



# DATASTREAM OMS<sup>+</sup>

## Unified Commerce: Why It's the Next Evolution of Retail

In every aspect of our daily lives, from how we work to how we socialize, the lines are blurring between the digital and physical worlds. It's only natural that we want the same to be true of how we shop.

Today, people expect the convenience of moving between different shopping channels (online, in-person, social, AI, etc.) without it slowing them down. These expectations apply not only to B2C consumers, but also to B2B buyers who expect a consistent experience as they move between working with their sales rep, placing orders through an online portal, talking to customer service and other channels.

Retailers have evolved to meet this need by embracing omnichannel commerce, but today, even that may not be enough. The retail and broader enterprise market is shifting towards AI-driven operations which is raising the bar even further. It is no longer sufficient to simply connect channels. Systems must enable intelligent, real-time execution. That requires a unified foundation of tightly integrated applications, trusted data and processes that AI can act on.

Unified commerce is a direct result of this shift, bringing these principals into the next evolution of retail for B2B and B2C environments.

## WHAT IS UNIFIED COMMERCE?

The terms “unified commerce” and “omnichannel commerce” are sometimes used interchangeably, as both describe a buying experience that’s integrated across multiple channels. The subtle difference, however, is that they function as different layers of the same strategic stack. Omnichannel commerce centers around customer experience and delivering seamless, consistent journeys across every touchpoint, from digital to in-store. Traditionally this has been achieved by connecting multiple channel-specific systems. These systems all talk to each other, but there can be a lag between when information changes in one system and that change shows up in another. This can result in latency, data inconsistencies and increased complexity as information



## BAKING UNIFIED COMMERCE INTO ALL SALES CHANNELS

As one of the country’s most popular baking ingredients supplier, **Business A** sells across a broad variety of channels: it has a complex wholesale operation for grocers and foodservice providers, plus a direct-to-consumer arm that manages everything from retail stores to baking schools. Its variety and growth quickly became too much for its homegrown order entry system and legacy ecommerce platform to handle.

On the wholesale side, these outdated systems forced employees to spend hours processing orders. It’s not uncommon for Business A to receive wholesale orders with over 100-line items and varied shipping requirements, and employees had to enter all of this manually. On the consumer side, call center agents struggled to juggle multiple legacy systems to find answers for all the different types of customers the business served.

By building on SAP S/4HANA as the core system and extending it with DataXstream’s OMS+, Business A created a unified layer across all channels – grounded in consistent data and shared processes. Now, employees can automate wholesale order processing, entering orders up to 160-line items in one step. Call center agents can serve all customers out of one intuitive interface. OMS+ serves as the execution layer, bringing together order entry, customer interactions and automation across all channels in one, unified experience.

moves between channels.

Unified commerce, by contrast, is the operating model that enables omnichannel to work at scale. It brings all channels onto a shared, real-time foundation where orders, inventory, customer and product data are managed through a single composable architecture designed to execute consistently across the business. This unified foundation does more than streamline operations, it also creates a structured, real-time data environment for AI to begin moving from insight to action. In fragmented environments, AI can recommend steps. In unified environments, it can help execute them. This is why unified commerce is emerging not just as a customer experience strategy, but as a prerequisite for AI-driven execution.

## THE BENEFITS OF UNIFIED COMMERCE

### For overall retail & wholesale operations

Unified commerce is not simple technology. Rather, it is a sophisticated architectural approach that is designed to manage real-time data, workflows and execution across the enterprise. But this complexity is removed from the user.

By unifying applications, data and AI into a real-time foundation, unified commerce reduces fragmentation across systems and ensures that data remains consistent, governed and usable. The result is a

seamless experience for both users and customers.

Some common operational benefits of unified commerce include:

### *Centralization across all channels, even in complex sales environments*

For organizations with retail, wholesale, and DTC operations, it's almost unheard of for one backend system to handle everything. But unified commerce makes it possible to streamline even the most complex environments. It introduces one platform across channels that can be used to find accurate data about inventory, orders, fulfillment, and more.

*Business A sells to grocers, foodservice operations, and third-party distributors, as well as to end consumers in retail stores and owned bakeries. Despite the many channels served across both B2B and B2C operations, unified commerce powers real-time inventory checks and instant customer service for all of them.*

### *Real-time, always accurate inventory data*

Most multichannel commerce solutions claim to provide real-time inventory data, but in reality, there's a lag time between when inventory numbers change in one system and when they get updated in another. With unified commerce, this lag time is eliminated.

This means more accurate customer service, a lower risk of stockouts, easier order building, and ultimately, happier customers.

## Automated order processing and quick inventory checks

Instead of having to move across multiple programs and screens, unified commerce lets agents and sales representatives build large, complex orders in minutes. They can find all products needed through a quick search and add them to an order with a few clicks. They can also quickly see how much inventory is available and be able to estimate delivery times.



*Business A frequently processes large, complex orders from its distributor and wholesale customers. Instead of having to parse through each line item, unified commerce lets employees upload these orders to an order management system in minutes. Hours of time are saved, and employees are freed to focus on more valuable work.*

## For employees

When technology is easier to use, employees get more done, stay with the company longer, and have time to go the extra mile for customers. Benefits employees enjoy from unified commerce include:

## Faster customer service

In a unified commerce environment, employees can create orders, find detailed product information, update customers about deliveries, and more from one interface. With unified data and workflows, AI can also play a more active role, such as guiding order creation, surfacing recommendations and reducing manual effort.

A more traditional environment would have an employee switching between multiple programs, wasting time and potentially frustrating the customer in the process.

