common bounce is due to a user searching for one thing, e.g. Gore-Tex Walking Shoes, and then landing on a Gore-Tex Shoe but not exactly the shoe they want to buy. They want to see other models. With no choice they click back to Google and another product. But if we give them the option to see 'related categories,' that is 'see other Gore-Tex Shoes' then they click on this rather than the Back button. We have split tested related category links with good success and tend to position the link under the product image.

Another way to reduce product bounce rates is to take people to a category-style landing page where the product they are interested in is made large at the top. They see the product they are interested in but can see other products underneath.

This style of product landing page works well on sites where the initial product landing page is different from the final product bought. If the product bought is different from the landing page 20 per cent of the time, then this technique can work well. You can work this out easily in Google Analytics.

### RECAP: ADD-TO-BASKET RATE

Your product pages are just as, if not more, important than your category pages, especially when using Google Shopping. Make sure all essential details and the Add to Basket button is above the fold, provide info about other similar items and make sure customers can easily return to previous products they were looking at.

### KPI: ADD-TO-BASKET RATE

Put it to use:

- 11 per cent of visitors should be adding to their baskets. If your percentage is less than 11 per cent, this KPI needs attention.
- Determine your type of buyer: spontaneous, methodical, humanistic or competitive.
- Adjust your product pages so that all pertinent information occurs above the fold. This makes it easier for customers to see everything and make quick decisions.
- Look at the middle reviews to determine what your site is doing wrong.
- Improve your worst-performing searches to increase add-to-basket rate.

Answer the following questions:

- What type of buyer does your website appeal to? Why?
- Take a look at your product pages and category pages. What areas can you improve on?
- What is your worst-performing search? Why do you think it performs so poorly?
- Take a look at your middle reviews. What areas do these reviews indicate need work? Write out your plan for improvement here.

**don't miss the next issue...**
**WEBSITE SPEED AND CAPACITY**

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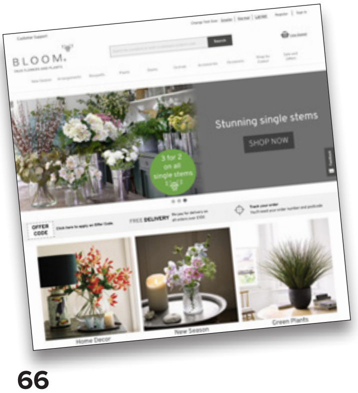
# Insert marketing programme supports brands as experts predict record growth for UK economy

**Experts are predicting that the UK economy will grow at its fastest rate on record. This is just what we have all been hoping for after long months of uncertainty which have caused many businesses deep concern.**

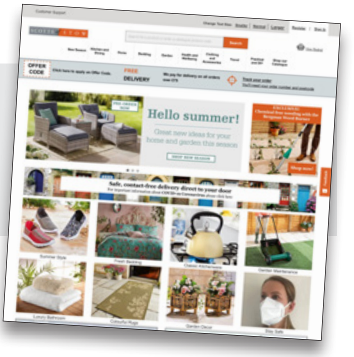
Not that we are completely out of the woods just yet, as even with lockdowns having eased there are lingering concerns about the future of high street stores. We all recognise that there are some consumers who now quite literally dread shopping in person. Even when they do venture out, they are finding that many of the 'household names' they used to rely on are no longer open for business.

The fact is that there are significant pockets of consumers who remain reluctant to go out shopping and for who home delivered catalogues have been a lifeline during the past year. Consumers who have now come to rely on the catalogues which arrive by post for all kinds of items and who open them in anticipation of finding something new to buy.




With this firmly in mind, Scotts & Co, under the Mail Train Media banner, developed a route for other brands to reach its customers. As you would expect, coming from a business with indisputable expertise in acquiring, retaining and marketing to customers, its solution is designed to be highly cost-effective – and quickly scaleable.  A way to reach hundreds of thousands of proven mail order customers who are keener than ever to open their favourite catalogues and read them avidly.

With no surcharges for test volumes, as so often levied by newspaper publishers, plus warrantied delivery, a consumer offer can be tested with Mail Train Media at a typical cost of no more than £1.75k for 50,000 inserts. Better still, brands will be able to roll out their successful insert campaign to millions of known direct mail-responsive customers within only eight weeks.




