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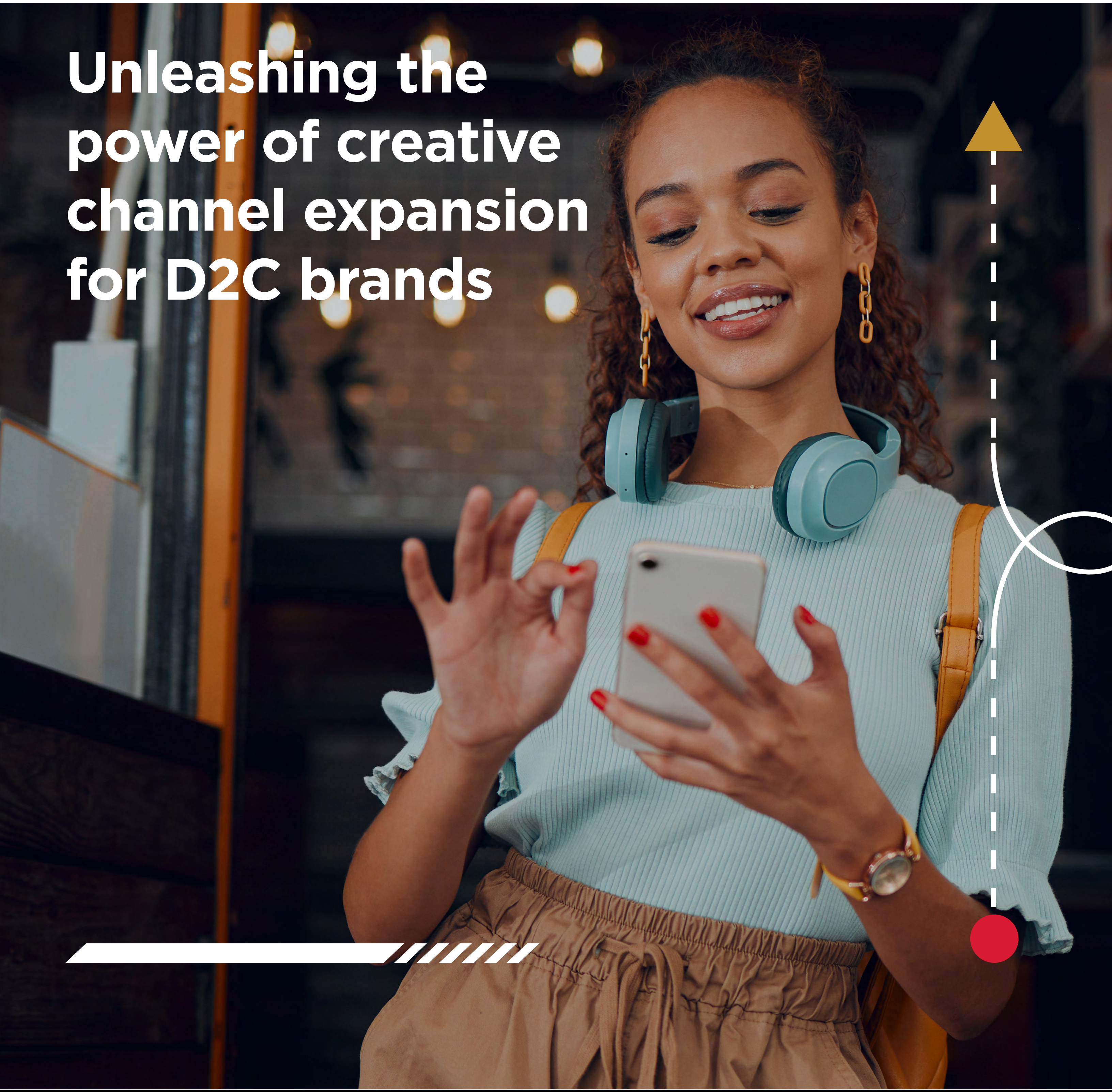
Unleashing the power of creative channel expansion for D2C brands



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Taking the brand experience beyond the storefront

Until recently, the direct to consumer e-commerce model represented the gold standard for how to engage consumers and build loyalty. But as acquisition costs climb and mature D2C brands struggle to reach profitability, it's clear that merchants need to think beyond the primary shopping journey to achieve sustainable growth.

As online channels continue to proliferate, it's become less likely that an e-commerce website is a customer's first touchpoint with a brand. Wholesale partnerships, loyalty programs, resale platforms, and more offer robust discovery opportunities to consumers. Yet finding the optimum mix of channels is an ongoing challenge for merchants.

According to a 2023 survey of retail CEOs, founders, and C-suite executives, almost half (47%) feel there are too many channels available to deliver a good customer experience, while 49% struggle to evaluate how successful their omnichannel strategy is.[1]

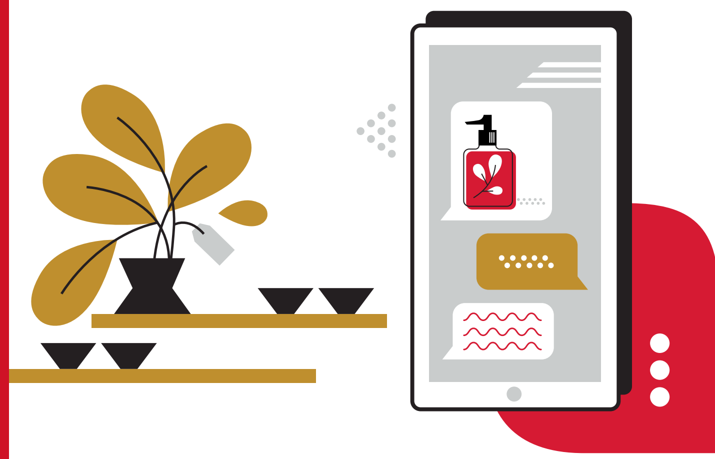
'Too many channels, too little time' might as well be the calling card for contemporary retail. If brands fall into the trap of investing in too many channels - but not the technological infrastructure to manage them - there's a high risk of the customer experience becoming fragmented and difficult for shoppers to navigate.

To manage creative channel expansion effectively, brands must balance both operational and marketing demands to find the right channel mix that serves customers while optimizing for cost.

What is creative channel expansion?

A channel doesn't have to be transaction-focused to provide value. An initiative that provides brands with more opportunities to connect with potential and existing customers should be considered as an additional channel for consumers to support your brand.

By framing these engagement opportunities as channels, e-commerce brands can ensure that these efforts complement each other and provide customers with a cohesive brand experience.



