



# The brick-and-mortar arms race: Omnichannel expectations that are shaping the storefront

# Inside the arms race to level up the storefront

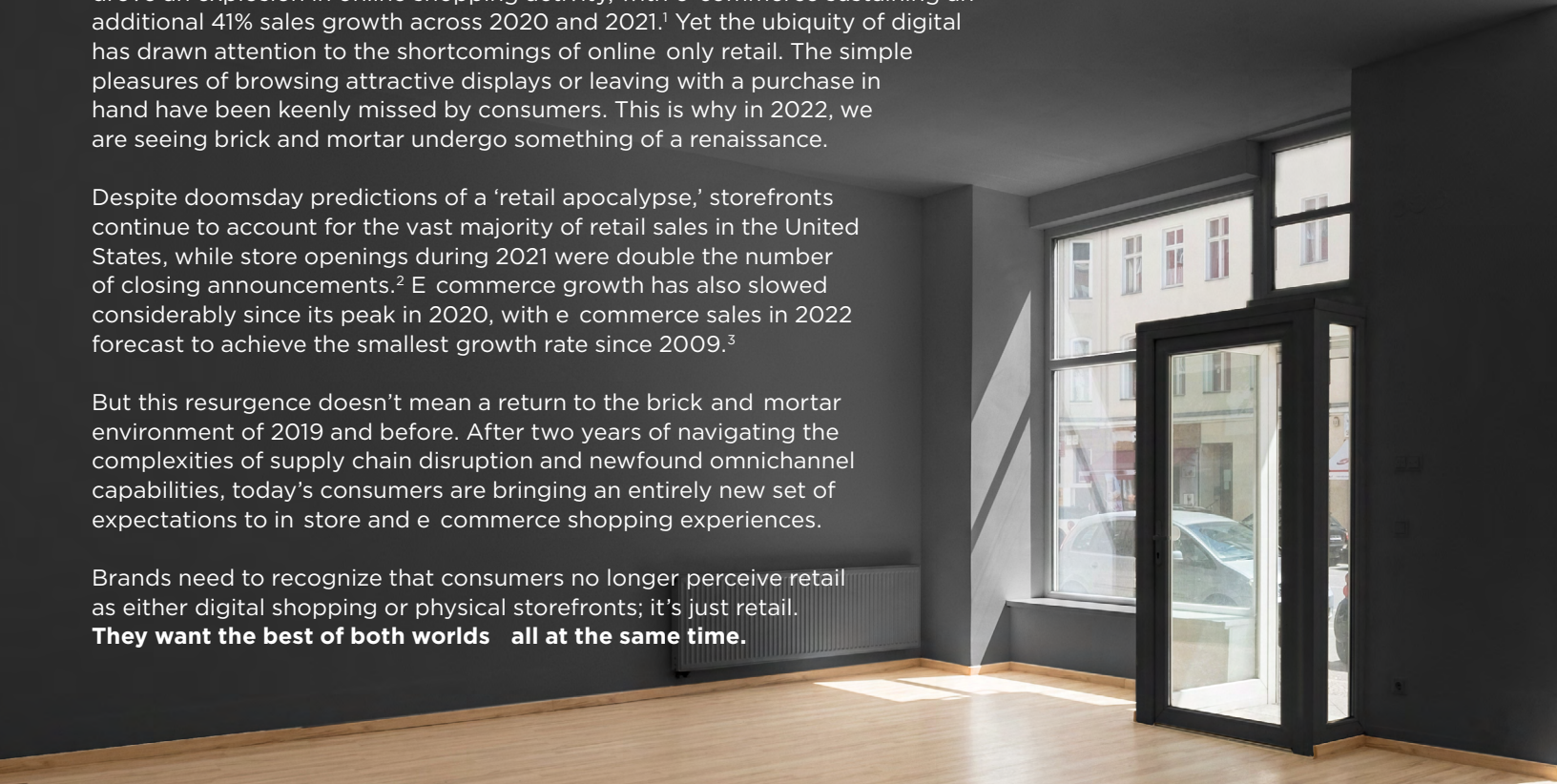
**Physical retail suffered a major setback during the COVID 19 pandemic. But as consumers return to the storefront, an arms race has begun. Brands must be ready to provide a digitally led store experience or risk becoming irrelevant.**

2020 can easily be referred to as ‘the year of e-commerce.’ Stay at home orders drove an explosion in online shopping activity, with e-commerce sustaining an additional 41% sales growth across 2020 and 2021.<sup>1</sup> Yet the ubiquity of digital has drawn attention to the shortcomings of online-only retail. The simple pleasures of browsing attractive displays or leaving with a purchase in hand have been keenly missed by consumers. This is why in 2022, we are seeing brick and mortar undergo something of a renaissance.

Despite doomsday predictions of a ‘retail apocalypse,’ storefronts continue to account for the vast majority of retail sales in the United States, while store openings during 2021 were double the number of closing announcements.<sup>2</sup> E-commerce growth has also slowed considerably since its peak in 2020, with e-commerce sales in 2022 forecast to achieve the smallest growth rate since 2009.<sup>3</sup>

But this resurgence doesn't mean a return to the brick and mortar environment of 2019 and before. After two years of navigating the complexities of supply chain disruption and newfound omnichannel capabilities, today's consumers are bringing an entirely new set of expectations to in-store and e-commerce shopping experiences.

