How to Build a Robust

OMNI-CHANNEL STRATEGY

to Succeed in 2021 and Beyond

INTRODUCTION

A study by Aberdeen Group revealed that companies with extremely strong Omni-channel customer engagement retain on average **89%** of their customers, compared to **33%** for companies with weak Omni-channel customer engagement.

Furthermore, companies with extremely strong Omni-channel customer engagement see a **9.5%** year-over-year increase in annual revenue, compared to **3.4%** for weak Omni-channel companies.

Similarly, **strong Omni-channel companies see a 7.5% year-over-year decrease in cost per contact, compared to a 0.2% year-over-year decrease for weak companies.**

In a nutshell, **going the Omni-channel** way has accorded these businesses with the benefits of high customer retention and strong engagement, while simultaneously decreasing cost per contact.

In this Omni-channel guide we discuss

▶ Omni-channel retailing

▶ Omni-channel benefits brands should consider leveraging

▶ COVID-19 impact & how it's accelerating transformation

▶ Why integration is such a critical component for omni-channel success

▶ Digital Integration is the optimal solution

▶ Key components of a seamless integrated approach

▶ How forward-thinking businesses have leveraged integration to drive Omni-channel experiences

▶ How i95Dev can help
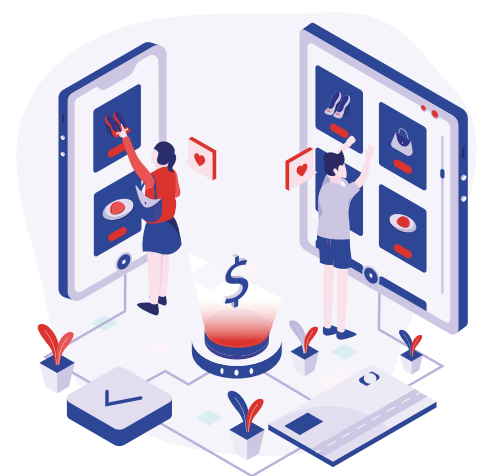
As lives get busier and technology evolves, consumers are looking for greater convenience and accessibility than ever before. Businesses that are able to offer Omni-channel experiences to their customers are bound to emerge as the biggest winners as eCommerce continues to grow from strength to strength.

Omni-channel Retailing:

Offering customers consistent experiences when they want it and where they want it

To elucidate why Omni-channel initiatives are transformative, let's take the example of Ikea, a brand that is leading in the spectacular yet seamless way in which it offers Omni-channel experiences to customers.

The brand offers an engaging eCommerce mobile platform that features a slick, intuitive app interface. But what they've also reinforced it with is VR technology, that allows users to visualize what their selection of Ikea's furniture will look like in their own home. They get to skip a physical trip to an Ikea store and view imagery which helps them build a connection between Ikea's pieces and their living spaces. The brand also offers similarly well executed consumer experiences in store as well. Store visitors can spend hours navigating the various staged showrooms, using the app to add items they like, onto a shopping list that also informs them exactly where they will need to go to pick up the goods.

IKEA: took this multi-channel experience a step further by making it Omni-channel - this included incorporating new mobile functionality that allowed users to save their favourite items as a shopping list on their mobile catalog application. This shopping list could then be used both on their website and in-store.

This is essentially what Omni-channel looks like in practice. As your customer interacts with your business across different touchpoints, they're being rewarded with a seamless and consistent shopping experience at each one.

A multichannel approach primarily focuses on the customer and the understanding that mobile and social have enabled customers to engage with your brands across a variety of channels and platforms. However, in order to make the pivotal shift from multi-channel-to Omni-channel requires that businesses are able to provide seamless, consistent experiences. These experiences should be designed to blur the boundaries between different channels, as your customers switch from one to other or simultaneously use multiple channels.

In a nutshell: Omni-channel marketing combines all customer touch/interaction points from brick and mortar and eCommerce stores, desktops, mobile, social media accounts and other channels into a single seamless, integrated customer shopping journey toward purchase and long-term loyalty.