Breaking down operational silos

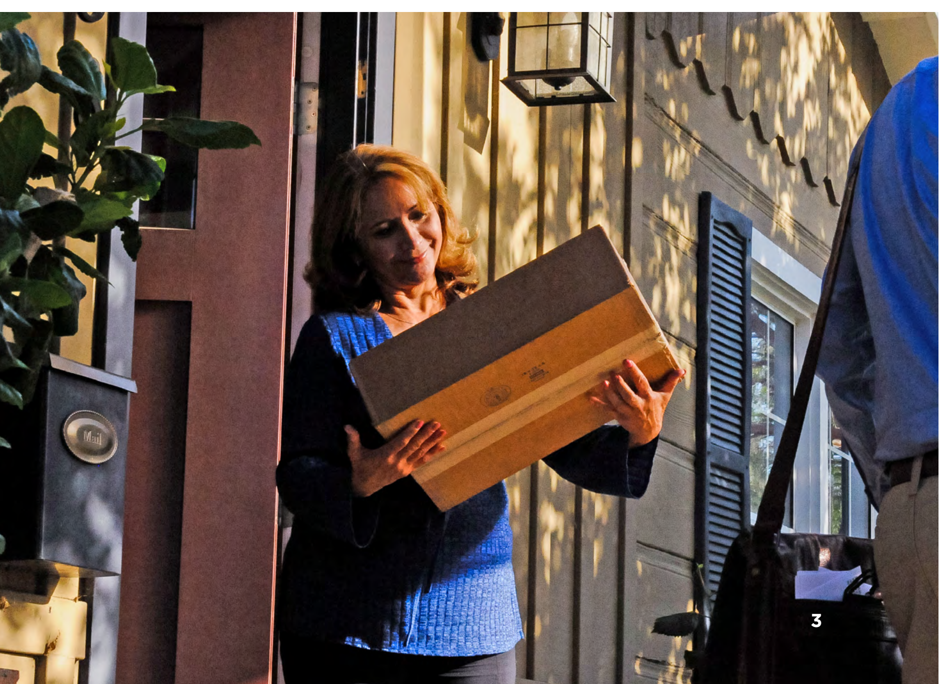
Today, multichannel retailing encompasses far more than the e-commerce-retail-wholesale trifecta. Creative channel expansion requires brands to look outside of siloed sales workflows and fulfillment strategies. This means finding fresh ways to nurture consumers toward purchasing - and having the necessary infrastructure to support them.

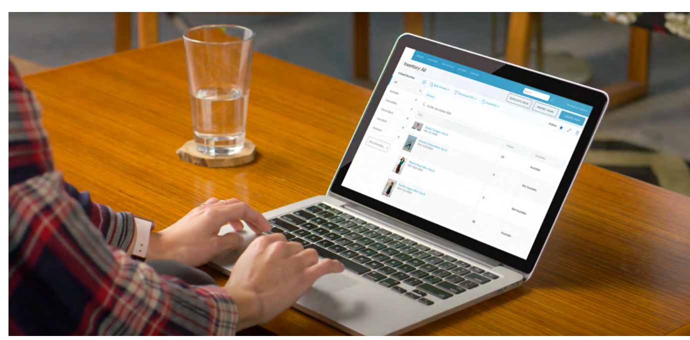
As the e-commerce playing field levels out, it's becoming apparent that digitally-native brands are no longer leading the charge. In 2022, established retail brands accounted for 75% of total direct to consumer sales in the U.S., a clear sign that an acquisition-driven approach is not reaping rewards.[2]

The steady growth of additional channels, such as localized retail and secondary markets for returned or last season merchandise, has highlighted the importance of curating experiences for different audience segments. If customers feel that a brand genuinely understands their needs, the pathway to securing higher levels of customer loyalty is clear.

But brands need the right operational architecture to support building out these channels. As the pendulum swings from seamless shopping experiences to meaningful brand interactions, it's no longer enough for merchants to remove points of friction; they need to actively build relevant touchpoints that foster emotional connections with shoppers.

For this to happen, customers must feel supported not only in the channel they begin their journey in, but within any subsequent channel they move to. This demands a true omnichannel approach that unifies data across channels to provide personalized, relevant brand experiences. With the right systems in place, creative channel expansion will inspire anticipation rather than panic for fresh engagement strategies.





Unlocking revenue with cross-border e-commerce

The rise of social media is driving new opportunities for retailers and brands to reach and engage with consumers worldwide. From Europe to Asia, the Middle East to Latin and North America, billions of consumers are communicating in an online landscape without borders, where trends spread instantly across the globe. This monumental shift is fueling the cross-border e-commerce market, which is expected to reach a value of $7.9 trillion U.S. dollars by 2030.[3]

Growing international website traffic and global followings have driven brands across the globe to realize the huge opportunity in selling directly to consumers; not just domestically, but also to their followers around the world.

However, when it comes to global channel expansion, retailers and brands are faced with many challenges, including leveraging global traffic and maximizing their cross-border growth potential.

While social media has created a borderless landscape, it is important for online retailers to understand that the global e-commerce market is not one entity; it's comprised of hundreds of individual markets - each with unique characteristics and consumer preferences that are constantly changing and evolving. To leverage international traffic and grow conversion rates, brands need to offer consumers a seamless experience, allowing them to shop the way they are accustomed to when buying online.

The power of localization in e-commerce

By offering a localized customer journey, brands can remove many of the barriers that prevent shoppers from buying outside of their market. This includes:

- Presenting prices and accepting payments in the local currency
- Enabling shoppers to pay with the popular payment options in their market
- Providing a guaranteed final purchase cost including all fees and duties
- Offering competitive shipping options
- Offering an easy and transparent returns process

However, to maximize international traffic conversion rates, brands need to delve deeper into consumer preferences and local market conventions. Local know-how, data-backed insights, and industry benchmarks allow e-commerce retailers to tailor their propositions to each market and better cater to customer demand.

By setting an enhanced experience that is optimized per market, in alignment with proven best practices and with their brand strategy, e-commerce retailers can boost online sales and expand into new markets while preserving margins and hitting business KPIs.

Brands and retailers selling online internationally should be agile to constant shifts in global market trends and consumer buying preferences and ensure they are able to swiftly adjust their proposition and keep it up to date. Moreover, while the shopper experience takes most of the focus when it comes to cross-border e-commerce, there are many challenges that can make this form of channel expansion complicated and time-consuming for retailers.

Building a seamless cross-border fulfillment channel

The logistics of international selling encompasses far more than just global shipping. From tax and duty compliance and remittance, changing import regulations, fraud prevention, and payment processing to international customer service, the long list of things that brands need to manage poses a huge barrier to global digital expansion.

Partnering with a specialist cross-border provider that covers all these aspects of international online trading reduces the risk and the complexities involved in cross-border selling, enabling brands to expand internationally in a simple and cost-effective manner.

The rapidly growing cross-border e-commerce market presents a massive opportunity for brands to accelerate their D2C business. A comprehensive solution, that combines advanced technology and streamlined global operations, and provides ongoing expert guidance and support, can help brands to fully capitalize on their global potential, increase their customer base and generate new revenue streams.

