

Ecommerce platforms

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Laying the foundations for success

Retailers are considering their customers' needs when choosing the platform they'll use to serve them, writes **Chloe Rigby**

TODAY'S ADVANCED COMMERCE platforms sit at the centre of the retail business and underpin a seamless customer experience, regardless of whether the shopper is visiting the website, the mobile site or app, or ordering from the store. Retailers that have a single view of the customer can be sure that their shoppers have a consistent experience every time they visit. By also enabling a single view of stock, retailers are able to serve shoppers with an alternative item, from the most convenient and profitable location.

Since this seamless experience rests on fully understanding the customer through joined-up data, modern commerce platforms should support and connect that data collection. Most platforms are now available in the cloud, as a service paid for on a monthly basis, as well as in the more traditional on-premises, fully paid for version. The advantage of cloud is that platforms are updated regularly but even on this model, none will include all the latest technologies and functionality. With that in mind, platform providers now work with a wide range of partners that can provide the add-on functionalities that enable retailers to meet their specific customer demands. Most platforms have open APIs that enable such technologies to be added on easily.

It's important for platforms to enable transactional websites that make sense to customers, whether they're viewed from a mobile device, a desktop computer or, in the future, from other devices. Mobile-first design means that sites make sense however they are viewed and today, most commerce platforms will support responsive design that shows a site to its best advantage through a range of devices.

It's also important for retail websites to be understood by customers wherever they are. In the not-too-distant past, retailers turned to different platforms to enable their international websites. Now they are moving

towards running all their websites from a single platform in order to ensure that the same data can feed consistent content across all the sites. Ensuring that a platform can scale resources to enable this to happen may be important for any retail strategy involving expansion.

Some traders are also experimenting with different ways to buy a product, from regular subscriptions to paying to share items such as cars and bicycles. Flexible platforms that can support services such as these, and, indeed, services and devices that are yet to be invented, will stand retailers and brands in good stead.

Future developments

Automation is already being used in retail and current evidence suggests it will only become more widely used in future. Shop Direct Group retailer Very is among the pioneers of chatbots and its Very Assistant, located in the Very app, responds to customers' enquiries about orders, delivery and payment.

The H&M app uses machine learning in a My Style section to provide shoppers with a personalised feed of shoppable images from Instagram. The Missguided app features recommendations for customers based on a Tinder-style fashion recommendation engine which learns as the user swipes left for 'nah' and right for 'love'. Machine learning also powers the voice interfaces deployed in smart assistants such as Amazon's Alexa and Google Home, for which third-party retailers including Tesco and Ocado have developed their own apps.

Until very recently, these technologies have predominantly been developed in-house in tech centres run by retailers including Amazon, Ocado and Shop Direct. But commerce platform providers are now launching their own artificial intelligence platforms that, acting as data hubs, can power Internet of Things technologies and machine learning as well as cognitive

Ampersand helps retailers create better ecommerce experiences.

Ten issues to consider

1 CLOUD OR ON PREMISES? Cloud can enable retailers to draw on more resources at times of peak demand but some still prefer the certainty, security and financial model of the owned on-premises solution.

2 WHICH FEATURES? Consider how shoppers want to use your website when considering which range of features are absolute must-haves and which are far less important.

3 BEST OF BREED: It makes sense to go above and beyond where that's a clear imperative for a retailer's audience. The broader the range, the more sophisticated site search is needed, while luxury fashion retailers would seem most likely to need high-end visual content.

4 PAYMENTS THAT WORK: Platform providers will likely offer a range of ways to pay, reflecting the variety of retailers' business models.

5 LEGACY ISSUES: Few retailers now start from scratch with a new platform. Ensure that new models can integrate into existing legacy software.

6 MOBILE FIRST? More websites are now built for customers who increasingly shop via their smartphone. Expect shopping devices and preferences to change again at some point in the future, then bake in the required agility to adapt to whatever emerges.

7 KPIS: By measuring the metrics that are important to their business, retailers can scope out the platforms they're considering and, once installed, ensure they're meeting expectations.

8 TIMELINES: By getting up and running as quickly as possible, retailers can subsequently tweak platforms while they're in service rather than waiting until they are completely finalised.