Many D2C brands are gearing up for an explosion in consumer spending after the Bank of England's chief economist Andy Haldane predicted that the UK economy is set for a rapid-fire post-Covid recovery. Many pundits are talking about the huge pent-up demand that exists amongst consumers who have both the desire and the means to buy.

Ian Stewart, chief economist at Deloitte, echoes this view. "The UK is primed for a sharp snap back in consumer activity," he says. "High levels of saving, the successful vaccination rollout, and the easing of the lockdown set the stage for a surge in spending over the coming months."

Barclay's boss Jes Staley is even more confident. He believes the second half of 2021 "will be quite something". As he told the BBC: "We estimate the UK economy will grow at its fastest rate since 1948. That's pretty spectacular."

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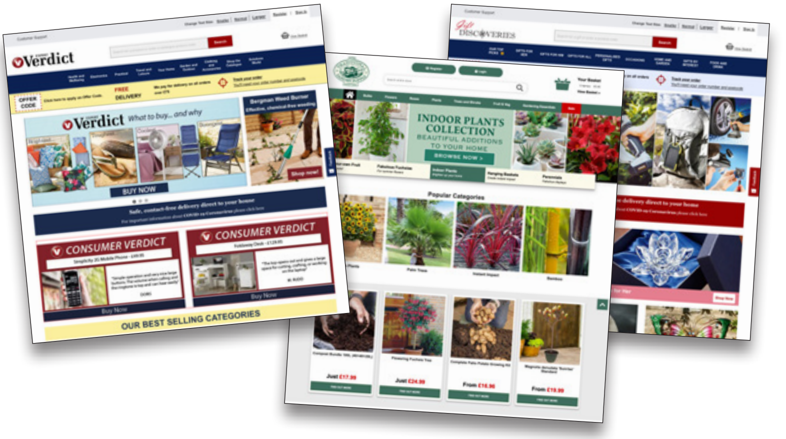


Mail Train Media stands fully primed to provide the instant scalability that many direct advertisers will need to take full advantage of soaring demand. It is achieving this by making more than 200 million targeted insert opportunities available in its high-volume mailings for mail order catalogue titles: *Scotts of Stow, Expert Verdict, Gift Discoveries, The Traditional Garden Supply Company, Bloom* and *The Garden Fragrance Company*.

Mail Train Media's 'departure board' shows that mailings are scheduled to go out on a near weekly basis throughout the rest of this year. Many of these personalised mailings will place an advertiser's insert, as a printed leaflet, directly in the hands of up to three million individual Scotts & Co. customers throughout the UK – at a cost of less than £30 per thousand mailings.

As a result, the scalable insert opportunities offered by Mail Train Media are the obvious low-risk, high-reward option for advertisers and their agencies.

"What we did when we developed Mail Train Media was to seek to evolve a medium which would meet or exceed all of our own media buyers' tough criteria," said Nigel Swabey, CEO Scotts & Co. "It had to deliver on quality of audience, be at a sensible cost per thousand, offer low volume testing as well as swift cost-effective roll-out. Mail Train Media does this and early testers are already coming back for larger runs.

In terms of cost-efficiency, targeting and reliability, Mail Train Media's insert campaigns have numerous advantages over other direct advertising solutions, such as press inserts, online advertising, and even solus mailings.

Compared with inserts in the national press, for example, inserts in catalogue mailings tend to attract much higher responses because all mailings are delivered directly into the homes of known mail order customers. These consumers already have a proven track record of purchasing direct by mail for home delivery.

A typical solus mailing costs at least £250 per thousand. That is around **eight times more** than an insert in a catalogue mailing. By contrast, an insert campaign in the press might cost between £30 and £35 per thousand, depending on volume.

Unlike press inserts which carry a punishing premium rate for small test quantities, Mail Train Media's clients are positively encouraged to test with no extra charges. And when large volumes are involved, there are even occasional discounts on the £27 per thousand charge, subject to availability.

The distribution of Mail Train Media inserts is also much more reliable and transparent than press media inserts which frequently suffer shortfalls in distribution. (Certain publications have even been known to lose large quantities of advertisers' inserts). To date, Mail Train Media has never had any form of shortfall—and has never lost client inserts. In fact, circulation figures are guaranteed, and proof of insertion is always available on demand.