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The past, present, and future of order operations when expanding selling channels

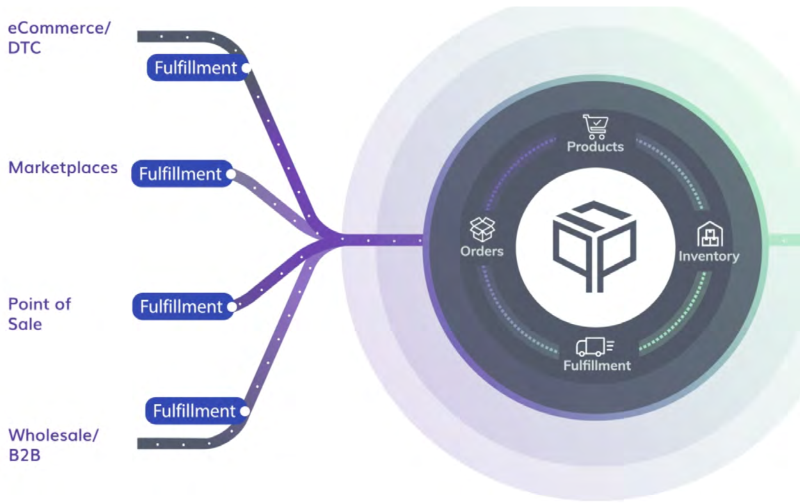
"Go where your customers are." It's a common saying. But where exactly are they? These days this could be Amazon, TikTok, Instagram, Walmart, Wayfair, Etsy, or simply just your own DTC site.

So, while selling on your own site may be the best-case scenario for a brand, there is so much more market share to be had.

Every time you launch a new channel, your brand reach increases - but you also add an increased layer of complexity to your business. So, how do you control your costs (and your headaches) with the added complexity of channel expansion?

Sadly, most of your selling channels will wind up being disconnected data silos. They take in the order, but then what? There is no way to route the orders to fulfillment centers based on geography, tags, SKUs, kits, bundles, or inventory levels.

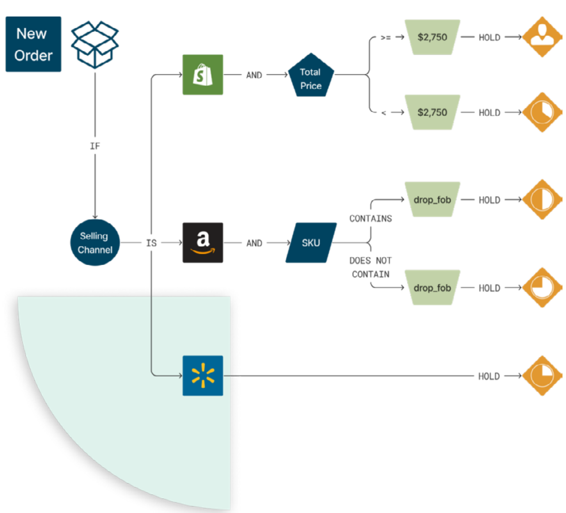
Most e-commerce tools excel at their specific function, like receiving orders, pick-pack-ship, or managing financials. But very few were designed with the end-to-end e-commerce journey in mind. Subsequently, they were not built to work seamlessly across your stack. Many tools lack "brains" or logic.



So, what are the options?

The spreadsheet

Spreadsheets are the #1 way that merchants usually start solving the problems that channel expansion inflicts on their order operations. They can download orders as a csv file from the selling channel, manipulate/transform them in Excel, and then upload them to their fulfillment center's WMS. However, this has to be done every day or risk backlogging customer orders and bombarding customer service with "Where's my order?" inquiries. This is time-consuming, unscalable, and prone to human error, which can be very costly.



The daisy chain

Some merchants are passing every order back to their Shopify or BigCommerce store, and then routing from there to their fulfillment center. This 'daisy chain approach' leaves you dependent on numerous point-to-point integrations. Normally, you're using multiple 3rd party apps (each with its own reliability variable), between your e-commerce platform and each selling channel. These types of integrations are known to cause errors or break completely. It could be days, even weeks before you realize there's a problem with one of these integrations - resulting in extremely unhappy customers.

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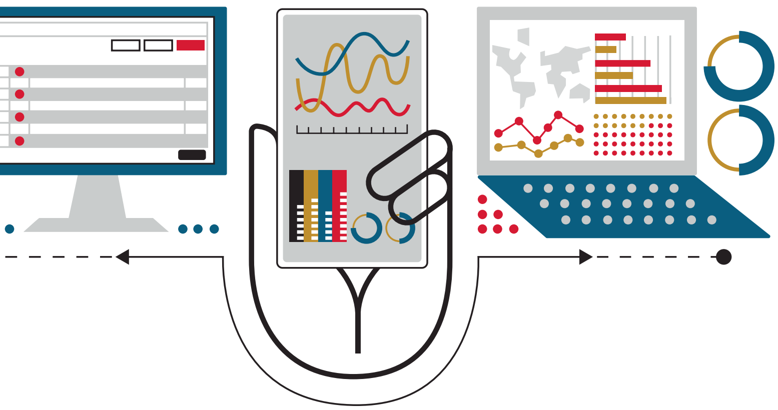
The ERP + iPaaS

ERPs are good at collecting data and breaking out financial reports. Some have add-on tools you can buy for advanced order routing, but these are often expensive, with lengthy setup times, and high development costs. You also have to set up and code your iPaaS to fit your business needs. An iPaaS works for building point-to-point connections and bridging the connectivity gap between disparate data sources. However, an iPaaS requires customization. They take months to set up and hundreds of development hours to go live. You will trade speed and flexibility due to cost and time constraints to reconfigure your system every time your operation expands or changes.



Omnichannel Order Hub

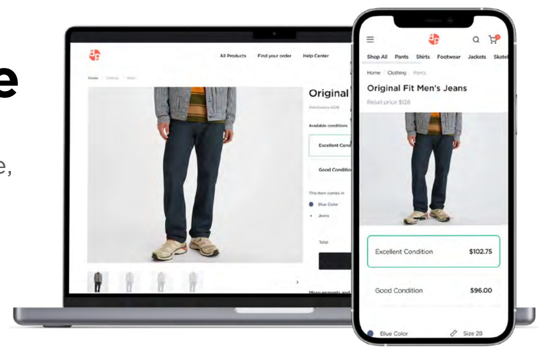
To be a true omnichannel operations wizard, you must have all your selling channels, fulfillment centers, and back-office applications unified and working together, in lockstep, to process orders efficiently.

Unlike an iPaaS, which requires extensive customization to do the same work, Pipe17 can be implemented in days, sometimes in minutes, with no code or systems integrators required. Once implemented, Pipe17 acts as your centralized data orchestrator. It automates the transformation, routing, and visualization of your order operations data across your entire commerce stack. By standardizing and normalizing all your commerce data, this removes the need to use unreliable point-to-point integrations or spend hundreds of hours coding and developing custom solutions.

