

# Omnichannel 101:

## Master Your Retail Omnichannel Strategy With Your Delivery Provider







## Omnichannel 101: What's it all about?

Due to the rise of technology, our lives are becoming more intertwined with the internet. In 2020, it's estimated 31.38 million Canadians use a smartphone – approximately 83% of our population.<sup>1</sup> This always-connected lifestyle makes customers crave an instant availability of information and products. The result? These expectations have significantly changed the relationship between a retailer and the customer.

Shoppers are getting closer to having what they want when they want it – whatever “it” is. When COVID-19 spread around the world in March 2020, people were mandated to limit spending time outside of their homes, especially for activities that could be completed inside. While many businesses were already [selling online](#), or at least providing in-store or curbside pickup, the need for an omnichannel strategy had never been more prevalent to capture a customer base. Instead of face-to-face interactions, communication is often via digital channels,

especially during the pandemic. And, regardless of digital constraints, consumers still want a personalized, convenient and reliable experience.

This guide uncovers the importance of an omnichannel strategy and how it can benefit your business. We also discuss how you can work with a logistics provider to leverage a seamless omnichannel strategy throughout the customer journey.

### **Keep reading to learn how an omnichannel strategy can help your business:**

- ✓ Stay competitive and expand your reach.
- ✓ Personalize the shopping experience for each customer.
- ✓ Standardize your brand across all channels.

## Explaining the retail buzzword of the 2010s

In the past decade, omnichannel has become one of the fastest-growing concepts for retailers and consumers alike. Omnichannel started as an unfamiliar marketing approach. Then it transitioned into a trendy retail buzzword. And now it's a must-have component for successful marketing.

### What is “omnichannel”?

Often confused with multichannel, omnichannel is a holistic approach to servicing customers.<sup>2</sup> By breaking down the silos of different marketing and sales channels, customers are provided a consistent and seamless experience, regardless of whether they jump from channel-to-channel or person-to-chatbot.

### Multichannel vs. omnichannel. What's the difference?



#### Multichannel

Multichannel takes a product-centric approach to meet customer expectations by letting them purchase “anytime, anywhere”. With multichannel, a customer's information and their buying journey remains separate for each channel. Each channel has a different strategy and way of communicating, making less of a personal and streamlined customer experience.



#### Omnichannel

Omnichannel takes a customer-centric approach.<sup>3</sup> With omnichannel, there's no siloed information. Customer information is accessible and utilized by all channels, regardless of how many different channels a consumer takes to complete a single shopping journey.

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The distinction between omnichannel and multichannel is slight, but it makes all the difference in customer experience. Both multichannel and omnichannel focus on the customer journey, and shoppers can engage with your brand through their channel of choice.

### Why is it important to create and utilize an omnichannel strategy?

Shoppers nowadays don't just want to be able to shop wherever they like, they want to be remembered too. A study by Salesforce shows that 75% of consumers anticipate a consistent experience wherever and whenever they engage.<sup>4</sup> This is made possible by using an omnichannel strategy, leveraging the same customer

data, preferences and shopping habits across all channels. Each customer's experience is seamless, simple and intuitive, thanks to their profile and shopping data following them however they choose to interact.

## Understanding the omnichannel strategy throughout the buyer journey

With customers using multiple channels for shopping, businesses need to meet them wherever they are within their personal buyer journey. Below are the five stages of the customer shopping journey within an omnichannel experience. The variety of touchpoints demonstrate many of the options a customer can

take. Note that the omnichannel journey is cyclical – customers can join the journey from different stages or skip stages. Therefore, it's important to provide a consistent experience across all touchpoints.

### 1. Product Awareness

Customers first become aware of the brand and product through different marketing channels.

- In-store
- Online
- Mailed promotions
- Word of mouth
- Mobile ads

### 2. Research

Interested shoppers research the product and business to decide whether it's right for them.

- Search engines
- Reading reviews on the product and brand
- Querying in-store
- Viewing the brand's social media pages

### 3. Purchase

Depending on their channel of choice, customers will make their purchase.