Brands need to recognize that consumers no longer perceive retail as either digital shopping or physical storefronts; it's just retail. **They want the best of both worlds all at the same time.**



## The weaknesses of pure-play e-commerce

- High shipping costs
- Less immersive brand experiences
- Growing customer acquisition costs
- Loss of instant gratification
- Lack of organic product discovery opportunities

# Wanted: A better in-store shopping experience

Physical storefronts and e-commerce selling have traditionally operated as parallel retail journeys, running along separate tracks that never intersect. But as consumers return to in-person shopping informed by their experiences of pandemic retailing, brands need to meet evolving expectations for convenience and flexibility—and it all starts with the right technology.

## The perfect offline experience starts online

Superior in-person shopping experiences are no longer confined to the storefront. After years of public health restrictions, consumers embraced the necessity of cross-channel experiences enabled by digital connectivity.

Where shoppers once started their journey by visiting a store and browsing the shelves, they now have far more tools at their disposal. Social media platforms have become the leading brand and product discovery engine for Millennials and Gen Z, outstripping even Google.<sup>4</sup> E-commerce websites now allow consumers to ask questions via live chat with customer service representatives, and even to check product availability at the nearest store location, all before they've even set foot inside a store.



In sum, brick-and-mortar retailers can no longer ignore the pivotal role that e-commerce plays in meeting customers in their preferred channel and priming them for high-intent store visits. This is known as **'bricks and clicks'** and it holds the key to strengthening your in-store experience.



However, bricks and clicks can only be unlocked by investing in technology solutions that break down the silos between your storefront, digital channels, and the warehouse. We're going to explore how three omnichannel software solutions are enabling retailers to take control of their retail operations and unify shopping channels for a seamless customer experience (CX).



## The power of bricks and clicks

Bricks and clicks reflects the growing desire of consumers to blur the boundaries between retail and e-commerce. According to Shopify's Future of Retail report for 2022, **54%** of consumers say they're likely to look at a product online and visit a store location, while **53%** are likely to look at a product in store and buy it online later.<sup>5</sup>





## How to embrace the power of wholesale retail with EDI

For a nascent brand, e-commerce offers a productive sales channel with a very low barrier to entry. An online store backed by savvy marketing can gain customers quickly without the need to develop retailer relationships. As a result, there's no shortage of success stories from direct-to-consumer (D2C) digitally native brands. But there is a follow-up chapter for these brands—and it centers around the race to the storefront.

### Online to omnichannel

At some point, even the most revered online-only brands realize their growth is limited if they stick to a single sales channel. Fact is, people are still going in-store to shop—in 2022, some analysts predict that brick-and-mortar sales will account for **83%** of all retail purchases.<sup>6</sup>

For brands that found their footing online, that's a lot of purchasing power to ignore. More and more digitally native companies are moving to expand their buying audience through traditional retail outlets, realizing it's necessary for further growth. Why? It turns out that even the internet has a ceiling.

With a solid online presence established, these brands have an advantage when they begin developing relationships with established retailers or seeking capital to build out their own brick-and-mortar footprint. They may be new to the sales channel, but they have also cemented a reputation and developed a consumer following.

When they move their products into physical locations, these brands also bring a different approach to retail. Their service-oriented formula resonates with consumers, including Gen Z shoppers, who may want to touch and try products in a store before making a purchase online.

“Online-only doesn't work. You still need stores. I think that's why they [internet retailers] generate so much excitement—because they're this kind of amazing testament to the power of physical retail.” — Michael Chernofsky, Placer.ai

It may be more accurate to say that online works—but only up to a point.

Larger success, further scale, and continued growth demand a physical store presence, whether it's through partnerships with established retailers or the build-out of brand-specific stores.

“Online-only doesn't work. You still need stores. I think that's why they [internet retailers] generate so much excitement—because they're this kind of amazing testament to the power of physical retail.”

Michael Chernofsky  
Placer.ai





## What is EDI?

Of course, moving from an internet-only strategy isn't just a matter of flipping a switch. To sell through the wholesale channel, relationships with retailers need to be built.

Stores that are the most lucrative outlets for brands also tend to be the ones that can afford to be selective with their inventory. Online brands will need to make a strong case to be included.

Once a deal has been struck, the work is far from done. Brick-and-mortar retailers and major online marketplaces like Amazon or Walmart rely on a data format called electronic data interchange (EDI).

With EDI, transactions are completed through the exchange of specific documents, ranging from Purchase Orders to Advance Shipping Notices. Every document is assigned a number code that is always used, and the effective use of EDI adds efficiency throughout the supply chain.

Retailers rely on EDI to ensure that their own operations are not just seamless, but cost-effective. The focus on just-in-time inventory means that stores want a constant flow of goods, and aren't interested in filling their own distribution centers or stores with excess product.

EDI is a critical component of this agenda. Products need to arrive at specific locations in specific amounts at very specific times. EDI replaces back-and-forth email exchanges with a very specific information flow—**it can speed up business cycles by more than 60%.**<sup>8</sup>

Retailers require that brands selling in their stores be compliant with their EDI requirements. Mistakes are penalized with chargebacks that are costly for suppliers, and productive relationships are damaged when items don't land on shelves as planned.