Just a few years ago, launching a new selling channel would be risky, take months of time and money to go live, and create a slew of operational nightmares that literally keep the team from sleeping.

Now it is easier than ever to go live on any of the biggest marketplaces out there, so long as you've got the right operations stack and partners working together to streamline your systems and processes.

Recommerce: The resale channel poised to disrupt DTC e-commerce

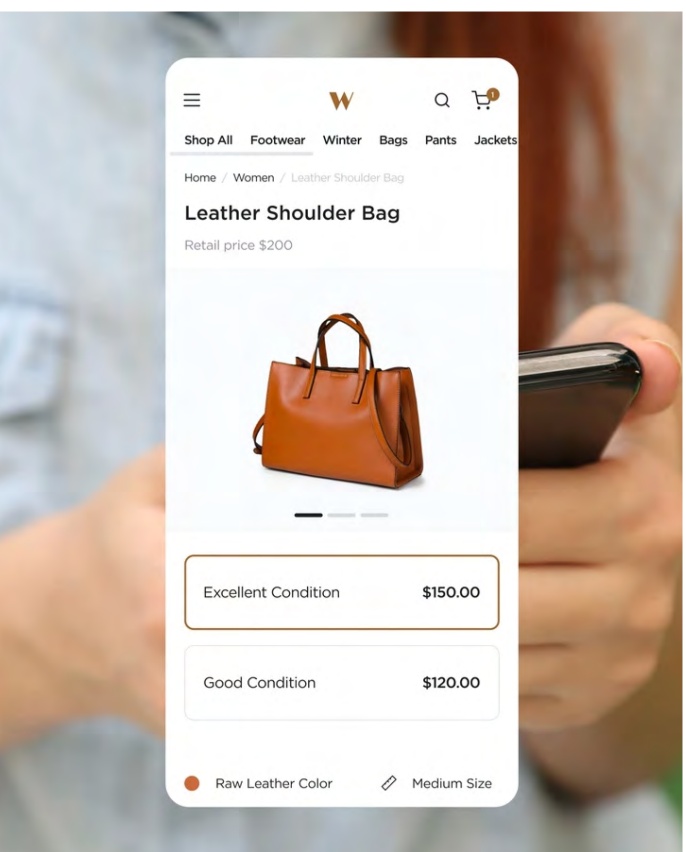


As we stand at the intersection of sustainability and profitability in commerce, one concept is set to reshape the retail landscape — **"recommerce".**

An innovative solution to the challenge of handling returned inventory, recommerce is expected to transform retail returns from a cost center into a profit-driving, sustainable asset.

This recommerce revolution is fueled by shifting consumer behaviors and a growing desire among brands to reclaim a share of their Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) lost in non-new returns, which currently have limited handling options (liquidation, landfills, donation & resale among them).

While current recommerce programs are accounting for a small portion of a brand's revenue (<1%), it is expected that a successful resale program can recapture anywhere from 1-8% of a brand's mainline GMV as best practices continue to develop.



There are several recommerce models for brands to consider, that are differentiated by how returns are collected and sold by brands:

"Take-back"

(allowing customers to give back their returns in exchange for cash or credit).

"Peer-to-peer"

(providing a platform for seller-to-buyer transactions).

"Brand supply"

(the existing return flow from mainline sales entirely supplies a resale program's inventory).

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Brand supply is by far the most promising financial and sustainable approach. This involves implementing a straightforward set-up at fulfillment warehouses where non-new returns are inspected, refurbished, graded, listed and then sold on a fully branded resale website.

The “brand supply” method of recommerce presents the largest revenue and sustainability impact potential because it generates the highest volume of returns eligible for resale, and the quality of “brand supply” returns is much higher than other methods, meaning the resale price is much closer to MRSP (within 10-30%) than other options (40-70% discounts).

In addition to building and powering a fully branded resale storefront on behalf of a brand (including managing order updates & customer support), Recommerce providers like Arrive offer a fully outsourced reverse-to-forward logistics resale programs through their network of warehouses, where they take receipt of non-new returns and quickly refurbish-grade-list and fulfill resale items.

“With 67% of retail executives planning on revamping their return management and asset recovery program in the next 12-24 months, the recommerce movement is expected to accelerate quickly as brands scramble to boost bottom line performance whilst driving their sustainability program forward.” Says Chris Lavoie, Director of Strategic Partnerships @ Arrive. “A brand supply returns-to-resale program has the potential to be the silver bullet retailers are looking for.”

One major outdoor retailer who partnered with Arrive in early 2023 quickly generated $1M in resale GMV with an incredible 90% sell-through rate within their first 90 days, validating the potential of a brand supply model that comes with a higher volume of high-quality units. Importantly, this brand was able to stand up its resale program (branded storefront & operational set-up) in under 8 weeks, a timeline that will only get shorter as recommerce becomes mainstream.

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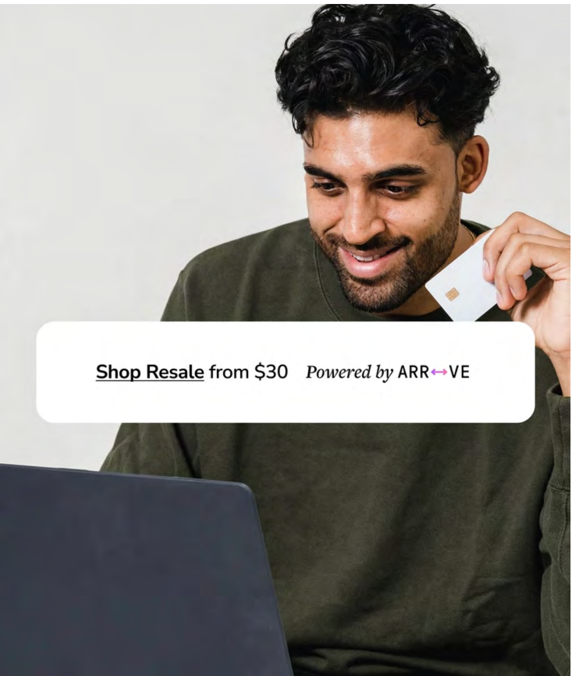