9 STAY LEAN: By focusing on features their customers must have, retailers can avoid paying for the development of unnecessary and unused extras.

10 PARTNER NETWORKS: Many platform providers work with a range of third-party providers to enable extra functionality. Consider going down this route during the scoping-out process.

predictive solutions. Expect these to improve as artificial intelligence develops beyond the machine learning that is currently most widely available. Retailers currently use these new platforms as an add-on to boost the power of existing commerce platforms but in future, they may become an integral part of them.

Looking to the future, we can expect to see platforms become ever-more flexible as they are called on to power commerce in a retail environment where customers will demand a consistent experience whether they are on a retailer's website or on social media, shopping with a smartphone, from a laptop or tablet computer, or from other devices altogether. Virtual and augmented reality may move beyond the screen to headsets or other devices that have yet to become popular.

By opting for platform providers that demonstrate agility and innovation in their roadmaps for the future,

retailers can build-in some of that ability to respond fast when customers inevitably demand changes to the way they are served.

In summary

The commerce platform provides the skeleton on which retailers can hang their retail transaction and data gathering operations. Choosing that system is important both to meet customers' current demands and also to meet the as-yet-unknown demands of the future. Agility, flexibility and a capacity to grow are key for retailers and brands when they select the technology that will be central to their businesses for many more years to come.



Ampersand can help you build flexible ecommerce systems and websites that drive sales across channels.

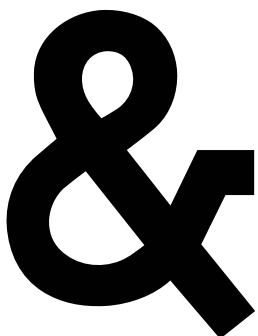
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The 'farmer's wife experience' and other musings

ON A VISIT to a local market earlier this year, my wife and I met a farmer who encouraged us to try his tomatoes. He wasn't just a farmer but a salesman too and, before long, we had agreed to cancel our weekly veg box subscription with a national company and order from him.

Recently, about to go away for a while, we needed to suspend our order. My wife emailed customer services and received a warm response – "Of course, it won't be a problem... all the veggie best!" She was delighted that this personal email came directly from the wife of the farmer we had met. Theirs is clearly a family business, with the same husband and wife team that grows and picks our veg selling the product and communicating with customers.

What's my point? It's that there is a human element that will never be replaced by technology, in retail and elsewhere. What I hope is that technology can augment that humanity in order to serve customers more effectively.

Not every business can offer the 'farmer's wife' experience, but delighting your customers can be done in various ways. Make your website easy to browse across multiple devices, for example. Pay special attention to usability on your mobile website. Make it simple for customers to find your stores and buy or reserve in-store stock. Offer a persistent cart across devices. Make your delivery and returns policies easy to read and understand. Make a unique product or support a cause that your customers believe in. Offer multiple delivery options. Online or in-store, incremental changes such as any or all of the above can be truly impactful if your decisions are data-driven and deliberate.

While the media speaks of rapid change in the retail industry, there are a couple things that have remained constant over the past few years. Firstly, ecommerce (including mobile) is growing, and secondly, consumers still like to go to the shops. The retailers who are investing in multichannel customer experience are going to be the future leaders in our industry.

Consumers still like the immediacy and experience of shopping in-store but they don't like queues. According to a recent study by Adyen, 78% of consumers want to buy or reserve before going into a store. As more people are shopping on-the-go, centralising stock data and offering mobile services such as immediate 'click-and-collect' or 'reserve-and-collect' is becoming more important than ever before.

According to Ampersand's latest Mobile Retail Report, the appetite for cross-channel, mobile-initiated purchasing has increased by 19% since 2014, with 56% of smartphone owners now having researched products on their mobile with the intent of purchasing later in-store. However, only 30% of retailers offer a store stock check from their ecommerce websites. Centralising data – ideally both stock and customer data – isn't easy or cheap, but the reward for doing it sooner than later is great and long-lasting.

Choosing what technologies will form the foundations for your multichannel services can be overwhelming, especially when many platforms seem to offer very similar features. The truth is that platforms will never be as innovative as retailers. Whatever technologies you choose, ultimately, it comes down to ROI. Investing millions into your website does not mean that it will be inundated with sales.

