Next Practice: Omnichannel Represents an Enterprise-Wide Opportunity

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Oracle Retail's unique breadth enables the all-important 'single view' of inventory, customer and order

For many years, discussions about omnichannel have tended to focus mostly on the *channel*, much to the detriment of the *omni* element. Retail organizations have been kept busy figuring out how to add the latest consumer engagement device or emerging delivery method to their already existing channel-based structures. Meanwhile, the equally important tasks of creating a coherent customer experience across both new and old touchpoints, and of realigning the enterprise so that it matches the contours of a radically reshaped customer journey. Too often, retailers have been forced to play "catch-up" with the scattershot demands involved in adding new channels.

Fortunately, the conversations – and the reality – have both started to shift in a more holistic direction. Part of the motivation for this imperative has come from consumers themselves, and their embrace of always-on, always-present mobile technology. There's been a strong realization that customers no longer think in terms of "channels" (if they ever did), but of brands. Today they are using their mobile devices, along with stores and websites to interact in new ways with the brands they like and trust, in search of the products and services that will meet their needs.

For retail organizations, the implications of this shift are both simple and daunting. If omnichannel is less about the edge device, the channel or the delivery method, and more about creating a coherent experience that's aligned with the customer's journey, these organizations need to achieve:

• An enterprise-wide, single view of their **inventory**;

• A single view of each **customer**; and

• A single view of each **order**.

In short, omnichannel success is every bit as much about the attributes of a core merchandising system as it is about creating an engaging mobile app. Gaining this all-important single view of inventory, customer, and order is the foundation on which all other elements of omnichannel operations need to be built.

Even as retailers increasingly realize this is the right discussion to be having, a number of practical questions arise: How do I get from where I am to this holistic state? Can I leverage the IT investments that I've already made? And is there some logical, best-practice sequence to follow? As an example, begin with e-commerce first, then core merchandising, and then planning?

At Oracle Retail, we believe every company will be starting in a different place and taking a unique path. This is why we offer the breadth of capabilities, applications, and expertise that allow an organization to literally start *anywhere*, building the behind-the-scenes integration fabric that brings together so many different operational and customer interaction elements.

As Senior Vice President and General Manager of Oracle Hospitality and Retail, Mike Webster is the leader of the Retail Global Business Unit. This organization is comprised of over 1,260 retail professionals focused on strategic planning, solution development, solution enablement, consulting, service, support, marketing and sales. Throughout his 28-year career, Mr. Webster has served global retailers in a variety of different roles.

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Oracle's comprehensive retail portfolio, including planning, merchandising, supply chain, commerce, stores, and analytics, are complemented by the company's Commerce Anywhere strategy for improving integration among multiple business processes and the applications that enable those processes. This portfolio has recently been supplemented with the MICROS acquisition, adding key applications around analytics, loyalty, CRM, and order broker/order management capabilities.

In addition, Oracle Retail continues to consistently invest in research and development at a truly disruptive rate. All these factors, along with Oracle Retail's extensive partner network, enable retailers to go beyond catching up with *best* practice, enabling them to define their own blueprints for delivering on *next* practice.

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