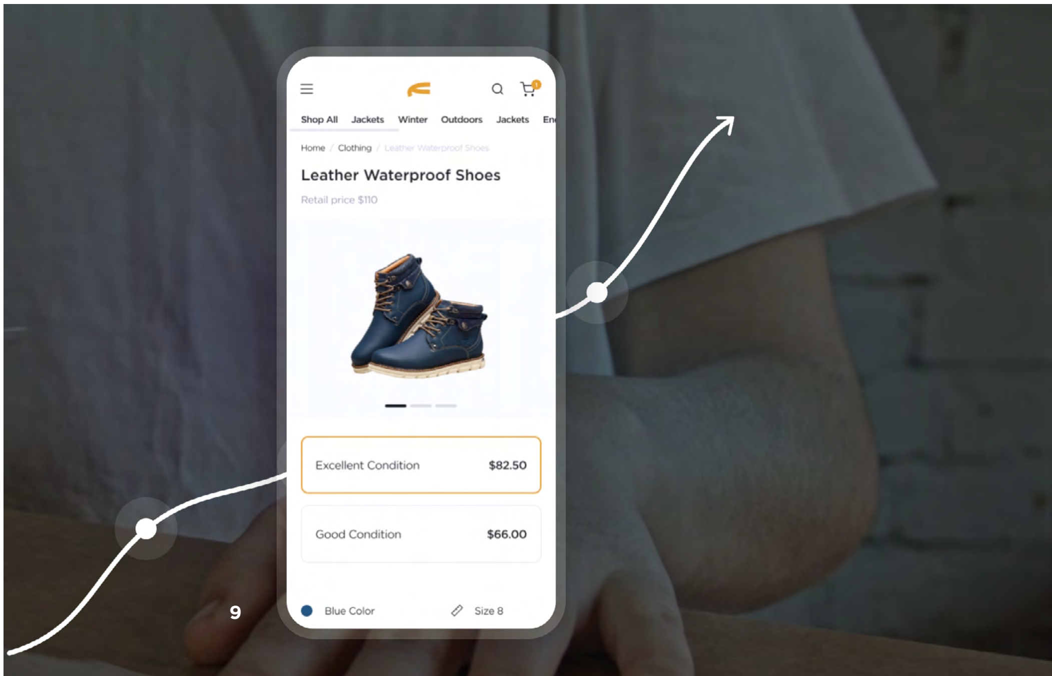

Maximize sales opportunities through strategic channel investments

As e-commerce growth tapers off from the heights seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, digitally-native brands are faced with the question of where to go from here. Merchants have numerous avenues at their disposal to bring their brands to market. But which channels are worth the investment?

Choosing the right creative channels to market and sell your products is no longer a question of who is in control of what. Just 10% of U.S. consumers start their product discovery journey using a brand's website.[4] While managing channels directly has its advantages, it's more important that a channel is capable of reaching its intended audience.

The pivot currently underway towards wholesale selling is a clear sign that the limits of the 'go it alone' approach are being felt. There is significant power in brands moving past the idea of 'owned' channels and working to maximize convenience and discovery opportunities for consumers. Rather than diluting the brand experience, expanding beyond D2C enables merchants to bolster their brand ecosystem and build more touchpoints with potential customers.

At the same time, it's vital that brands continue to leverage the strengths of direct-to-consumer retail. The ability to connect with consumers directly to deliver personalized experiences, ask for feedback, and invest in loyalty initiatives is more valuable than ever as growing digital competition makes it harder to stand out from the crowd.

The great wholesale migration

Research from Glossy and Modern Retail demonstrates how D2C brands are reckoning with a retail landscape influenced by growing saturation and shrinking investment. Their 2022 survey of D2C brands found that **80%** of respondents expect wholesale activity to grow, while just **62%** are confident in direct retail revenue increasing.[5]

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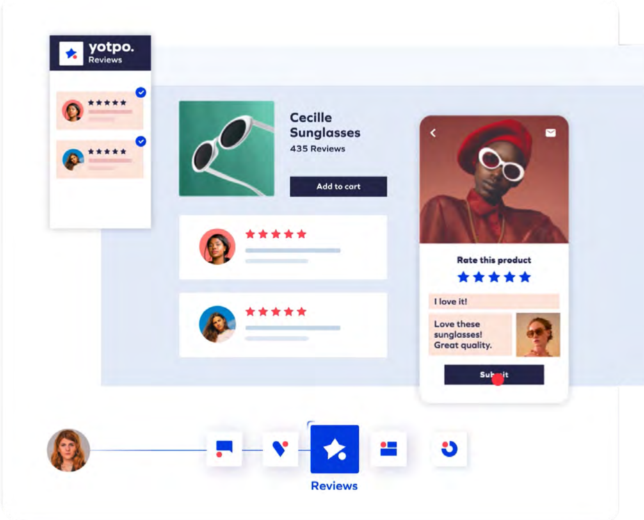
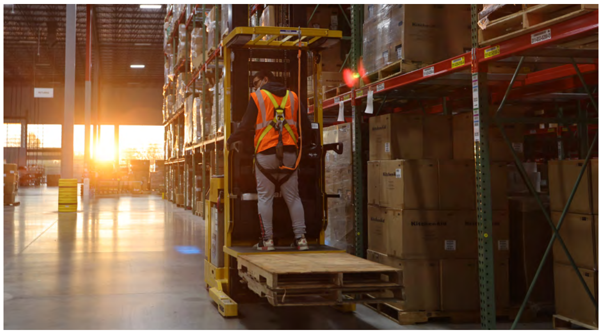
From engagement to loyalty: Build multi-channel experiences to boost customer retention

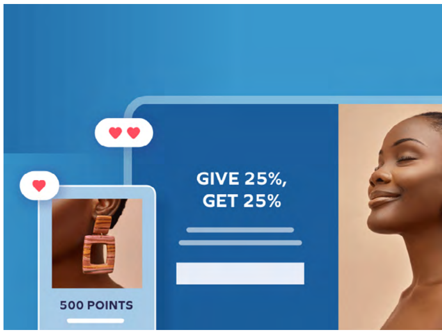


The e-commerce landscape has long been driven by the relentless pursuit of customer acquisition and rapid growth. However, the industry is now experiencing a shift towards sustainable growth, which necessitates a renewed focus on customer retention.

According to a recent survey conducted by **Yotpo**, 52% of brands said that they are more focused on retention than they were a year ago, but 40% have yet to make any changes to enhance or broaden their retention strategies. Additionally, 70% of brands reported that their retention rates either remained stagnant - or worsened - over the past year.[6]

While the importance of retention is widely recognized, many brands struggle with where to begin. To develop a powerful e-commerce retention strategy, a brand needs to leverage all available marketing channels to build a cohesive customer journey. By integrating and aligning these channels, brands can achieve even greater impact, fostering sustained engagement, repeat purchases, and long-term customer relationships.





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5 steps to building a multi-channel customer experience that drives retention

To build a multi-channel retention strategy, you need to know your customers, create a fully connected journey, and offer them value at every touchpoint. Here's what that looks like in practice:

Step 1: Leverage reviews and loyalty to engage customers post-purchase

Once a customer receives their order, keep the momentum going by sending an email and SMS to solicit reviews and ratings. Invite them to join your loyalty program and send them an automated welcome flow letting them know how to earn points, including following you on social media.

Step 2: Create a value exchange between you and your customer

After a customer leaves a review, reward them with loyalty points for their feedback and then send an email or text letting them know how many points they've earned.

Step 3: Deliver personalized communications for ongoing engagement

Use SMS and email to remind the customer of their loyalty points balance and recommend products they are likely to buy based on their purchases and behavior.