## EDI, online brands, and the in-store experience

Many consumers have gravitated to online brands because of their commitment to a higher level of customer service. The successful ones typically have generous return policies, ample support staff, and products that are available to ship quickly. To protect the equity these brands have built online, it's important to replicate these qualities in brick-and-mortar retail locations.

In addition to ensuring that products are presented in an appealing way, inventory and fulfillment are critical. It doesn't help a brand if their items are available to see, touch, and try in physical stores if the selection is thin, or if the colors and sizes are limited. For online brands to be successful at wholesale, the very qualities that captured consumer attention need to be continued across every channel. With EDI managed by a service-first provider like eZCom, that happens.

## EDI and your WMS

Clearly, inventory management and fulfillment are critical to retail relationships. That's precisely why integrating EDI software and your WMS (warehouse management system) is so valuable.

When an EDI platform and a WMS are in lockstep, costly mistakes are eliminated. Inventory counts are always accurate, and fluctuations in demand can be forecasted. An integration process requires developers from both your EDI provider and your WMS to work together effectively, and it's extremely beneficial if they have already established a strong relationship with a proven track record.

In other words, choose your EDI provider and your WMS in concert, knowing that your most efficient, productive workflow will be driven by seamless integration.

## Online to all channels—a retail success strategy.

Successful digitally native brands can accelerate growth by moving products into the brick-and-mortar sales channel. It's vital that brands recreate all the elements that drove their initial success—that visually appealing website should translate into exciting in-store experiences, the branding should be consistent, and the fulfillment process should be swift.

With the right partners for EDI and your WMS, great online storefronts can become standout physical locations. Make sure you choose yours wisely!



## Making hybrid retail a reality

The pandemic has retired every old rule in the e-commerce playbook and inevitably disrupted conventional in-store retail. With consumers stuck at home for long stretches of time, online shopping fast became the new norm. This eventually led consumers to acclimatize to rich digital retail experiences.

Accustomed to safe, touchless digital shopping, today's consumers have evolved dramatically in their attitudes, behaviors and habits. Research from McKinsey shows that these new behaviors are here to stay permanently, especially now that consumers are ready to start visiting brick-and-mortar stores again.<sup>9</sup>

But this time around, their expectations have changed concerning what they consider to be the 'ideal' in-store experience.

### How do brick and mortar stores rise to the challenge?

Retailers have no choice but to refine their methods and rethink the in-store experience. Brick and mortar stores must now start providing a superior in-person shopping experience that mirrors the convenience, personalization, localization, and speed offered by online shopping. This is what customers will be looking out for as they return to stores.

The answer lies in capitalizing on the one key thing that post-COVID-19 shoppers crave the most: **instant gratification.**

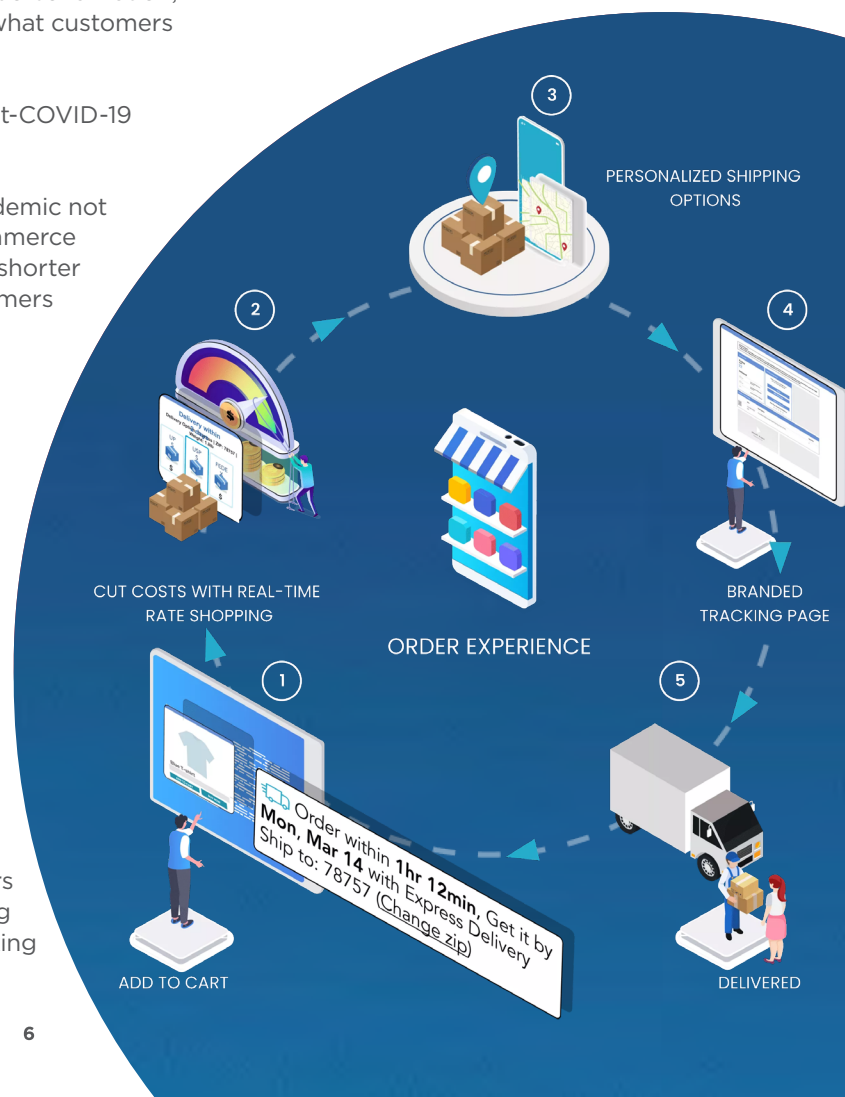
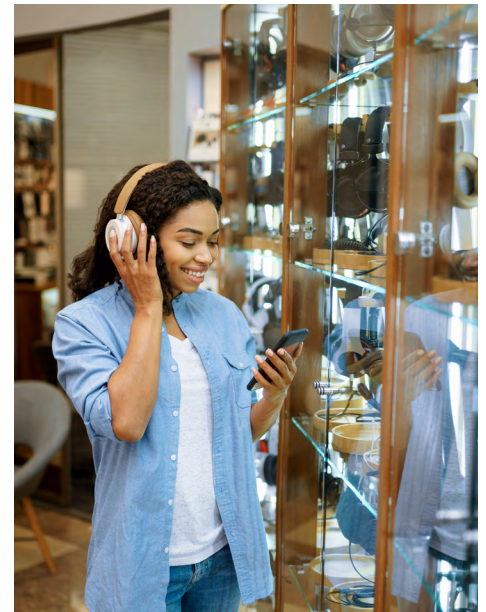
Stay-at-home rules and prolonged isolation during the pandemic not only led to increased volumes of online shopping. As e-commerce heavyweights like Amazon and Walmart began to promise shorter delivery timelines of no more than a couple of hours, consumers experienced a significant increase in their need for speed.