You have your data, so act on it. Build the stuff you know you need. Investing in your ecommerce website and systems in the ways that matter to your customers will encourage them to be loyal to you instead of turning to your competitors.

Ampersand offers free mobile and multichannel retail benchmarking tools online to help retailers define their multichannel roadmaps. See what's available from us and download information directly from the Ampersand website – amp.co/retail-reports. Thanks for reading.

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Customers:

Aegean Airlines
Amadeus
Crew Clothing
EE
John Lewis
Tesco Mobile

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As the world's largest and most trusted cloud delivery platform, Akamai makes it easier for its customers to provide the best and most secure digital experiences on any device, anytime, anywhere. Akamai's massively distributed platform is unparalleled in scale, with over 200,000 servers across 130 countries giving customers superior performance and threat protection. Akamai's portfolio of web and mobile performance, cloud security, enterprise access and video delivery solutions is supported by exceptional customer service and 24/7 monitoring. To learn why the top financial institutions, media and entertainment providers, ecommerce leaders and government organisations trust Akamai, visit www.akamai.com, blogs.akamai.com or @Akamai on Twitter.

Customers:

Airbnb
AO.com
Fruugo.com
Jet2.com
Ocado
Office
Shop Direct
Urban Outfitters

Partners:

activereach
BT
Capgemini
GlobalDots
IBM
Trustwave

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AmperSand is an award-winning agency that helps retailers create better ecommerce experiences. AmperSand architects lasting multichannel retail systems and builds ecommerce websites that drive sales across channels. AmperSand values customer collaboration and works with high-growth retailers to help increase conversion and drive efficiency through the strategic use of technology. Through agile delivery and accelerated builds, AmperSand can deliver flexible ecommerce systems quickly at a fixed fee. AmperSand's primary ecommerce technology suite includes Magento (ecommerce platform), Fredhopper (merchandising), Akeneo (PIM) and snow.io (IPaaS).

Customers:

Bensons for Beds
The Book People
Harveys
Harvey Nichols
Hillarys (Web Blinds)
Interflora
Moda in Pelle
Regatta Outdoor Clothing

Partners:

Akeneo
Fredhopper
Magento
Snow.io

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Tell us about your company and ambitions and we'll make the complex world of payment acceptance simple, wherever and however you sell to customers. Customer demands are constantly evolving. They want choice – of products and services, channels to browse on and buy from, and ways to pay. They also want to know that their personal and payment data is safe. Give your customers an easy, quick, secure way to buy from you by partnering with Barclaycard Business. Join the thousands of businesses who already rely on us to give them the right solution for now, and to pioneer new forms of payment to stay ahead of customer demand. From micro-businesses to multichannel global brands, our client trusts us to be at the forefront of payment innovations.

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CHANNEL ADVISOR

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ChannelAdvisor (NYSE: ECOM) is a leading provider of cloud-based ecommerce solutions that enable retailers and branded manufacturers to integrate, manage and optimise their merchandise sales across hundreds of online channels including Amazon, Google, eBay, Walmart and Facebook. Through automation, analytics and optimisation, its customers can leverage a single inventory feed to more efficiently list and advertise products online. Billions of dollars of merchandise are driven through ChannelAdvisor's platform annually, with thousands of customers using its solutions to help grow their businesses.

Suppliers:

Boohoo.com
Debenhams
Dune London
H&M
JD Williams

Partners:

Amazon
Cdiscount
eBay
Facebook
Google
Tmall
Zalando

CRAFTY CLICKS LTD**clicktoaddress**

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Crafty Clicks is a specialist provider of address capture and validation solutions. Our ClickToAddress technology helps streamline checkouts and registration pages and ensures accuracy of captured customer data.

- Reduced checkout friction – auto-complete function on the address forms makes checkout and registration forms user friendly and quick to fill out.
- Better address data quality – addresses are validated at the point of capture, improving delivery success rates and ensuring complete customer satisfaction.