- Through a brand's website
- On a personal mobile device
- In-store checkout
- Self-checkout kiosk

### 5. Post-Purchase

Customers continue to evaluate the brand. Their overall purchase satisfaction influences [brand loyalty](#).

- Flexible return policy
- General customer support
- Providing reviews on their experience via online channels, phone or in-store

### 4. Delivery

While home deliveries are popular, consumers may request to ship packages elsewhere.

- To a home address
- To a work address
- In-store pick-up
- Parcel lockers
- Alternative pick-up location





## The importance of the delivery, throughout the buyer journey

The delivery may be one section of the buyer journey, but it plays a much bigger part than it sometimes gets credit for. Even before the purchase, buyers contemplate the shipping speed and cost. Before opening their package customers assess their experience again, noticing factors such as the accuracy of shipment speed, the package condition and the experience with the courier. Even beyond receiving the package, the delivery service sets the expectation for future purchases with your business.





## How COVID-19 reinforced the importance of an existing omnichannel strategy

The unprecedented growth of e-commerce took all retailers by surprise. In fact, the first quarter of 2020 reported 10 years of e-commerce growth in just those 90 days.<sup>4</sup> Even after the first wave of COVID-19, consumers continued to rely on e-commerce for making purchases. Where in-store browsing wasn't allowed, shoppers became accustomed with buying online, and sometimes picking up in-store, or curbside pick-up.

This transition meant a lot of brick-and-mortar stores had to quickly change their supply chain strategy – product shipments needed to be more efficient for direct-to-customer deliveries and they required a streamlined process in place for in-store or curbside pick up. In practice, these adaptations take meticulous planning and time to execute, neither of which were available. Supply chains broke down, causing out-of-stock items and longer timeframes to fulfil each order. Due to this, online-only retailers (that were online prior to COVID-19) had higher satisfaction rates than brick-and-mortar stores with online sites and pick-up options. Not only does this show the importance of a strong omnichannel strategy, it also showcases that the delivery experience as an integral part of the buyer journey – throughout the journey.



Consumers have been most satisfied with their shopping experiences from online-only retailers, with a survey showing a 93% satisfaction.<sup>5</sup>





Shoppers weren't only turning straight to an e-commerce site during COVID-19. While many people were stuck at home, streaming videos quickly became an important pastime – YouTube saw a rise of 500% in views on March 15, 2020, compared to daily averages throughout the rest of the year. Meanwhile, TikTok leveraged the rise in activity by launching a way for brands to sell products directly from the platform.<sup>6</sup> With this in mind, marketers (particularly in retail) spent more on influencer marketing than ever before.<sup>7</sup>



# 76%

of Canadians will continue to use online delivery from large retailers when things go “back to normal”.<sup>5</sup>



# Using an omnichannel strategy to stay competitive and expand your reach

Even before COVID-19, the days where consumers only engage with your business through one channel were long gone. Instead, 73% of consumers today jump back and forth between interacting with a business online and in-person.<sup>8</sup> To stay competitive, businesses must consider all the viable channels – both online and offline – to expand their reach, collect more consumer data and provide a holistic experience.



## 73%

of consumers today jump back and forth between interacting with a business online and in-person.<sup>7</sup>

### Take advantage of offline channels.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and health considerations, it's predicted that 90% of brick-and-mortar retailers will offer BOPIS (buy online, pick-up in store) by 2021.<sup>9</sup> Although online shopping is contributing to the closure of some brick-and-mortar businesses currently, there are many buyers who prefer in-store pick-up. 73% of BOPIS shoppers prefer in-person pick-ups to avoid shipping fees,<sup>10</sup> but this isn't the only reason – a lack of internet accessibility, personal preferences or seeing an item in-person before purchasing also play a part. Advertise in-store pick-up as a free and convenient alternative to customers who are happy to safely travel to your nearest location. When in-store shopping makes its comeback, there will be potential to upsell other in-store products to BOPIS customers.

### Exhaust all your online opportunities.

Having an [e-commerce website](#) doesn't quite cut it anymore. Today, over 75% of adults jump from one device to another when starting and finishing an activity,<sup>11</sup> such as shopping. To generate the maximum leads and sales, businesses need to meet their customers wherever they're searching. Among other options, you can use Google My Business; claim your business on review sites; use social media platforms; apply email marketing, run Facebook and Google ads, and work with influencers. And it's not just your visibility that's improved. By utilizing these online channels, you're taking further control of your online presence and strengthening your brand voice.