# 5 Omni-channel Benefits Brands Should Consider Leveraging

Introducing Omni-channel customer experiences enables brands to increase sales by opening alternate channels for your consumers to shop on. The connected systems also ensure that you no longer have to lose a customer when a product is out of stock in one store but available in another and allows you to offer greatly enhanced customer experiences at various touchpoints.

A recent Harvard Business Review (HBR) study discovered that "conducting prior online research on the retailer's own site or sites of other retailers led to 13% greater in-store spending among Omni-channel shoppers."

The study by HBR also found that Omni-channel shoppers not only had bigger shopping baskets, but they were also more loyal. Within six months after an Omni-channel shopping experience, these customers had logged 23% more repeat shopping trips to the retailer's stores. The study also found that these customers were more likely to recommend the brand to family and friends than those who used a single channel.

To secure success for your business in 2021, here are five Omni-channel retailing trends you should consider integrating into your Omni-channel strategy.
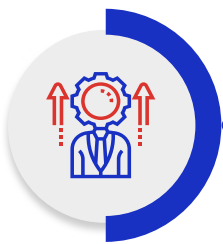
Improved personalization

An important way for retailers to stand out amidst competition and generate customer loyalty is by building meaningful relationships with them. This can be done by crafting your campaigns and offers to cater to their specific interests and needs. Leverage insights extracted from customer data across various touch-points to better understand your customer's most pressing needs. When you're able to combine identity data with deep insights, you can offer deeply personalized offers and experiences that are aligned seamlessly with your customer's needs. When businesses effectively integrate all their channels, they are better positioned to build strong relationships with customers, address their needs and create competitive advantage for themselves.

Strategic innovation

Let's face it: customers today have lower attention spans. And this is because they're inundated with exciting experiences from various sources. So, it's vitally important to consider what will make your brand special and unique and allow you to retain customer attention. Offering unforgettable experiences to customers requires leveraging a variety of innovative technologies, such as virtual and augmented reality, to offer interactive and unique experiences. These experiences will, of course, have to be a part of a more wholesome Omni-channel approach thatenables your consumers to use their smartphones to advance their customer journey, whether in a physical store, or from the comfort of their homes.

Easy checkouts

How many times have you found yourself vexed at having to fill out a billing address, a shipping address, your entire credit card number, CVV, pin, etc. in order to complete a purchase? For repeat customers, this is particularly frustrating. There are a number of options available right now - blockchain solutions, contactless payments, payment options such as GooglePay, Paypal and so on - to simplify the checkout process for your customers - whether they're shopping online, over the phone or at your store. Rest assured, your customers will lean towards shopping from providers that are providing them the most convenience.

Ongoing customer support

You may not be able to keep your physical store open at all times to service customers, but what you can do to greatly simplify and improve your customers' lives is to offer 24/7 customer service. This, of course, includes online shopping, ordering and ongoing support. Offering your customers the option to shop online from multiple platforms has its advantages, but it's important that you're offering seamless, consistent support across all of them.

Social integration

Integrating your social channels to enable your customers to shop directly from your social accounts is going to be a game changer. You must've already noticed/shopped from Instagram posts that directly take you to the product listing. It's a supremely convenient way for your customers to shop, plus you're also, building an audience as you go, with the visual content you're creating and curating, thereby creating a win-win environment.

COVID-19 impact & how it's accelerating transformation

The coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered consumer behavior.