Customers:

B&Q
Clintons
Deichmann
Moonpig
PrettyLittleThing
Ryman Stationery
Robert Dyas
Virgin Trains

Partners:

Amazon AWS
Dyn Inc
HERE
Royal Mail

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Criteo (NASDAQ: CRTO), the leader in commerce marketing, is building the highest-performing and open commerce marketing ecosystem to drive profits and sales for retailers and brands. More than 2,700 Criteo team members partner with 17,000 customers and thousands of publishers across the globe to deliver performance at scale by connecting shoppers to the things they need and love. Designed for commerce, Criteo's Commerce Marketing Ecosystem sees over \$550bn in annual commerce sales data. For more information, please visit www.criteo.com.

Customers:

Clarks
JD Williams
La Redoute
New Look
Secret Escapes
TravelRepublic

GREENLIGHT COMMERCE**greenlight**
commerce

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Greenlight Commerce is an award-winning, digital commerce agency that specialises in implementing SAP Hybris Commerce and Salesforce Commerce Cloud platforms. Our team of experts apply creativity and a deep understanding of your business to deliver platforms for digital growth. Using tried and tested processes, we build omnichannel experiences and service offerings that give you the edge in the marketplace. Part of the Greenlight group, we are a full-service partner, giving our customers the expertise and technology to deliver digital growth across all areas, in the one place.

Customers

BHS
Euronics
Furniture Village
Liberty London
Maplin
Master of Malt
RB

Partners:

In Cloud Solutions
Ingenico ePayments
Salesforce Commerce
Cloud
SAP Hybris



Ampersand can help you build flexible ecommerce systems and websites that drive sales across channels.

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iAdvize is a conversational marketing platform which generates a turnover of more than €1bn each year for more than 600 businesses in 60 countries. With iAdvize, businesses can predict and engage contact opportunities in real-time with their customers and prospects. They are connected via messaging, with experts available 24/7.

Customers:

Air France
BMW
Christian Dior
Europcar
House of Fraser
Lacoste
Matches Fashion
TUI

Partners:

Armatis LC
Atos
Buw Digital
Havas Media
Ignition One
Lithium
Prosodie CapGemini
The Links

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Klarna was founded in 2005 in Stockholm with the aim of making it easier for people to shop online. In the last 12 years, technology has evolved, transforming the world around us, yet our mission remains as relevant as ever –to make paying as simple, safe and smooth as possible. Klarna is now one of Europe's largest banks and is providing payment solutions for 60m consumers across 70,000 merchants in 18 countries. Klarna offers direct payments, pay after delivery options and instalment plans with a smooth one-click purchase experience that lets consumers pay when and how they prefer to. Klarna is backed by investors such as Sequoia Capital, Bestseller, Permira, Visa and Atomico.

Customers:

Arcadia Group
ASOS
Finery London
HYPE
JD Sports
Maplin
Schuh

Partners:

Adyen
Magento
Demandware
Hybris
Shopify
Stripe
Woocommerce
Worldpay

KPS AG



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KPS is Europe's leading management consulting firm for retail business transformation and process implementation. We offer end-to-end strategy and process consulting, with extensive implementation expertise in digital customer management, ecommerce and ERP. Our customers profit from the experience and deep sector knowledge of our consultants, which allows them to drive omnichannel and digital transformation projects to success. With its proprietary Rapid Transformation® methodology, KPS has cut project turnaround times by up to 50%. We are based in Munich, with additional locations across Germany, Denmark, Austria, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the US. KPS plans to expand further into the retail sector with innovative digital transformation projects.

Customers:

Arla
Dansk Supermarked
Delvaux
Electrolux
Hugo Boss
Lidl
Puma
SportScheck

Partners:

Adobe
Hybris
Intershop
SAP

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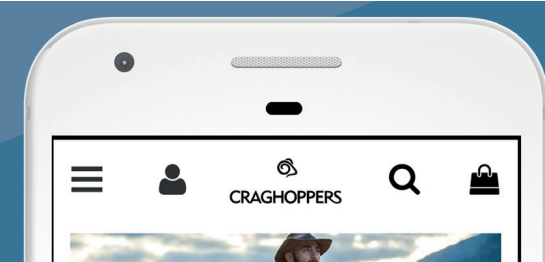
Lengow is the ecommerce automation solution that helps brands and distributors improve their performance, automate their business processes, and grow internationally. The Lengow platform is the key to strong profitability and visibility for products sold by online retailers around the world on all distribution channels: marketplaces, comparison shopping engines, affiliate platforms and display/retargeting platforms. Since 2009, Lengow has integrated more than 1,800 partners into its solution to provide a powerful platform to its 3,600 retailers in 45 countries around the world.