"The most popular Mail Train departures for the key dates in September, October and November are booking up very early, so quick booking is recommended given the expected surge in consumer spending in Q3 and Q4," said Nigel Swabey, CEO of Scotts & Co. and Mail Train Media.

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# Creative technology is key to bringing fashion full circle

By Christopher Baird, senior manager inventive shopping, Capgemini Invent

**The impact of fashion on our already fragile ecosystems can no longer be ignored. As the scale of the problem of textile – and subsequent packaging – waste is being realised by brands and consumers alike, more fashion companies are turning towards solutions that enable and sustain a circular economy. For this to happen, there needs to be a marrying of both creativity and technology.**

According to a report from the Ellen McArthur Foundation, the estimated value of unused items in the average US household is $7,000, which across the population adds up to a staggering $875 billion worth of goods that could be put back into the economy.

The good news is that technology can help – from companies deploying Artificial Intelligence (AI) to creating a more circular supply chain or using computer vision to assess the state of second-hand clothing for resale. But to unlock its full value, we need to be thinking more imaginatively with our solutions.

As with any major shift in mindset, reimagining the way we engage with and consume fashion will require a multi-dimensional approach, beginning with how garments are made, looking at how to extend their life beyond landfill and, perhaps most critically, shifting priorities towards sustainability.

## Addressing the problem at source

When it comes to considering the origins of our garments, the onus is on brands rather than consumers, and there is a pressing need to create more circular supply chains using recycled, reusable or biodegradable materials to ensure that the manufactured products are better all-round. This shift has seen some forward-looking brands create entire ranges of this nature, however, the demand for fast fashion is still significant and it may take a while for sustainable fashion to overcome this.

As Capgemini's report, 'Loops of Life', notes that in many cases it will be largely impossible to reprocess or reuse every product within the boundary of a company. Brands should therefore draw on the concept of the ecosystem, creating a symbiotic relationship with companies within and across its supply chain particularly to ensure the use of by-products, refurbishing and upcycling can be benchmarked.

Meanwhile advanced technologies such as AI are also having a significant impact in helping to create more circular supply chains – enabling fashion brands to track and trace their garments' histories and measure their impact on the environment more effectively. This in turn, may make it easier to set a

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benchmark for standards across the board in the future.

### The shift to second hand

A recent flurry of apps has cracked open the marketplace for lightly worn garments – with either retailers themselves or third parties launching services to giving such items a new lease on life. Apart from the environmental benefits, this also offers participating brands the opportunity to create new revenue streams and rollout circular loyalty programmes where customers are rewarded for trading in old garments. Brands have also begun to offer buy back services in stores where consumers can return worn items to have them repaired, upgraded, and sold on.

Aside from hosting the marketplaces themselves, there are several other ways technology is being used to support this new sustainable trend. An example of this currently being used at CornerShop, a live retail store and technology innovation lab run by Capgemini, SharpEnd and The Drum, is called 'Circle'. Circle is an AI-assisted ready-to-go solution that helps secondhand apparel vendors to identify an article's brand, condition, and value. Once a piece of clothing has been valued and imperfections identified, the item can be collected, labelled and resold. Considering that 95 per cent of the 13m tonnes of textile waste could have been recycled, initiatives like Circle provide brands with a sustainable and time-light alternative to the rubbish bin.

### Driving greater awareness

Having a circular supply chain and establishing sustainable ways to extend the life of a garment is a great start, however if there is no shift in the mind of the consumer, it is almost impossible to close the loop. Here, technology is playing a fundamental role in helping to shape the way young people in particular think about fashion.

Creative awareness drives such as H&M's One/Second/Suit campaign, which offers 24 hour free suit rental for people taking job interviews, or the partnership between Maisie Williams and Animal Crossing to promote sustainability are fundamentally underpinned by technology geared towards Gen-Z and Millennials.

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"With 66 per cent of consumers choosing to purchase products or services based on their "environmental friendliness", it's in the interests of brands to close the loop once and for all."

### Technology and the broader retail ecosystem

Of course, the shift towards sustainability is not exclusive to fashion. Furniture rental options, for example, are quickly becoming more prevalent – offering people who do not want to buy a full suite of furniture the option to access pieces they like and pay a monthly fee, then return the items when they are no longer needed to be refurbished, upcycled, or reused, depending on the quality.