Today's shoppers are now spurred not only by speed but a need for increased flexibility and choice in deciding how their orders are fulfilled. In a nutshell, the modern consumer wants to be able to shop anywhere, any time.

To ensure that customers' demand for swift and free delivery is met, retailers need to adapt their strategies by creating brick-and-mortar experiences that combine the convenience of shopping online with the speediness of in-store collection.

This reality has now engineered a new omnichannel strategy known as **BOPIS** (buy online, pick up in-store).

BOPIS is a unique delivery feature that allows retailers to fulfill online orders swiftly at local stores. BOPIS gives retailers the ability to optimize the omnichannel experience by giving shoppers the option of purchasing products online but picking the order up themselves at the closest physical store.





## Why customers love BOPIS

Consumers might be buying online due to greater convenience, but they still love the brick-and-mortar experience. More shoppers are embracing brick and clicks, fusing e-commerce selling with traditional physical retailing.

BOPIS is the connector that makes that process click for both customers and retailers. And customers love the flexibility that it offers. According to Statista, **41%** who purchased an item online did it for in-store pickup. Statista research also found that **63%** of respondents were willing to buy online and pick up in-store.<sup>10</sup>

As customers come in contact with your brand both offline and online, they'll keep preferring the BOPIS-style fulfillment for the following reasons:

### Convenience & flexibility

A National Retail Federation survey showed that 83% of consumers consider convenience a big factor that influences their buying decisions.<sup>11</sup> With BOPIS, customers don't have to do store-based shopping. They can enjoy the convenience of shopping from their location and then have the order routed to the nearest brick-and-mortar store for pickup.

### Speed

BOPIS orders get fulfilled a lot faster than standard deliveries. Customers who want their order urgently just have to make their way to the pick-up location after being notified that the product has been picked and packed. If the product isn't what they needed or expected, they can easily return it; no return shipping required.



### Free delivery

48% of customers abandon their carts due to high shipping charges. BOPIS eliminates shipping fees, which saves money for both customers and brands.<sup>12</sup>



## Elevate your omnichannel strategy with BOPIS

Harmonizing both online and offline retail channels by synchronizing your inventory is crucial to keeping consumers happy with BOPIS. This omnichannel fulfillment strategy is a win-win for retailers as it provides a superior customer experience while benefitting retailers in multiple ways.

With more customers buying online and picking up in store, retailers gain increased online orders, more foot traffic which boosts storefront visibility, and higher AOV, with 67% of BOPIS customers buying an extra item when picking up the initial order.<sup>13</sup>

The onus is now on retailers to leverage intelligent tools that increase their inventory coordination so they can create delightful customer experiences by managing orders efficiently and ensuring the right products are where they need to be at the right time.



# How omnichannel retail management drives customer loyalty

Over the last few years, the world of commerce has taken on an entirely new identity. As a result, we've seen the making (or breaking) of retailers who either recognize these changes and reinvent their business—or don't.

Whether it's adding new sales channels to meet consumers where they buy or diversifying supply chain dependencies to reduce bottlenecks, demands are continuously unfolding and retailers need to get on board or risk being left behind.

The challenge for retailers is to find a way to constantly evolve and innovate. They need to embed agility throughout their operation to deliver cutting-edge multichannel shopping experiences that consumers crave, or face losing sales to the brands that do.

According to research we carried out in early 2022, 32% of shoppers get frustrated by brands that don't sell on their favorite online channel, and 33% would buy from a competitor that sold on their preferred buying channel over an existing brand they've used before.