Customers:

Emma Bridgewater
L'Oreal Paris
Mango
MatchesFashion
Nespresso
Nisbets
Ted Baker
Uniqlo

Partners:

Affiliate Window
Amazon
eBay
Facebook
Google
La Redoute
Instagram
Pinterest



Ampersand can help you build flexible
ecommerce systems and websites
that drive sales across channels.

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MAGINUS SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS

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Magnus

Whether you're a retailer, wholesale distributor, online pureplay or mail-order company, Magnus' core solutions are designed to meet your specific business needs. Magnus aims to take the stress and uncertainty off our customers' shoulders through the provision of industry-specific solutions based on world-leading technology platforms. Magnus' solutions include in-store technology, merchandising and warehouse management systems for processing sales and fulfilling orders as well as some of the leading eCommerce solutions in the industry.

Magnus has unique experience in integrating these technologies, to provide a true omnichannel platform.

Customers:

Bettys & Taylors
The Card Factory
The Co-op Electrical
Habitat
Nisbets
RSPB
SMEG

Partners:

EPiServer
iCore Solutions
Magento
Microsoft
Sana

PARASPAR **paraspar**

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Paraspar is a trusted ecommerce solutions provider. We provide market-leading on-site search, autocomplete, visual and self-learning merchandising automation with content integration.

Our clients have direct access to a team of experts that brings together skills in online retail strategy, project management, UX design, search merchandising, systems integration, online marketing and application management. We help clients attract, engage and convert customers across online, mobile and in-store channels. Contact us to explore your requirements.

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7Liverpool
Crew clothing
Dune London
Foot Asylum
Harvie & Hudson
Lombok

Partners:

Amplience
Attenda
Nosto
Postcode Anywhere
Rackspace
Sage Pay

PFS**P F S**

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PFS is a global commerce service provider of solutions including digital strategy consulting, digital agency and marketing services, technology development services, business process outsourcing services and a complete omnichannel technology ecosystem. The company seeks to optimise every customer experience and enhance the traditional and online business channels of clients across numerous industries. PFS is solution agnostic, with strong and longstanding partnerships with the major enterprise commerce platform providers, which results in the best technologies being utilised for each implementation. PFS has offices across three continents in North America, Europe and Asia.

Customers:

ASICS
Anastasia Beverly Hills
Barbour
Gore
The Entertainer
L'Oréal
Pandora

Partners:

SalesForce Commerce Cloud
SAP Hybris
IBM
Magento
Oracle Commerce

POQ

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Poq, the app commerce company, is a Software-as-a-Service that empowers retailers to create highly effective and customised native apps. These allow retailers to build stringer brands, sell more products, deepen customer loyalty and deliver relevant content, communications and rewards.

Our platform is the result of years of focus on retail apps and is proven to increase conversion rates and revenue. New code is rolled out every week and new releases delivered every quarter. Clients include the UK's largest brands and department store retailers.

Customers:

Beauty Bay
Holland & Barrett
Hotel Chocolat
JD Williams
MADE.com
Missguided
Pretty Little Thing
Quiz

Partners:

Attract
Braintree
Hybris
Magento
Stripe
Urban Airship
Salesforce Commerce Cloud

Ampersand helps retailers create better ecommerce experiences.

SALESFORCE COMMERCE CLOUD

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www.salesforce.com/uk/products/commerce-cloud/overview/



Salesforce Commerce Cloud powers commerce operations across all points of sale, including web, social, mobile, in-store and more. The leading enterprise cloud commerce solution, it allows the world's top retail brands to continuously innovate in the complex, consumer-driven world. Now, as part of the world's number-one CRM platform, Commerce Cloud is uniquely positioned to empower companies to deliver a consistent brand experience throughout the customer lifecycle. By leveraging Salesforce's leading sales, service, marketing, communities, analytics, IoT and platform solutions, brands and retailers can ensure every engagement, regardless of channel or device, is completely unified.