E-commerce has never been more important. Read our guide on how you can [elevate your online presence](#).





## Some ways to drive your online sales even further

- ✓ Use Google My Business
- ✓ Claim your business on review sites
- ✓ Use your social media platforms for e-commerce (e.g. Facebook and Instagram)
- ✓ Create a drip-email campaign
- ✓ Run pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns (i.e. Facebook ads, Google ads)
- ✓ Work with macro and micro-influencers



## Choose an omnichannel delivery partner that uses innovative solutions.

Home delivery, curbside and in-store pick-ups are popular, but sometimes other solutions are necessary. For instance, some customers cannot commit to home delivery times or don't live near a store. Omnichannel is all about offering a flexible shopping experience, so ensure every step of your buyer journey offers options for the customer – including the delivery. You can expand your customer base by making your products more accessible. A delivery provider with flexible pick-up solutions will meet the needs of every customer. Some innovative solutions include offering after-hours or weekend delivery services, more convenient pick-up locations and flexible return options. The easier it is for customers to purchase from your business makes, the more likely you'll see returning customers.

## Did you know? Purolator offers a variety of pick-up and drop-off services, so your customers can choose their delivery.

- |                               |                                     |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ✓ Mobile Quick Stop locations | ✓ Customizable delivery preferences |
| ✓ Pop-up kiosks               | ✓ Parcel lockers                    |
| ✓ Ship-to-store               | ✓ SMS tracking                      |
| ✓ Home or work delivery       | ✓ Mobile app tracking               |
| ✓ Store-to-store              |                                     |



## Using an omnichannel strategy to personalize the shopping experience

Consumer expectations are increasing alongside the growth and maturity of digital channels. In response, personalization is becoming table stakes for brands. Before COVID-19, 72% of customers expected businesses to tailor engagement strategies to their needs. 86% of consumers also stated that customized experiences influenced what they buy.<sup>12</sup>

While personalization continued to be prioritized as predicted, COVID-19 accelerated the need to have e-commerce versions of brick-and-mortar stores. With the current climate in mind, many businesses were left questioning if it's possible to focus on a personalized shopping experience while adapting their

sales efforts. To stay nimble, businesses have begun to focus on retention, rather than converting or acquiring new shoppers.<sup>13</sup> Why retention? Shoppers are beginning to shift their loyalty as more stores utilize e-commerce, offering perks like discounts, safe shopping experiences and faster delivery times.

In summary, it is currently easier to acquire new customers, but it can be harder to keep them. Plus, as mandates continue to ask society to 'socially distance', it's likely your customers (and everyone else) is feeling a little isolated by the pandemic. It's never been more important to give a personalized experience to keep your customers coming back.



In 2020, retention overtook conversion and acquisition as a key reason for web personalization.<sup>14</sup>



Here are some ways to personalize your omnichannel efforts to the individual needs of your customers:

**Data-driven marketing for “big picture” personalization.**

You should have a clear idea of your main buyer personas to allow for broader marketing that's personalized on a subtle and easily-executed scale. You can do this by gathering and analyzing your customer's shopping behaviours. This enables you to accurately understand how your customers interact with your brand and also, how specific groups can be targeted through marketing efforts based on their interests, demographics and other personal data.

**Send customized content through loyalty programs.**

58% of customers express appreciation for personalized product recommendations.<sup>4</sup> Capitalize on this by using loyalty program insights to send dynamic emails. This will ensure all highlighted products and offers resonate with each customer group. Furthermore, businesses can use A/B testing on email copy to optimize the tone for conversion.

**Use mobile location targeting to personalize offers.**

While more people may be shopping online these days, there are still reasons to leave the house. Businesses can use location-targeted marketing through IP address recognition called geo-targeting. This enables customers to receive relevant information when they are within a specific location, such as near a store, or even a competitor's location.<sup>14</sup> With geo-targeting, your business can share offers, in-store policies and a link to your e-commerce store.