In a world where customer acquisition and loyalty are everything, can businesses afford to miss out?

That being said, we understand that it's often not as easy as just plugging in a new sales channel. Businesses need to be able to maintain customer experience far beyond the buy button.

For many retailers, adding more channels means adding more complexity and that could result in operational issues like overselling, delayed deliveries, mispicks, and higher costs resulting in negative customer reviews and a lot of staff stress. In fact, our research shows that for 1 in 10 firms, the complexities of multi-channel shopping and delivery channels were their biggest challenges last holiday season.

Brands need a back-end tech stack they feel confident in so they can run toward change, rather than try to avoid it. However, investing in back-office technology should involve careful consideration. Modern brands must have the flexibility to quickly connect a variety of best-in-class tools and apps to adapt and meet consumer expectations, but ERP (enterprise resource planning) software and other single-solution platforms simply aren't built for that.

It's now clear that many ERPs, OMS (order management systems), and other standalone solutions such as WMS are outdated, inflexible and wholly unfit for purpose in this new era. For instance, going live with an ERP takes forever (420 days on average), customizations take months and costs often come in 400% higher than expected, which is hardly conducive to being agile, bold, and ahead of the times.

Brands need to be able to instantly integrate a changing roster of the best tech for each area of their business, as and when trends and shopping habits change. They need purpose-built functionality that saves time and cuts costs. They need flexible, best-in-class tools that help them scale their business and delight modern customers. That's where a ROS (retail operating system) like Brightpearl comes in. **Brightpearl was built and developed to help modern merchants do one thing, above all else: Grow Fearlessly.**



## Automation

- 8/10 Active rules
- 9395 orders processed in the last 30 days
- 25 orders with errors in the last 30 days





# Capturing the essence of brick and clicks

We've explored the backend capabilities required to level up your digital and physical storefronts. So, how can brands use this technology to enable fluid retail journeys that prioritize convenience, personalization and memorable experiences?

As the world recovers from the pandemic, retail stands at a crossroads; consumers want both the accessibility of e-commerce and the immediacy of brick and mortar. This can take a variety of forms, from cross-channel return policies to at-home try-on programs—and even how your goods are packaged for BOPIS and home delivery.

But putting bricks and clicks into practice requires a complete rewiring of how we conceptualize the storefront. Brands must be ready to meet customers at every point in their shopping journey, providing them with the right information and the right tools to satisfy their specific needs.

Perhaps it's an omnichannel return portal that enables customers to kickstart their return process in every channel. Or custom packaging that allows online shoppers to connect seamlessly with product instructions, review sites and more.

Let's dive into what these seamless hybrid retail experiences can look like in practice, and how the rise of third-party omnichannel retail services is helping brands transform the storefront—one customer at a time.



## \* A tale of three storefronts

Brick and mortar retailers have responded to changing shopping behaviors by embracing different aspects of the omnichannel experience:

### 1. Storefront as distribution

Store locations as the touchpoint for bricks and clicks activities such as BOPIS, in store returns, and local e-commerce delivery.

### 2. Storefront as experiential

Store locations as immersive spaces dedicated to brand storytelling and in-store activations, supported by online channels to foster brand awareness.

### 3. Storefront as the nexus

Store locations that combine bricks and clicks services and experience-led design to educate and prime customers for purchases across channels.



# TRY NOW

## How ‘try before you buy’ is transforming touchless e-commerce

As 2022 comes to a close, we can look back and reflect on how the re-opening of stores (and the emergence of formerly home-bound shoppers) have impacted the meteoric rise in e-commerce that we witnessed starting with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The shoppers putting down their iPads or stepping away from their laptops to visit a brick-and-mortar store aren't the same shoppers they were before the pandemic. Forced entirely online for the first time, many brands had to stretch themselves to find creative ways to still deliver a memorable customer experience.

But that genie can't be put back in the bottle. Shopper expectations have risen for increasingly hybrid experiences that blend technology with immersive in-person experiences.

One issue that came to the forefront when fitting rooms and showrooms were closed was try-ons. Virtual try-ons, home trial programs, and video reviews discussing fabric and fit made some headway in streamlining online purchases. But how do you get someone to confidently buy something online that they can't fully experience?

This is where ‘try before you buy’ comes into the picture—and why we think it's here to stay even as shoppers head back to physical stores.

Try before you buy is where shoppers fill their cart with items and go through the checkout for free, only paying for what they keep at the end of the designated trial period.

Advances in augmented reality (AR) and fit tech are making it easier than ever for consumers to shop online, but nothing is as immersive as a real-life try-on experience. The truth is, even 3D virtual try-ons or AR assistants are still pretty one-dimensional. You don't know how the product will feel, fit, look in certain lighting, or match other items you own. The confidence that comes with an in-person evaluation of a product cannot be replaced by technology—and it's this confidence that sees shoppers willing to part with their hard-earned money.

**But what about shoppers who try multiple sizes or colors with the intent of returning some or most of the items? Aren't they taking advantage?**

On the contrary! This is a high-intent shopper who wants to love your product and your brand. They're just not sure what size they are, or what color will be the most flattering.

When shoppers exhibit this behavior (termed ‘bracketing’), brands only have two choices: to discourage it in a game of whack-a-mole, or lean in to make it a competitive differentiator in a hybrid retail landscape.