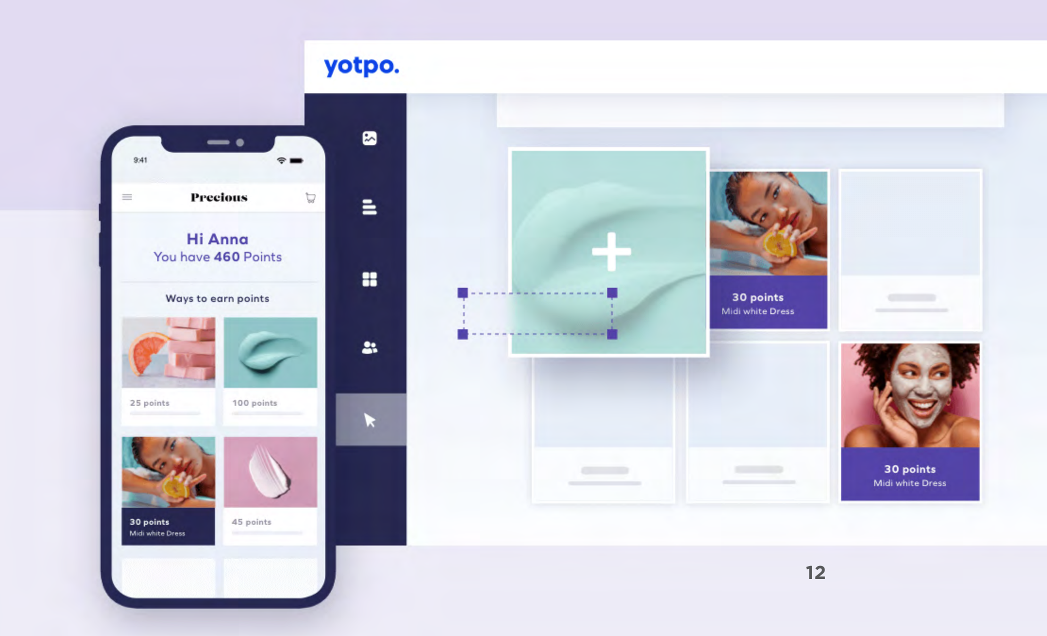
Step 4: Shorten the path to the next purchase

If you offer subscriptions, let the customer know that they can redeem loyalty points on a subscription, and incentivize sign-up by offering additional points. Use technology like Click-to-Redeem to offer them a curated cart experience right from a text.

Step 5: Deepen the connection between the customer and your brand

Now that your first customer is a repeat one, keep engaging them and providing value. Remind them when their next subscription order is coming up so they can make changes or skip, incentivize referrals to help offset your acquisition costs, and send SMS and email when they reach a new loyalty tier, explaining the new benefits they've unlocked.

To build these multi-channel experiences that keep customers coming back, your technology solutions need to work together, with shared data points and a single view of the customer. With the right data and segmentation capabilities, you can ensure that you're always engaging the customer with the right message, on the right channel — building deeper relationships and turning every first-time shopper into a loyal brand advocate.



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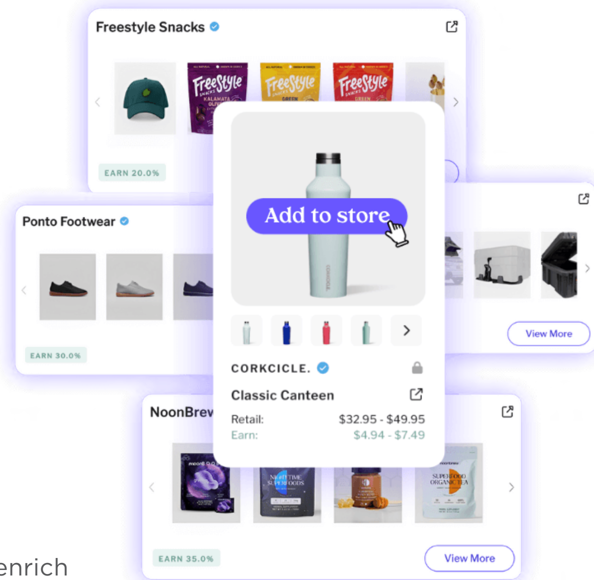
How collaborative commerce can fast track 2023 e-commerce growth

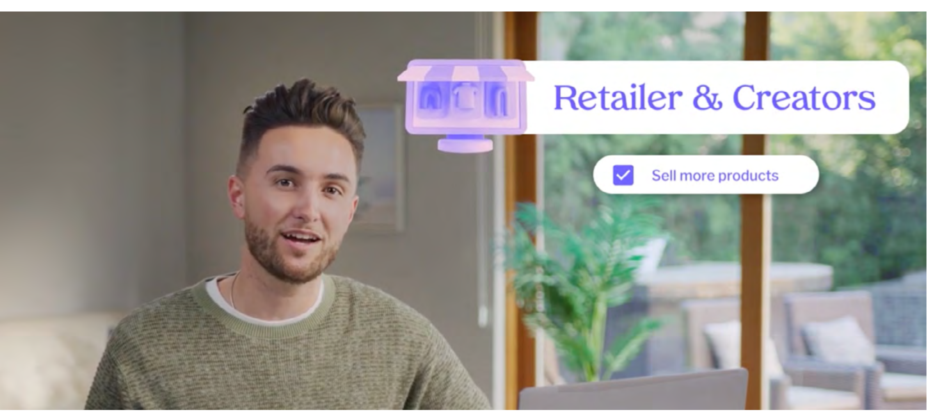


'Collaborative Commerce' is not a term many e-commerce brands are familiar with. It's a channel expansion strategy that enhances sales, boosts average order value, and enriches customer experience. Let's explore why it's a stellar alternative to traditional wholesale and how to get on board.

Collaborative Commerce, or cross-store selling, reimagines traditional wholesale relationships and inventory commitments. It presents a zero-barrier avenue for merchants to expand their product catalogs and customer acquisition capabilities by creating partnerships with other brands.

Traditional wholesale agreements, with their high entry barriers, have long pushed D2C brands to the sidelines. They are time and resource-intensive, making product diversification a challenging and lengthy process. Additional complexities arise from warehouse requirements and sales forecasting.

Enter Collaborative Commerce, an answer to these challenges. It advocates inventory-less merchandising, mitigating the risk of unsold stock. Brands can enrich their offerings without owning the inventory, enhancing the customer experience while alleviating operational burdens.



Through Collaborative Commerce, Gear.com added over 6,000 products to its catalog in less than a year, a milestone unachievable via traditional wholesale.