Customers:

Bally
Boohoo.Com
Cole Haan
Marks & Spencer
Oasis
PUMA Europe
Sonos
Vibram

Partners:

Accenture
Astound Commerce
Capgemini
Deloitte
Isobar Ecommerra
OSF Premier Services
PFS
Tryzens

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RETAIL SOLUTIONS LTD**

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With more than 25 years of multichannel retail experience, Sanderson helps brands to navigate the complexities of today's retail and wholesale markets, sell across multiple sales channels, achieve a single view of customers and stock, and offer flexible fulfilment and delivery options. Our retail ERP software covers B2C/B2B channels, warehouse management & fulfilment, delivery integration and returns, purchasing, marketplace order management, ecommerce, EPoS, and digital store solutions.

Customers:

Axminster Tools
Beaverbrooks
Clipper
Hotel Chocolat
Joe Browns
Office
Thorntons
Tottenham Hotspur

Partners:

AFD
CyberSource
Datalogic
Global-e
MetaPack
Sage Pay
Verifone

SHOPWARE AG

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Shopware is a leading open source ecommerce platform that is trusted by over 60,000 businesses, including some of the leading European brands, retailers and manufacturers across B2C and B2B industries. Shopware has a global network of 1,200+ solution and technology partners as well as a very active developer community that gives customers access to robust third-party extensions and certified professional support. Shopware is the industry's leading feature-rich, highly scalable, enterprise-class platform, with a full suite of out-of-the-box capabilities and lower total cost of ownership.

Customers:

Hughes
Mywalit
OOZZ
Sysmex
Tigha

Partners:

CB Squared
GPMD
Inviqa
LiberoNet
One Creations
Pushon
Reply
StudioForty9

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Sitecore is the global leader in experience management software that enables context marketing. The Sitecore® Experience Platform™ manages content, supplies contextual intelligence, automates communications and enables personalised commerce, at scale. It empowers marketers to deliver content in context of how customers have engaged with their brand, across every channel, in real-time, before, during and after a sale. More than 5,300 brands have trusted Sitecore for context marketing to manage and deliver the type of meaningful personalised interactions that delight audiences, build loyalty and drive revenue.

Customers:

American Express
Carnival Cruise Lines
easyJet
L'Oréal

Ampersand helps retailers create better ecommerce experiences.

TRUSTPILOT

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Trustpilot is the leading global review platform helping businesses collect customer reviews and leverage them to boost traffic, sales, and revenue. Currently boasting over 35 million reviews of 200,000 businesses, Trustpilot has become a global consumer community that builds trust between consumers and businesses. Trustpilot's solution helps businesses to automate review collection, moderate and engage with reviews, and syndicate reviews throughout search and on-site, driving more traffic and boosting conversions.

Customers:

Argos
Autotrader
Purplebricks
Sage
Specsavers
Superdry
Three
Wordpress

Partners:

BigCommerce
Facebook
Google
Hootsuite
Magento
Shopify
WooCommerce
Zendesk

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Pentagon is a market-leading service and technology provider that enables retailers to accelerate their online growth through international marketplaces worldwide. Using a team of more than 150 ecommerce experts, we optimise and localise data, integrate to new ecommerce platforms, connect stock management and order managements systems to marketplaces, launch and manage online stores, drive ecommerce sales, handle international logistics and returns, and provide multilingual customer service. Our tiered service offering provides retailers with a tailored solution to meet their unique requirements, from a robust technical integration to fully managed online stores across multiple international platforms.

Customers:

Ann Summers
BMW
Canon
Dyson
Next
Halfords
Nissan
Renault

Partners:

Amazon
eBay
Lazada
Myntra
Newegg
Privalia
Rakuten Ichiba
Cdiscount

WONDER LISTER

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Wonder Lister was created by a former eBay Engineer, Chavi Rastogi, in 2013. Chavi worked at eBay for more than a decade managing various seller tools. There he saw the constant struggle that online sellers were having because they had no choice but to use slow, unstable and inefficient listing tools. He created Wonder Lister to help alleviate these problems, and designed it from the ground up to be an easy-to-use, fast and reliable desktop application loaded with powerful features. Online sellers across 22 countries are using Wonder Lister to help grow their ecommerce business. Join one of the fastest-growing online listing tools in the market!