Brands that are confident in the quality of their products are leaning in by offering try-before-you-buy programs. In turn, their shoppers convert at higher rates, are more likely to find something that they love, and become more loyal customers because of this experience, meaning higher levels of customer lifetime value.

**Try before you buy is an incredible lever to drive revenue through customer support and other channels with personal touchpoints.** When a customer reaches out while they're shopping (‘Is this true to size? Would this fit someone with my build? Does this fabric have a sheen to it?’) customer service can answer with the best information they have to offer, plus: ‘But don't take my word for it! We have a try before you buy program.’

Similarly, this boosts the success of kitting and styling programs. Recommendations from algorithms or stylists can feel like expensive upsells with a high risk to the shopper footing the bill. With try before you buy, these are truly thoughtful suggestions, and shoppers only pay for what they love.



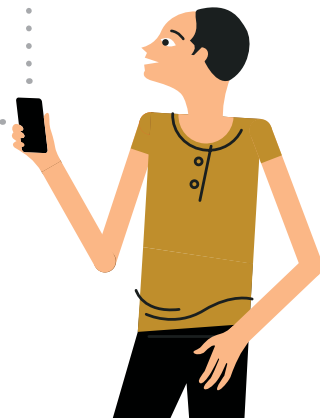


## Enabling convenience and driving customer satisfaction through seamless, omnichannel returns

While recent years have proven that convenience reigns supreme as trends shift more favorably toward e-commerce shopping, the satisfaction of stepping foot into a physical store—seeing, feeling, smelling, and trying items before buying—is still both desirable and impactful for shoppers and merchants alike.

But when a purchase doesn't work out, offering this same level of optionality and accessibility during the returns process is not only key to building loyalty, but is expected by the modern multi-channel shopper.

**Buy Online, Return In-Store (BORIS)** complements e-commerce merchants' D2C growth strategy and creates a premium experience for customers who want to physically come into the store, interact with product experts, and find alternative items. Not only does BORIS allow merchants to retain more revenue, but Shopify data shows that 62% of online shoppers are more likely to make a purchase online if they're able to make returns at a physical store.



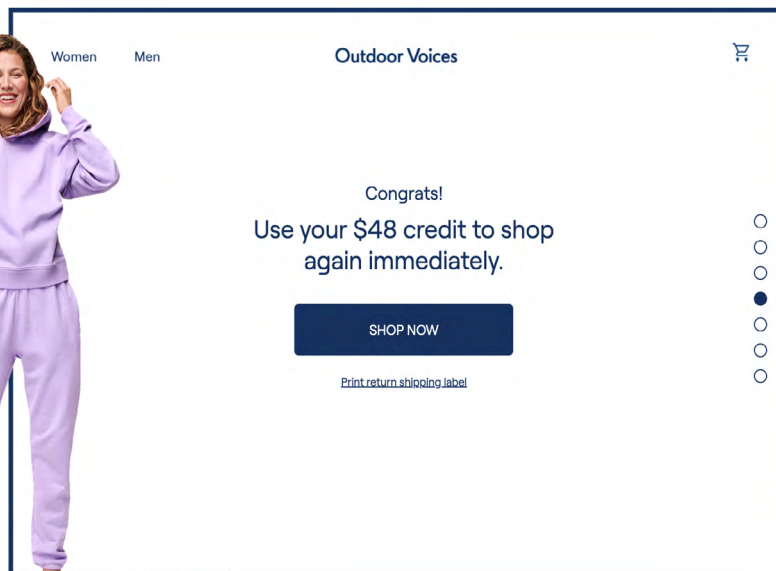
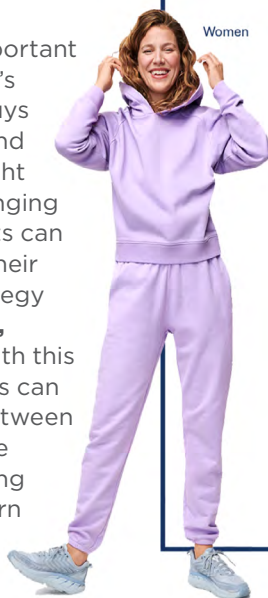


### Benefits of offering In-Store Returns

- Saves shipping and processing fees, reducing costs for merchants and their customers by eliminating return labels and warehouse handling.
- Drives foot traffic, enabling retail teams to guide the customer to find a preferred size or product, in turn, retaining revenue.

In-store returns aren't only great for customers, but less packaging and labels yield a positive impact on the planet as well. Returnly merchants like Frank & Oak prioritize sustainability and alleviate waste by offering in-store returns. Not only are customers able to contribute to eco-friendly initiatives by dropping returns off at a brick-and-mortar location, but they're also provided personalized support from store associates who help customers find something new to exchange that returned item for, ultimately retaining and often increasing revenue.

But it's just as important in the reverse. Let's say a customer buys an item in-store and realizes it's not right for them after bringing it home. Merchants can further enhance their omnichannel strategy with **Buy In-Store, Return Online**. With this feature, merchants can bridge the gap between online and in-store commerce, allowing customers to return items online through an online Return Center without having to return in-store where the purchase was originally made.