According to First Insight, more than 40% of shoppers say fears have already impacted their buying decisions. Furthermore, 29% are using buy online services to have products delivered to their homes, while 18% preferred curbside pickup.
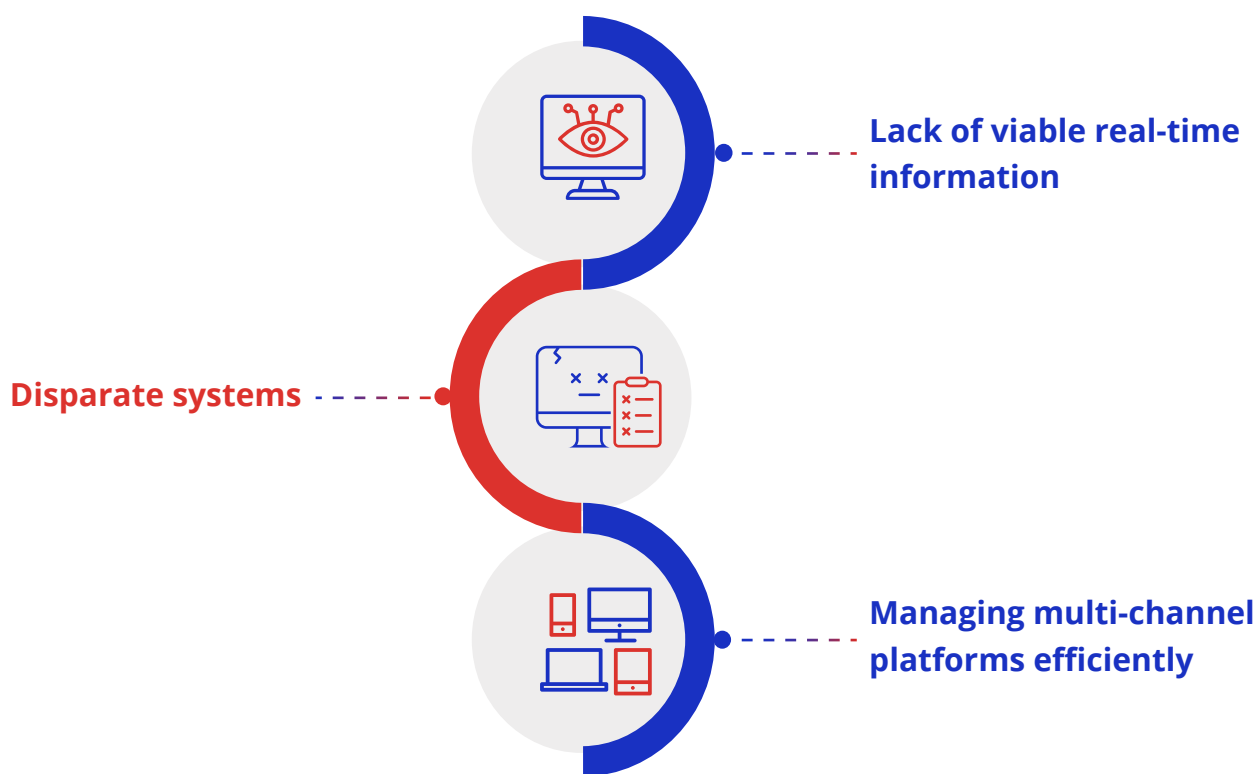
Retail was already undergoing tremendous transformation in the past few years, thanks to evolving technological advancements. The COVID-19 crisis further cemented the need for businesses to disrupt rapidly and strategically.

Most retailers were already on the path to building a more direct-to-consumer business model - this shift exacerbated by the pandemic, has accelerated the adoption of retailing.

The pandemic has had an obviously deep impact on eCommerce, giving rise to sudden changes in customer behaviour patterns. Online shoppers have increased by 50% in the US & Europe as customers now prefer to shop from the comfort of their homes. For obvious reasons, they're also looking for contactless experiences as an absolute requirement, thus making zero-touch integration extremely important to sail through this crisis.

Why integration is such a critical component of the framework for Omni-channel success.

The most common issues faced by businesses in offering superior customer experiences are:

Lack of viable real-time information

Disparate systems

Managing multi-channel platforms efficiently

Digital Integration is the optimal solution

Digitally integrating systems allows your business processes to be synchronized and facilitates seamless communication.

For example: A customer has changed the shipping address for her recent order and she connects with the customer support team to enquire about the order status and confirm the changed address. In this case, if the eCommerce platform is not integrated with the ERP system, where the actual order information is stored, it can quickly create a gap in the address update and result in poor customer experience for your customer, who may choose an alternate provider next time around.
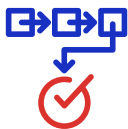
Digital integration is as important as having your own eCommerce website. It offers the following incredible benefits:

Multichannel management from a single location:
No more time and effort wasted on managing different platforms separately.

Access to real-time data:
No more lag in updated information.

Easy to implement changes:
Changes are not anymore a headache.