Meanwhile in food retail we are seeing really interesting investment and discovery around reducing food waste, specifically using larvae rearing to tackle this. The level of technology innovation in this area is fascinating, while development would be essential to the global issue of rotting food which accounts for about 7 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. It will be interesting to see how brands begin to utilise innovative tools, such as larvae rearing, to meet circular commitments across their supply chains.

### Where next?

The industry has woken up to the impact it continues to have on the environment and is taking responsibility for its share. Its response so far has been nothing if not a move in the right direction; from adapting product offerings to incorporating used fashion, but there is a long way to go.

The technological developments we have seen in the past twelve months are hugely encouraging, but they must be pushed even further. With 66 per cent of consumers choosing to purchase products or services based on their "environmental friendliness", it's in the interests of brands to close the loop once and for all.

Ultimately, the more that we can do, the better. The extent to which technology can amplify our efforts to protect our natural world should be investigated and exploited so we can best protect environment for future generations.

# expert register

- permanent candidates
- consultants
- interim staffing

**Our clients are enjoying strong growth this year and are expanding their teams.**

*If your experience lies in eCommerce, catalogue and multichannel retailing, then we're worth knowing. If you are looking to make a great move or know someone else who is then do get in touch, even if you don't see the ideal role here. We have watching briefs for exceptional candidates for roles that are never advertised.*

## Some of our current openings

### Contact Centre/Operations Analyst

A super **part time role** for an experienced contact centre professional who can support a very busy department head & outsource partners with scheduling data, troubleshooting, & generally help to ensure that our client exceeds customer expectations. Strong presentation skills, cheerful 'can do' attitude, as well as ability to communicate with team members at all levels, right up to board level.

### Data & Insight Analyst

This is the perfect role for an experienced analyst who loves to unearth new information that creates great opportunities for a busy, professional database marketing team & board members. You will be tenacious, highly motivated as well as able to present findings in a meaningful way. Very busy department with masses of scope.

### Production Manager

Here we're definitely looking for deep experience in catalogue & print production. Fast paced environment, multi-brand, multi-edition throughput – & tight deadlines. Super-organised, commercially astute, able to get the best from team members and external service providers. Strong print & mailing knowledge vital.

### Head of Database Marketing

A fabulous new role for someone with strong relevant experience in the multichannel retail sector. You will be commercial and driven, always seeking to grow the bottom line by recruiting profitable new customers as retaining and increasing the LTV of existing customers. Reporting to a highly respected board director, you will be working with key partners and group members and delivering continuous improvement. Strong presentation skills a must as is the ability to work harmoniously with peers.

## Account Manager

If you have strong experience in digital growth marketing – client or agency side – and are keen to work with a very successful niche agency as an account manager, we have a great opportunity for you.  You'll be joining a tight knit team with great clients, a strong record of success & potential to develop your career.

## Buyers

We are always looking for experienced buyers who have developed their careers in DTC/multichannel retailing. Buyers who really understand how to develop winning products that deliver strong margins. We currently have a watching brief for senior buyers with catalogue/ mail order experience across a range of categories.

## Business Growth Manager/Director

A respected digital creative agency is seeking a dynamic individual to support its growth plans. Able to work with and provide exemplary service for existing clients as well as to drive new business generation.  Ambitious, polished, commercial – you may have cut your teeth in a media or advertising agency, and are now seeking an opening which will strongly reward your efforts. London/South Coast.

## Copywriters/Content Producers

Seeking strong creative copywriters with experience of writing product copy that sells for catalogue, advertising, and digital channels. If you can always find the unique benefits of each product and are keen to work on an a permanently employed full time basis with a reliable regular income, rather than freelancing, we have several great openings. WFH option for the right candidate(s)

## Artworkers

Opportunity to join a tight knit inhouse team which produces thousands of catalogue pages every year across a range of brands. With increased paginations and frequencies scheduled, if you are a fast accurate artwork with strong catalogue experience our client can offer a near-immediate start. Permanent salaried role, WFH option.

# For further information please contact us:

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direct commerce awards 2021

**Winners announced on June 17th**

**& in our next issue find out who won which category...**