### Benefits of Buy In-Store, Return Online

- Allows customers to start an online return with just a store receipt.
- More convenience for shoppers, even out-of-towners.
- Enables merchants to gather return reasons in their return portal, helping inform future merchandising, product, and business decisions.

Rounding out return options is **Buy Online, Return Online**, a seamless process to manage returns without customers ever stepping foot in-store. When implementing this option, merchants must make their return policies readily accessible on their website so customers understand how much time they have to decide on returning an item and who is responsible for covering return shipping costs.



### Benefits of Buy Online, Return Online

- Allows customers to start a return or exchange at any time.
- Custom, automated returns workflow enables merchants to support more customers in less time.
- Automated labels, brand customizations, and automatic refunds alleviate manual processes for merchants so they can focus on other tasks.
- Exchanges allow customers to exchange for a different size, style or product with the new item shipping before they've sent back their return, eliminating pain points from stockouts and getting time-sensitive items like swimwear on hand as soon as possible.
- Prompt customers to shop for something new while waiting for their return to be processed, retaining more revenue for merchants and providing a top-notch customer experience, completely risk-free.

Shopify data shows 92% of consumers said they will buy again if the returns process is easy.<sup>14</sup> This is why it's so important for retailers to cover every possible return path that a customer could desire in a hybrid retail environment, regardless of where items are originally purchased. No matter whether your business has its origins in brick and

mortar or e-commerce, Returnly assists merchants in bridging the gap between in-store and online.

# RYDERECOMMERCE

by whiplash

## Connecting the in-store and online experience with fulfillment marketing

In a world where the seamless end-to-end customer journey is at the forefront of a successful retail business, it's clear that packaging is far more than just polymailers and cardboard cutouts protecting products.

Thanks to the rise of social media, the way that goods are packaged has become something of a phenomenon. Not ready to commit to a purchase? Check out an unboxing video online or look up the hashtag #tiktokmademebuyit. It's almost as good as buying the product yourself—and it's likely to answer a few key FAQs.

This e-commerce fulfillment strategy is known as fulfillment marketing, and besides the potential for more impressions and influencer deals, there's more to a customized packaging strategy than meets the eye.



### \* The power of the hashtag

By using the right hashtags on social media platforms, brands can achieve an unbelievable amount of exposure for their products—and how they are packaged. The famous TikTok hashtag **#tiktokmademebuyit** has racked up over 6.6 billion views on the app, making it a powerful tool to drive brand discovery.<sup>15</sup>



# RYDERECOMMERCE

by whiplash

## Packaging as a multichannel tool

In a traditional retail setting, a trip to a brick-and-mortar store is full of anticipation and delight. There's the moment of walking through the entrance and being surrounded by hundreds of products, as well as friendly sales associates, signage and visuals to help pave the path to purchase.

In e-commerce, it isn't as easy to provide such a tangible experience for consumers who are ordering products directly to their homes. But with fulfillment marketing, brands can bridge that 'experience gap' in a way that brings the essence of brick-and-mortar storytelling to D2C fulfillment.

So, what does bridging the gap between online and in-store experiences look like?

**QR codes.** Thanks to the pandemic, a largely touchless world have become the norm, with QR codes replacing menus, instructions, maps, and more. Retailers can include QR codes within branded packaging, quickly directing customers to social content, product information, or even a newsletter sign-up.

**Packaging inserts.** Inserts like thank you notes or coupons not only provide customers with a more personalized experience, but also encourage them to come back again and again.

**Product samples.** Omnichannel brands that adopt product sampling can introduce more personalization into the brand experience, building a sense of community and an incentive to keep purchasing.

But none of these strategies are isolated to e-commerce or the storefront. Product samples are no longer reserved for customers meandering through store aisles, but can be added to customer orders based on their purchasing history. And while custom packaging is typically thought of within the context of home delivery, it can take pride of place within the in-store experience. Think of branded shopping bags, custom tissue, and free samples to enjoy at home.

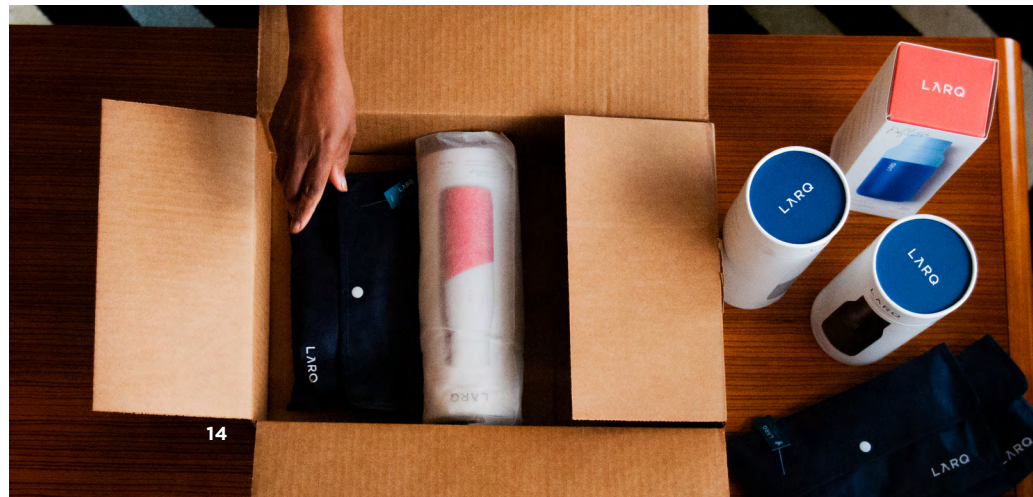
## Putting a price to custom packaging and unboxing experiences

Fulfillment marketing is one of the most powerful ways to get ahead in the brick- and-mortar arms race. No matter whether a customer sets foot in a physical store or purchases a product via Instagram, well-thought-out packaging and collateral make the experience feel more personal and cohesive—like a close friend giving a gift, rather than that distant relative who knows nothing about you.