Saves time and efforts:
Reduces manual efforts and saves time as things happen within a wink of an eye.

Cost-effective and high ROI:
When things are managed centrally it saves cost and that results in high ROI

According to Rakuten Intelligence, online grocery sales saw a 210.1% increase. That underscores how urgently businesses will need to move to zero-touch retail in order to meet current needs and ensure business continuity. While you can choose the level of digitization that suits your business & customers, zero-touch ERP integration is an absolute must.

Zero-touch retail is here to stay and a seamless integration process is critical to facilitate its smooth functioning. **Zero-touch ERP connectors** can help enhance customer experience andimprove efficiency.

Choosing the right integration partner certainly plays a very important role in seamless integration.

Key Components of a Seamless Integrated Approach

It is imperative that all aspects of your Omni-channel retailing work together. Having one integrated approach to your system - right from when the customer places an order, to shipping of the products and information management - is critical to delivering successful Omni-channel experiences.

Having one system handle both front and back-end processes helps keep everything in sync. It also greatly simplifies for the consumer, regardless of which channel they use to purchase your product, receive or return it. When all systems are in sync, everything works together without any problems, ensuring you can focus on offering exceptional customer service. Customers have a unified experience, regardless of the channel they use to reach you, giving them peace of mind, as well as a reason to return to your brand to shop more.

Here are the prime aspects of the integrated approach we recommend:
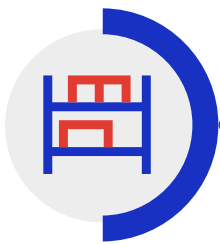
Centralized Inventory

Ensure that all of your inventory is in a central location and can meet the needs of any channel your retail establishment offers. Customers will gain more confidence in retail stores when they are able to quickly obtain their desired product, no matter how they order it. Retail stores also have the ability to keep up with the demand of certain channels by tracking it easily from one location.

Centralized Order Management

Integrate all channels that your consumers can use to purchase products. This facilitates a centralized order management system. Whether consumers purchase your products through your store, online or through a mobile application, the orders should be processed through one system to keep inventory, shipping and various administrative tasks together in one process.

One System – Multiple Functions

Integrating your front and back-end processes allows you to have one system that handles order management, shipping, payment processing, inventory and sales. There is no need to have several different departments, each with a separate system that does not speak to one another, further exacerbated by heavy dependence on employee interaction and discussion to sync the systems. Establishing a partnership with a technology company with the capability to integrate all points of engagement with your customers and incorporate it into one system will help you achieve the most success with your Omni-channel retailing efforts.
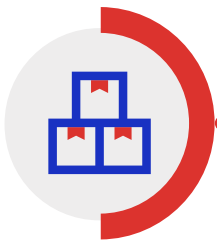
Centralized Product

Ensure optimized product listings on every online channel. You can upload, edit, and publish product information across various channels through one single dash-board. A central, fundamentally collaborative and intelligent repository for product data completely eliminates the need to manually upload listings on each individual channel, thus providing consistent product information to your customers across all channels.

Centralized Customer

Integrate disparate customer data spread across several channels to build a 360-de-gree view of your customers. Having a comprehensive view of your customers helps you understand each customer better, enabling you to meet their needs more effec-tively. Your sales, customer service, and technical support teams will all have access to the same information about each customer to adjust their interactions based on the customer, creating a more personalized experience. This leads to customer delight and, ultimately, business growth.