**Work with a reliable omnichannel delivery partner with flexible delivery options and extra services.**

With the unprecedented demand for e-commerce, it's more important than ever to work with a delivery provider that can provide a consistent and reliable shipping experience. Delivery providers vary in the number of delivery options and solutions they offer so look for a provider that has convenient solutions for your customers. Remember, not all customers need fast shipping. Having a range of delivery options can improve the customer experience and make it personal – a variety of shipping times, robust packaging solutions, customizable delivery options, remote signature release and mobile tracking capabilities are a few good examples.

**An omnichannel world requires a reliable delivery provider**

Are you working with the right delivery provider? Make sure you're working with a reliable partner who has the tools, expertise and capability to go the extra mile for omnichannel success.

**Things to look out for include:**

- ✓ Flexible delivery times
- ✓ Online tracking capabilities
- ✓ Easy return processes and diverse return options
- ✓ Fully connected inventory management



How can you redefine the customer experience during COVID-19?  
Our expert has the answers.



# Using an omnichannel strategy to standardize your brand across all channels

An omnichannel approach means customers can engage with your brand through many touchpoints. And aiming for brand-consistency is key to achieving a successful omnichannel experience. Alternatively, inconsistent branding will likely have a negative impact on a brand's strength.<sup>15</sup>

The disconnect between a consumer's perception of a brand and the actual experience creates confusion in the market, according to 71% of customers surveyed.<sup>16</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, many traditional "offline" shoppers have been forced to find alternative ways to shop. In order to provide a familiar experience in a very unfamiliar situation, consistency is key. Ensure your wording, promotions and designs are unchanging across different channels. This will allow your customers to have full clarity of your products and services.

## **Branding and messaging should be across different customer touchpoints.**

Mismatched language and design across channels will confuse customers. Ensure these features are consistent throughout all customer touchpoints, both online and offline. To illustrate, you might apply the same language and graphics to in-store flyers and social media posts. It's important to put this into practice in every place shoppers go to find information about your business. Standardized messaging improves the chances of product or service association with your brand.<sup>15</sup>

## **Customer experience needs to be consistent beyond your brand.**

Keep top-of-mind that, by association, all third-party partnerships are extensions of your brand. Any outsourcing that you do must match your brand image to ensure a consistent customer experience. This is especially important if a third party, such as a delivery partner, interacts with your customers in-person. Make sure you have full trust in your third parties, not only to provide the physical service you expect, but to uphold your reputation and values, ultimately creating [brand loyalty](#).

## **The right omnichannel delivery experience makes all the difference.**

As more customers opt to shop online, the need for a consistent buying journey – right through to the delivery – has never been higher. A standardized experience isn't only more convenient and clear, it's also integral to customer loyalty. According to Forbes, 69% of customers will shop more with brands that offer consistent experiences.<sup>17</sup> If customers can trust that their delivery experience will be the same each time they order, they're more likely to continue to shop with your business. Your delivery must be optimized to fully streamline the final part of an omnichannel customer journey. To do this, you'll need a delivery partner that has the scale, network and expertise to fulfil orders like clockwork.

**We share how a [parcel delivery service partner](#) can elevate your omnichannel strategy and grow your business.**





# The omnichannel experience

These omnichannel trends have been around since before the pandemic, but COVID-19 vastly accelerated their growth. At the height of the pandemic, it was prevalent e-commerce would strengthen beyond any predictions. Since then, purchasing power across a variety of online channels has never been higher. While changing restrictions and, therefore, changing shopping behaviours continue to occur, it's widely predicted that the need for an omnichannel strategy will be strengthened for good.

To succeed with omnichannel, the consumer experience needs to be consistently convenient in every interaction – regardless of their chosen buyer journey. To make this happen, consider your omnichannel strategy in each decision – including every aspect from your supply chain, to delivery and post-purchase interactions.

One of the hardest parts of executing an omnichannel strategy is a seamless last mile. Executing the delivery plays an integral part in providing convenient supply chain solutions. Build an airtight omnichannel strategy with the right delivery provider, right through the customer journey and choose a delivery partner with the capacity, knowledge, and tools to help exceed your customer expectations.





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