For emerging brands, custom packaging can be a significant investment and tricky to implement into the fulfillment process independently. Without the expertise of a 3PL who specializes in value-added services and custom fulfillment, orders may end up looking worse off than they did before.

To create a hassle-free implementation, brands need to have all of their ducks in a row before jumping into the fulfillment marketing space. This means developing a clear goal for customized packaging and providing the appropriate assets to their 3PL or retail partners.

When done well, fulfillment marketing can quickly become a merchant's greatest superpower. Unboxing is, after all, the only guaranteed interaction in the post-purchase space.



# The brick-and-mortar arms race has begun: Who will come out on top?

The message is clear: as in-person shopping takes off once more in the aftermath of the acute phase of the pandemic, brands can no longer neglect the power of the storefront. Finding success in this new era of retail means moving beyond the idea of digital and physical shopping channels serving different purposes within the customer journey.

After the challenging years of pandemic retail, shoppers have become very sensitive to signs that brands aren't putting convenience at the heart of their omnichannel strategy. To your customer, the bricks and the clicks are simply different faces of your brand. Your always-online shopper may prefer to return in-store to receive a faster refund or find a replacement item, while those who buy in-store don't see why they shouldn't get to enjoy beautiful packaging or free samples at the point of sale.

**Within the complex ecosystem that is your brand, consumers see themselves right at the center.**

Implementing best-in-class technology solutions that achieve inventory visibility and operational flexibility is the first step to putting in place those value-added bricks and clicks services that enhance CX and brand loyalty. Tools as such EDI and ROS provide a strong foundation for real-time insights into your operation and gaining control over every touchpoint in the shopping journey.

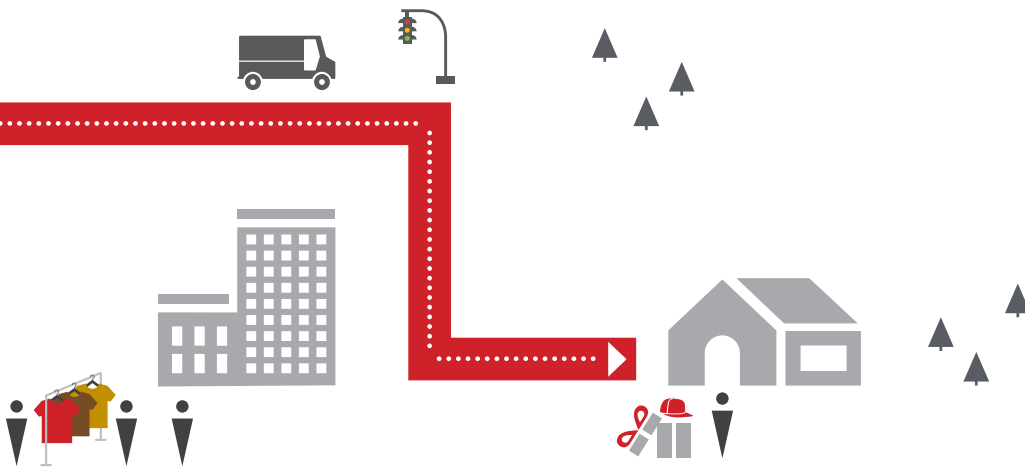
E-commerce and brick and mortar are continuing to evolve toward a single storefront, and brands need to think strategically about other ways they can use e-commerce technology to augment the in-store experience with digital connectivity.

**As your customers grow accustomed to seamless shopping journeys and meaningful brand experiences, you can feel confident that your business will emerge from the arms race victorious.**



## About Ryder E-commerce by Whiplash

Ryder E-commerce by Whiplash is a leading provider of direct-to-consumer fulfillment and retail logistics, including end-to-end customer care, transportation, distribution, and value-added warehouse services. Its high-performance operations are supported by its namesake e-commerce platform and a suite of advanced technology solutions, enabling the multi-channel connectivity required by the retail supply chains of today and tomorrow. Operating 24 distribution centers nationwide across more than 10 million square feet of space in addition to its international partner network, Whiplash brings emerging and established brands the scale and vision they need to grow and succeed. For more information on our end-to-end services, visit: [whiplash.com](http://whiplash.com)



Looking to better integrate smart offline and online shopping experiences into your omnichannel brand strategy? We invite you to visit the websites of the featured companies in this piece, and visit our partner directory at [partnerdirectory.whiplash.com](http://partnerdirectory.whiplash.com). To talk with one of our Whiplash fulfillment experts, please call us at **877.901.6472**, or email [fulfillment@whiplash.com](mailto:fulfillment@whiplash.com).

**RYDER**ECOMMERCE  
by whiplash





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