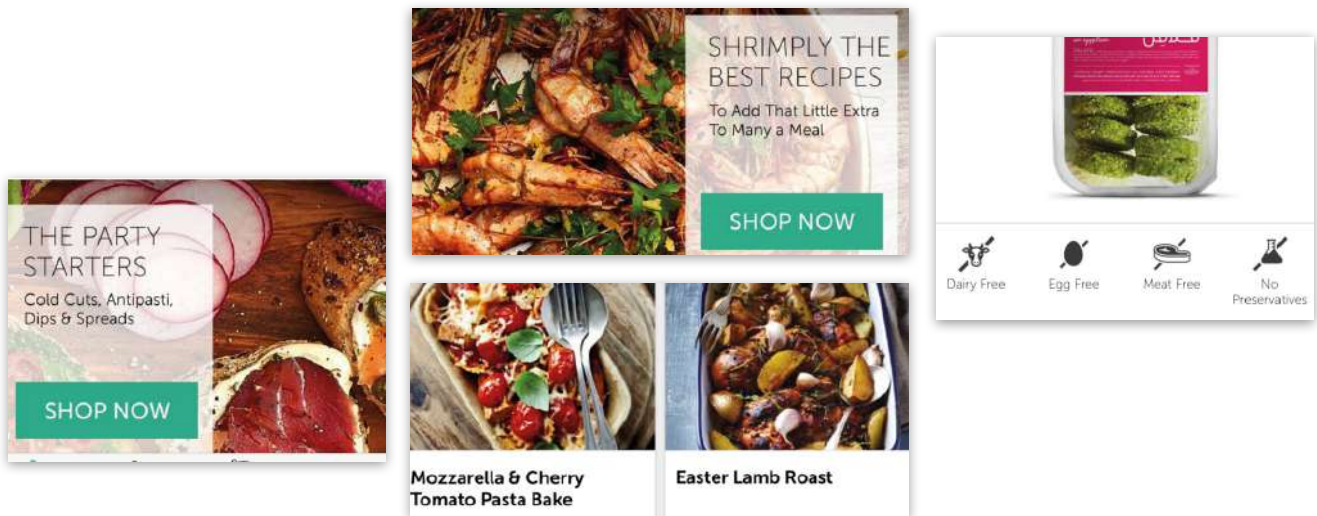## How forward-thinking businesses have leveraged integration to drive Omni-channel experiences

Gourmet Egypt ——— GOURMET EGYPT FOOD STORES

ProAudioStar ——— ProAudioStar

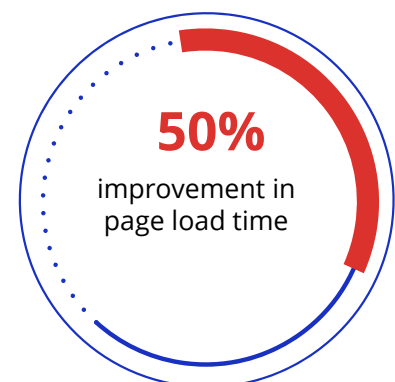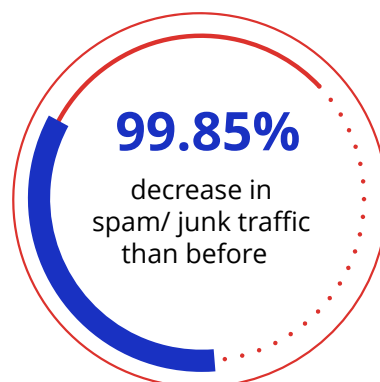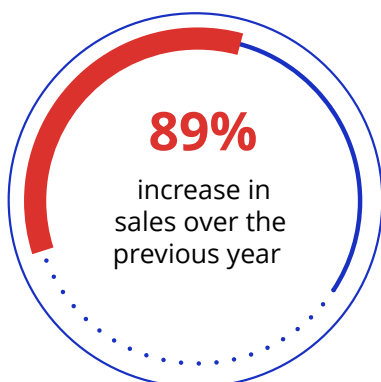# 1) Gourmet Egypt - Physical Stores, Mobile, ECommerce

The Gourmet Group is a leading food manufacturing and retailing company in Egypt. Their current operations comprise two business lines – food retailing (through Gourmet Egypt) and food manufacturing (through Gourmet Food Solutions). Gourmet Egypt operates strategically located stores across Egypt and enjoys a strong brand name.

Gourmet Egypt partnered with i95Dev to upgrade their store to Magento 2 Commerce, and streamline their processes, internal and customer-facing, using extensions and automation.

 i95Dev - helped Gourmet Egypt enhance and optimize their native mobile apps for iOS and Android, and integrated them with the Magento eCommerce store.