Additionally, Collaborative Commerce can significantly enhance average order value (AOV). Providing customers with more options leads to higher sales. BlendJet, a single-product company, wanted to expand into a marketplace to sell ingredients used in their blenders. However, traditional wholesale proved challenging. **With Carro's help, BlendJet's marketplace now houses a range of complementary products, increasing their average order value by 81% and customer lifetime value by 71%**.

carro

A CPM-Free Acquisition Channel

Collaborative Commerce also opens doors for co-marketing partnerships with leading brands as both a supplier and retailer, allowing your products to be featured in stores that align with your ideal customer, all without traditional advertising costs. It's a new, effective, and cost-efficient way of customer acquisition. Rather than pay Meta to sandwich your products between dog photos on Instagram, brands are realizing they can get closer to their ideal customers by partnering with complementary brands.

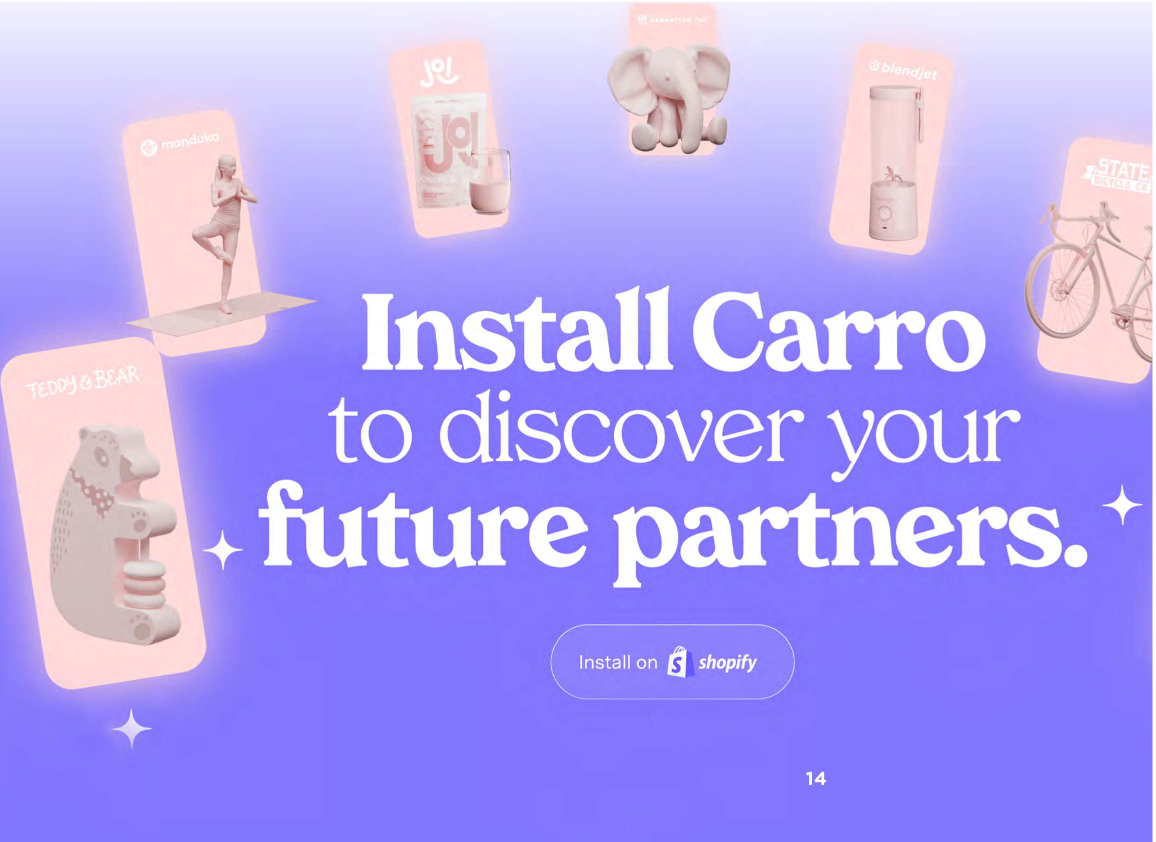
Collaborative Commerce is CX Rocket Fuel

Brands aren't meant to be a one-stop shop like Amazon. They understand they can't meet all customer needs. But through Collaborative Commerce, brands can curate on-site collaborations with complementary products, thereby enriching customer experience.

Collaborative Commerce is a gold mine of opportunities for brands willing to step beyond traditional channels. It's the future of commerce, a low-hanging fruit just waiting to be picked. Join this new wave of commerce and accelerate your e-commerce growth in 2023.

Join the ranks of over 28,000 forward-thinking DTC brands that are embracing Collaborative Commerce, propelling sales growth, and enriching customer experience. Seize this low-hanging fruit, unlock an entirely new channel, and sell more, together. The future of commerce is collaborative—are you ready to be part of it?

Take the example of **Schoolyard Snacks**. This keto-approved, high-protein cereal brand realized that its customers wanted more than just cereal. They sought an array of keto-friendly snacks. Traditional product creation or wholesale wasn't feasible. With Carro, Schoolyard Snacks transformed into a marketplace, seamlessly incorporating a variety of keto products from leading brands. The result was an enriched customer experience, extended product range, and increased average order value.



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How premium loyalty programs build touchpoints with your customers

When asked to describe a loyalty program, most customers would likely bring up points-based systems, their local cafe's punch cards, or Amazon Prime. But what is a loyalty program, and can you use it to build a community of your most loyal customers?

Odds are, you can.

In their most basic form, loyalty programs are an engagement channel designed to reward loyal customers and incentivize them to keep coming back to a brand. They generally come in two tiers: traditional and premium.

Traditional loyalty programs like the points-based systems (or neighborhood cafe punch cards), are free. Brands don't charge customers any fees cost to participate.

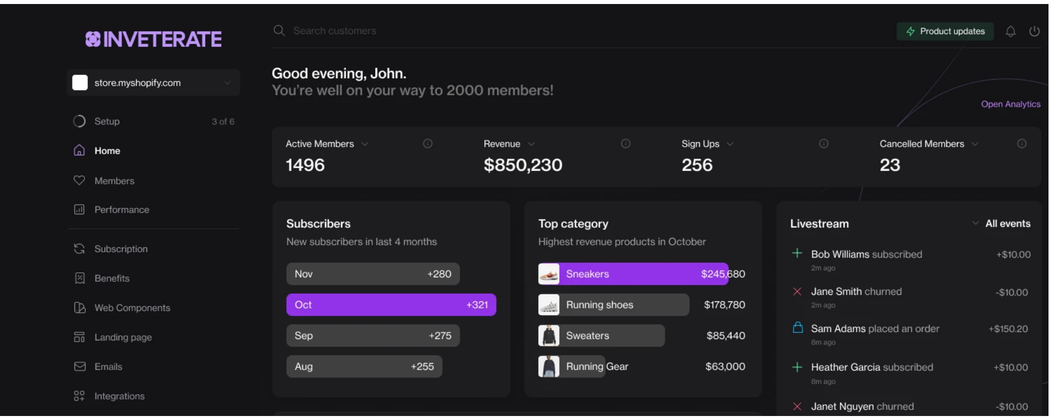
It is a customer retention strategy that costs the customer nothing but can have varying results... Free loyalty programs are convenient, and customers use them when they remember to use them. They reward routine-based behaviors but don't necessarily unlock additional margins, behaviors, or purchases the brand wouldn't otherwise get.