Ampersand can help you build flexible
ecommerce systems and websites
that drive sales across channels.

amp.co



AMPERSAND

Darryl Adie

Managing Director



Tell us about your company's USP

Ampersand is an ecommerce agency that's focused on complex implementations for mid-market retailers and brands. We create ecommerce websites and all the systems around them faster than our competitors and with a lower cost of ownership compared to enterprise solutions.

What is your strategic vision?

We make a real effort to build well-architected, long-lasting systems on which we can build a relationship with our clients. Some agencies would be comfortable with a shorter-term engagement with customers but for us, a five-year engagement with a customer is not unusual. There are two parts to it for us: the overall solutions and the ecommerce website.

What is your business currently doing in the ecommerce/multichannel market?

We are working with a number of key technologies that we've adopted because we think they are best-in-class within the mid-market. We're working on ways to build them into a solution that competes with enterprise solutions without all the legacy and overheads of working with a big enterprise provider. For us, it's about working with some smaller, as well as some bigger, technology platforms, and integrating them into a meaningful solution for retailers. We can then offer customers a solution with a timescale and cost that is more competitive than the much bigger enterprise solutions. That works really well for our mid-market customers.

Tell us about the latest service that you have launched for retail clients

We're building solution accelerators to allow us to deploy ecommerce, PIM, integration, search and merchandising

AMPERSAND IN BRIEF

Date launched: 2009

Reach: Based in the UK, works with clients in the UK and internationally

Turnover: £3.2m

Customers: Bensons for Beds, Harveys Furniture, Hillary's (Web Blinds), Regatta Outdoor Clothing, Interflora, The Book People, Bensons for Beds, Harveys, Harvey Nichols, Moda in Pelle, Interflora, Demon Tweaks

Number of employees: 50

Website: www.amp.co

For more information: contact Darryl Adie, CEO – da@amp.co or 0161 236 5504

Our mid-market customers want to be doing implementations in a 12-month window rather than two years, and sometimes a lot faster than that.

Darryl Adie, Managing Director

in one package in a very short period of time. By accelerating the process, we aim to get retailers to the point where they can put something live much, much faster. We're able to look at all those areas and ship the whole solution as an enterprise product would, but in months rather than years.

We hear all the time from people that they need to move so much quicker. When we win opportunities, it's because we can often do things in half the time that a bigger supplier would take. If you take two years to build a project, by the time you get halfway through, there will be things you will have missed, or no longer necessary, or even out of date.

How does this compare to what your competitors are doing?

Our competitor platforms are acquiring multiple businesses and packaging them up into an all-encompassing

solution, then shipping them through solution partners. I guess their customers get a package with a single logo on it that's been sold as an integrated solution, but often it isn't quite that simple, certainly not to start with. The size of those systems and the way they're built can mean they take a long time to implement.

By contrast, we're taking mid-market solutions that are more agile and we're integrating those together at speed before deploying them together. This gives our clients flexibility around, for example, which PIM they want to use in a hybrid model.

Who are your customers?

They are mid-market retailers with a high level of complexity. That might mean they are multi-brand, have a large number of SKUs, are B2B, or all of the above. They might be doing international as well. Time to market is key for our customers. They want to be doing implementations in a 12-month window rather than two years, and sometimes a lot faster than that.

We have most recently deployed an implementation for the Regatta Group, which includes four of their brands. We also continue to work with Web-Blinds, Interflora and Harvey Nichols, amongst many others.

How do you see the ecommerce/multichannel industry developing in the future, and how will your business adapt to that?