*Previously, customer service agents at Business A had to move between multiple legacy systems to serve customers. But with unified commerce, they can manage everything from loyalty points to refunds and reorders in one centralized location. Tasks are completed with fewer clicks, call times are shorter, and wait times are reduced. Plus, the simpler technology shortened call center training times by 25%.*

## A complete view of the customer

Part of what enables faster customer service is having all relevant customer information readily available, including what they've ordered in the past and what they've already done to try to resolve an issue. Seventy percent of customers expect any company representative to have full context into their issue. Unified commerce provides this complete context, merging customer service

channels in one place while making it easy for employees to pull up a customer's history.

## Easier in-store sales

In more traditional systems, building large, complex orders on behalf of a customer can be complicated and time-consuming as these orders are often manually entered. But with unified commerce, it can be done in minutes.

It also becomes easier for sales representatives to add products that may not currently be in a store or showroom onto an order, increasing the rate of upsells and cross-sells.

*For Business B, building a sale for a complex home renovation could be a lengthy, manual process involving a lot of paper-based workarounds to make up for the complexities of its bolt-on SAP solutions. After adopting a more unified approach, though, orders can be built rapidly through a user-friendly point-of-sale interface. As a result, in-store sales conversions increased by 1-2%.*

## For customers

All these benefits mean little if they don't ladder up to greater conveniences for the customer.

Some of the benefits customers see from unified commerce include:



## RENOVATING POINT-OF-SALE WITH UNIFIED COMMERCE CAPABILITIES

**Business B** considers itself to be in the fashion industry, in a sense; it sells high-quality tiles, wall trim, and backsplashes for kitchens and bathrooms.

Lengthy, high-touch sales cycles are the norm for Business B, whether it's selling to direct consumers or through partners like designers and contractors. To manage this complexity, it depends on SAP. Initially, Business B had a point-of-sale and order processing system that was part of SAP, but it did not fully align with how users needed to work and created friction for both customers and employees alike.

This initial system made order creation and checkout complex and time-consuming, often forcing sales teams into manual, paper-based workarounds. New employees took a long time to get up to speed on the system, and employee turnover was high. The complex system also made it harder for sales associates to stay on top of their customers' buying journeys and follow-up as needed, which resulted in loss of sales for the company.

Many of these issues were solved when Business B implemented OMS+ from DataXstream. Rather than replacing SAP, OMS+ extends it—leveraging SAP's core transactional capabilities while simplifying how users interact with them. By unifying data and processes within SAP, Business B not only improved the user experience, but it also created a foundation for future AI capabilities.

## Accurate information across all touchpoints

With unified commerce, customers get identical information regarding inventory, pricing, and delivery across every shopping channel. This consistency is essential for AI-enabled transactions as well. Whether customers engage digitally or through assisted sales, AI depends on accurate, real-time data to provide reliable responses and support transaction execution.

## The ability to move between touchpoints without restarting a search

In a unified environment, information about a customer's preferences or cart gets saved across all shopping channels. Shoppers can switch between in-person, online, and social shopping without skipping a beat, making every purchase feel seamless.

## More personalized customer service and follow-ups

When customer service agents have all relevant information about a customer and their order at their fingertips, they can resolve almost any question or concern in minutes. Accessible customer information also helps salespeople maintain the personalized touch and regular follow-ups that customers need.

*The home renovation industry Business B operates in is a high-touch space, but slow, manual workflows meant sales representatives struggled to follow up as*

*often as they wanted to. With a unified platform that centralizes customer information, sales representatives can now quickly see which customers need a follow up and what they need to discuss. Sales follow-ups tripled and sales conversions improved as a result.*

## More positive interactions with employees

A better employee experience isn't just good for internal morale; it's great for the customer experience, too. When customer service agents and sales representatives have simple software, they have the time and energy to give fully personalized attention and do it with a smile. In the process, customers get their needs met faster and enjoy their experience more.



*Business B's employees used to have a difficult time using their convoluted order management systems, forcing customers to be patient with lengthy order creation. But after switching to a more unified approach, employees can move much faster. Customers are more satisfied, and Business B is able to increase in in-store conversions and add millions to its revenue.*

## *Knowledge that they are at the center of your business*

All these benefits send a subtle but important message: customers are at the center of your business.

When shopping is easy and enjoyable, it tells the customer that you care about their convenience and they're motivated to come back and have that experience again or recommend it to others.

The customer doesn't know what unified commerce is or what's happening on your backend, but they know something much more important; they can trust your business to meet all their needs.

## BRING UNIFIED COMMERCE TO YOUR ORGANIZATION

As AI adoption accelerates, the focus is shifting from insight to execution. The next phase of AI isn't just about what systems can recommend, it's about what they can do. Enabling real-time execution requires a unified foundation of applications, data, and AI. This convergence is what produces unified commerce.

Achieving this is possible by partnering with a supportive vendor and taking some steps to streamline your own environment. To achieve unified commerce, begin by:

- **Cleaning up your ERP ecosystem.** Find opportunities to eliminate bolt-on solutions and other forms of technical debt so you have fewer points of failure and less to deal with when you migrate to a unified system. It's also smart to

- take this opportunity to clean your product data.
- **Auditing your workflows for automation opportunities.** Look at your sales, order management, and customer service workflows and consider if any processes could be automated. Use these decisions to inform what you look for as you select a unified commerce vendor and plan an implementation.
- **Evaluate potential new order management systems.** The ideal order management system brings product data, inventory levels, and logistics under the same roof, making it the basis of a unified commerce approach. Try to find an order management vendor that meets these needs while working with the ERP system you already have in place.

Unified commerce is the outcome of bringing together integrated applications, real-time data and AI into a single, cohesive foundation. DataXstream's OMS+ platform delivers this by unifying sales and order processes into an intuitive, customizable interface that enables real-time visibility, streamlined execution and consistent experiences across every channel.

To see how easily you can achieve unified commerce in your organization, contact DataXstream today.