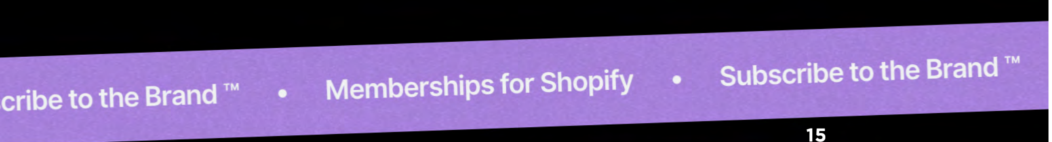
Subscriptions are a type of loyalty reward - this is most often a small discount for opting into a product refill being sent once a month. However, this still focuses on rewarding the customer for what they're buying anyway.

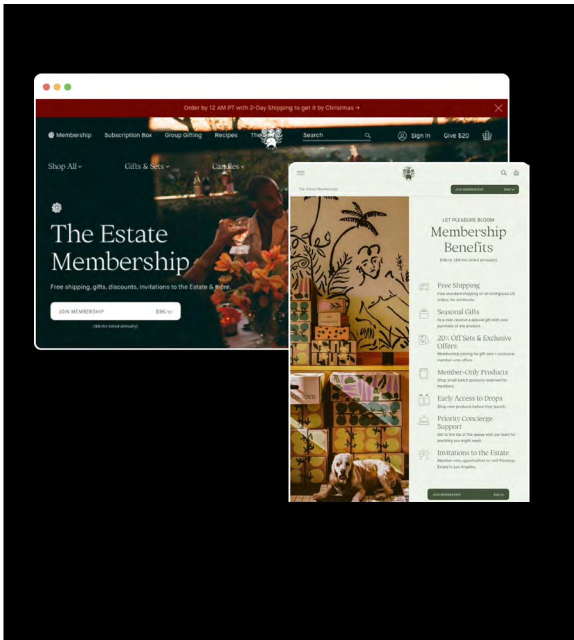
Premium loyalty programs, like membership programs, require customers to pay a recurring fee in order to access exclusive benefits and privileges.

Unlike traditional loyalty programs where membership is free, premium paid loyalty programs give a higher level of rewards and services in exchange for that payment. They will frequently have options and benefits like exclusive products, ongoing discounts, free shipping, or other perks.

With premium paid loyalty programs, the customer is paying to unlock options they wouldn't otherwise have. This is different than the free programs where they aren't getting anything other customers aren't, and just earn the rewards over time/repetition of purchasing.







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So, which loyalty program is better?

Both paid and free loyalty programs have their merits, but paid programs offer certain advantages that can make them more appealing for both the brand and the customers.

1. Better benefits:

Paid loyalty programs often provide more substantial and exclusive benefits compared to free programs. Paid programs can offer premium perks such as free shipping on all orders, member-only pricing, early access to new products, and experiential benefits such as member-only events.

These create a sense of exclusivity and cater to the needs and preferences of the most dedicated customers. It's a channel more tailored for brand enthusiasts and gives them a bigger incentive to stick with one brand versus another.

A free loyalty program doesn't have the same pull for decision-making. If the brand is convenient, great, but the rewards typically aren't so impressive that it's a deal breaker.

2. Higher engagement

Paid loyalty programs target your most committed customers. Traditional, free loyalty programs are given to everyone and aren't necessarily going to make advocates out of people.

By paying a recurring fee, members have a higher level of loyalty and are motivated to maximize the value of their investment. They are voting for a deeper connection with the brand in the most meaningful way possible: with their wallet.

According to Deloitte, more than 2 in 3 consumers identified premium services like expedited shipping as important to their program satisfaction.[7]

3. Revenue generation

Not only do membership fees generate direct revenue for the brand, but they can also increase average order value (AOV).

A study by Forrester highlighted one brand with a 12% increase in AOV after launching their premium loyalty program. At Inveterate, a brand that powers premium loyalty for Shopify storefronts, we have noticed an average 15-20% increase in AOV for our live programs.

This additional revenue stream can help to offset the costs associated with running the program and provide the brand with more resources to invest in this engagement channel, including customer rewards, services, and program enhancements. It can also help with recurring revenue, and forecasting future business offerings and decisions.

Well-crafted premium programs provide immediate, obvious value to customers, making it an easy decision to pay for the program.

4. It's more personal

Traditional loyalty programs are the same for everyone that uses them - paid programs let brands custom-create the things their biggest fans want.

Premium programs acknowledge them as the important buyers they are and give them options and flexibility in benefits. It's far easier to tailor things for the biggest fans a brand has, because their wants are usually common amongst them, unlike a generic loyalty program that is trying to cater to everyone - and is therefore catering to no one.

Navigating the future of e-commerce

It's clear that D2C e-commerce brands need to adapt or face becoming irrelevant as customers choose to interact with brands beyond the digital storefront. In an increasingly multi-channel retail environment, every additional channel represents new opportunities to connect with customers and build brand equity.

The path to creative channel expansion will not always be intuitive or easy for merchants. Maintaining the right infrastructure to manage your channels is a key investment to ensure your business can construct a full brand ecosystem of engagement efforts that complement each other, rather than a patchwork of channels that lack visibility and coordination.

The evolution of brand interactions online means that e-commerce represents far more than just a single channel, paving the way for D2C brands to augment the digital experience. A streamlined combination of direct sales, wholesale, and resale initiatives presents shoppers with an abundance of ways to interact with brands, while investing in post-purchase channels such as email and SMS helps to shorten the path to the next purchase.

Monitoring the success of your existing channels and speaking to customers is an important first step to help you understand where gaps exist in the brand experience and which creative channels can play a role in filling them. As consumer shopping habits continue to shift, staying in the loop with how consumers want to engage with brands online is key to staying relevant and maintaining your competitive edge.

By viewing creative channel expansion as an opportunity for more robust customer interaction, rather than just a way to boost short-term sales, brands can build more sustainable sources of revenue and foster increased trust in their customers.

About Ryder System, Inc.

Ryder System, Inc. (NYSE: R) is a leading logistics and transportation company. It provides supply chain, dedicated transportation, and fleet management solutions, including warehousing and distribution, e-commerce fulfillment, last-mile delivery, managed transportation, professional drivers, freight brokerage, leasing, maintenance, commercial truck rental, and used vehicle sales to some of the world's most-recognized brands. Ryder provides services throughout the United States, Mexico, and Canada. Ryder is regularly recognized for its industry-leading practices in third-party logistics, technology-driven innovations, commercial vehicle maintenance, environmental stewardship, corporate social responsibility, world-class safety, and security programs.

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