As a result of which, Gourmet Egypt saw

89%
increase in sales over the previous year

99.85%
decrease in spam/ junk traffic than before

50%
improvement in page load time

i95Dev also helped Gourmet Egypt in optimizing and enhancing the integration between their Magento eCommerce store and Dynamics RMS POS system. The integration enabled Gourmet Egypt to explore options like buy online and pick up in store, manage inventory better, service customers faster, and more.

2) ProAudioStar - ECommerce, Online Marketplaces (eBay, Amazon, Walmart)
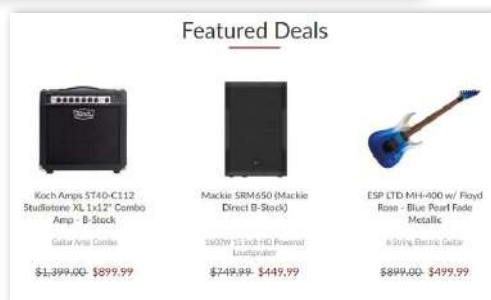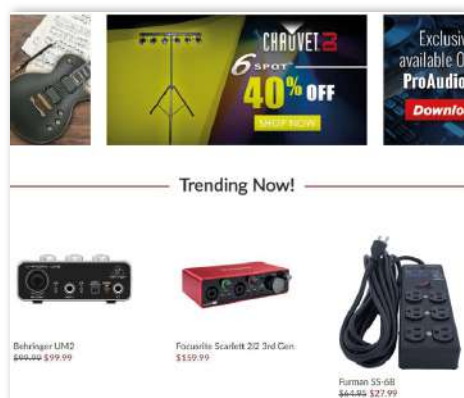
ProAudioStar experienced a challenge typical to most companies - they are present across a variety of online channels and eCommerce portals, but there is a disconnect between the order placement process online and the order fulfillment process in the company's warehouse.

The team at i95Dev analyzed the needs of ProAudioStar, and decided that they required a seamless integration between their channels that would automate the process.

i95Dev's GPConnect - presented a successful, functional solution. As a result, regardless of the genesis or point of origin (eBay, Magento or GP) of a received order, they are now processed effortlessly, completely error-free. All information, inclusive of order info, shipping, payment and tax info remains accurate and unified throughout all systems.

This has resulted in several other immediately visible benefits such as:

Increased productivity and profitability

Automated order processing

A marked decrease in order processing time

Ability to accept more orders per day, and to manage all facets of their entire process (from order to delivery) from one comprehensive platform

100% accuracy in order processing

Since ProAudioStar's site went live with the integration, they have reported shipping 500 boxes in a single day, versus their average previous ceiling of 300. They were able to achieve this significant increase without any increase in overheads.

Get Started

If you're currently looking to design and implement an Omni-channel strategy, **here's a peek into how we enable businesses to offer improved customer experiences.**

A truck engine manufacturer who was making a 100 million dollars in sales, approached us to begin their shift online. While the company was quite happy about its turnover and not looking to increase sales, they wanted to move online in order to reduce costs associated with managing customers. At the same time, the manufacturer wanted to ensure that this move did not cause any hiccups in their relationship with customers (retailers and distributors).

The team at i95Dev was responsible for improving customer experience while reducing the cost to manage them. Finally, it led to the development of a system that streamlined interactions between the company and its customers - seamless communication drastically enhanced the overall customer experience.

With the new system implementation, i95Dev helped them reduced their expenses to 20% of what they were investing originally.

How i95Dev can help

i95Dev is a leading eCommerce and integration company in North America which can help you build the right infrastructure required to truly become an Omni-channel retailer. Our ECommerce Growth Engine (EGE) product is an integrated eCommerce solution which integrates your systems like eCommerce, mobile, social media, online marketplaces and Dynamics ERP. The integration can further be extended to include your other backend systems like CRM, POS, etc.

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About i95Dev

i95Dev provides complete suite of eCommerce solutions for B2B and B2C markets. We are one of the leading systems integrators for Magento in supporting complex integrations with various ERPs, POS, CRM, Accounting, Mobile and Social Applications. We advise more than 1500 brands from Retail, Manufacturing, Distribution and Wholesale Trade on Next Generation Commerce and Omni-channel strategies.

PROFESSIONAL
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Gold Application Development

Magento 2 Certified

Inc. 5000