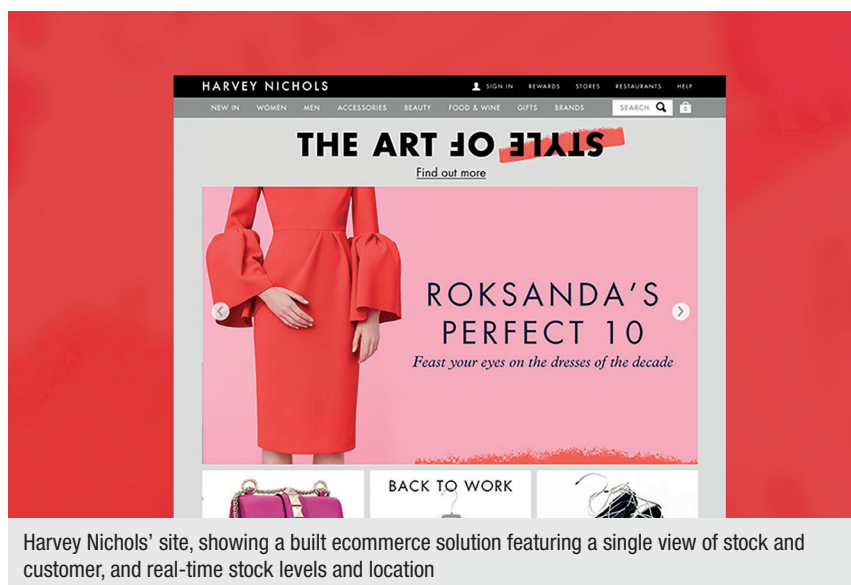
For me, the thing that I think will go away is the talk of specific devices. That discussion of desktop versus mobile versus tablet will start to go away as shoppers adopt more and more varied ways of interacting with retailers. There are things that seem a long way off but that will have the same impact on the need for technology to change.

If you think about virtual reality, that's not anywhere near being adopted in the mainstream by retailers, but it requires an approach where retailers have the flexibility to be able to add and take away those interfaces, or touchpoints, in a very straightforward way.

In the short-to-medium term it's going to be about screens but I think things are going in the direction of headless commerce – where customers transact with brands wherever they are, rather than solely via a website. I think a lot of technology stacks will struggle to cope with that because a lot of retailers and platforms are still differentiating between doing an implementation for mobile, doing one for desktop, doing one for tablet and doing yet another for a mobile app. I think a lot of retailers already feel that is unsustainable, or it's too much to manage.

The only way to deal with that is to make those systems agnostic to the devices that ultimately consume the content they're pushing out. The big challenges, both for software vendors and for retailers, will be how do we make that agnostic, flexible approach, and what do retailers want to support or invest in?

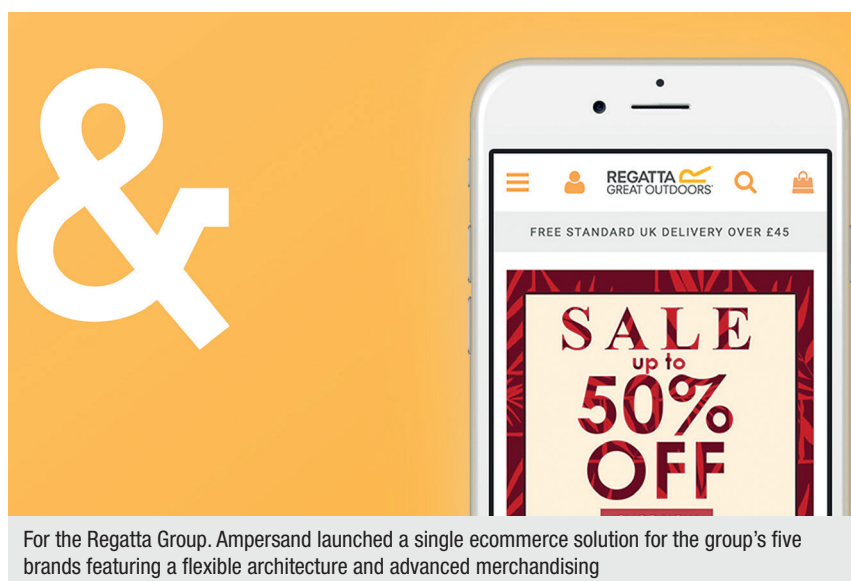
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Harvey Nichols' site, showing a built ecommerce solution featuring a single view of stock and customer, and real-time stock levels and location



For Poundland, Ampersand launched the retailer's ecommerce trial, featuring single item and bulk sales, gamification and geolocation



For the Regatta Group, Ampersand launched a single ecommerce solution for the group's five brands featuring a flexible architecture and advanced merchandising