



Whitepaper

HOW TO BUILD A  
SUCCESSFUL  
**UNIFIED COMMERCE  
STRATEGY**



# CONTACTS

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Venturing into the wonderful world of Unified Commerce can feel like a mountain to climb. That's why we have created a mix of our top insights, tips and models.

We hope to inspire those who have worked in e-commerce for many years and those who are just starting out.

**Enjoy the ride!**

Mark Blockhuys

MANAGING DIRECTOR

[mark.blockhuys@osudio.com](mailto:mark.blockhuys@osudio.com)

# INTRODUCTION

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## Are you working in a role with direct or indirect responsibility for your company's sales and e-commerce?

If so, then this white paper is a perfect read for you. Hopefully you and your business will benefit from our overview, which includes our best advice and concrete actions, whether you are about to venture into the world of Unified Commerce or seeking to optimize your current ecosystem. Since this is an overview, we do not dive too deep into each topic covered. That would be a far too extensive read for a white paper. We have tried to create the perfect mix of basic insights, tips and models, while adding a few new concepts, models and ideas to inspire those readers who have been working in e-commerce for many years.

E-commerce is big business. Swedish retail industry growth is entirely based on e-commerce. This is a trend that can be seen in many European countries. Customers can be found in countless channels today and Unified Commerce is truly a shopping experience based on their terms.

There are many trends related to consumer shopping behaviour to keep track of. For example, more than half of consumers today prefer purchasing online and then picking up their products in-store.

This in turn results in increased demand for functions that make it possible to check product availability and provide flexible return options. Online shoppers are becoming increasingly mature in their behaviour and the vast majority of consumers use various smart devices when shopping. Sales staff also require digital devices that can help make their everyday work faster and easier. A Unified Commerce strategy is a response to new customer and employee behaviours. In short, it aims to deliver the desired experience, no matter how, where, when or why someone wants to shop or use a smarter digital tool at work.

Studies actually show that most consumers will not trust staff in a store if they are not using a digital device.

Another reason why Unified Commerce is a hot topic these days is the prediction that customer experience will soon overtake price and product as a key brand differentiator. Customer experience is key to meeting customers' growing expectations and fulfilling their needs throughout the customer journey. However, new customer services often

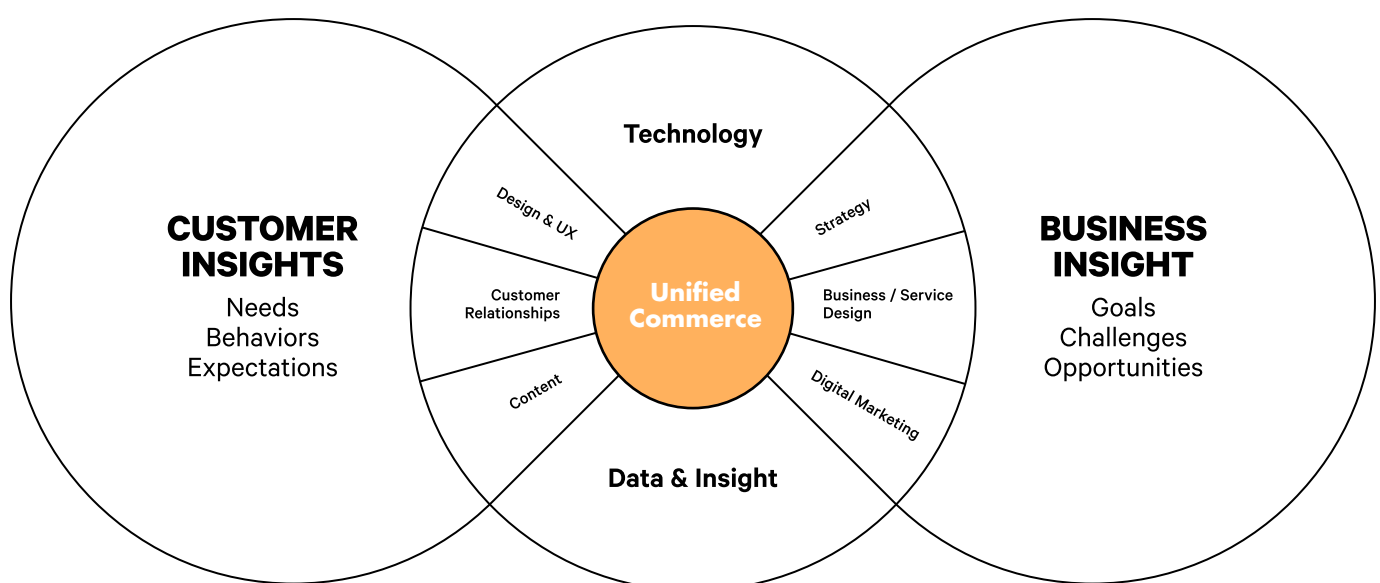
**"Another reason why Unified Commerce is a hot topic these days is the prediction that customer experience will soon overtake price and product as a key brand differentiator."**

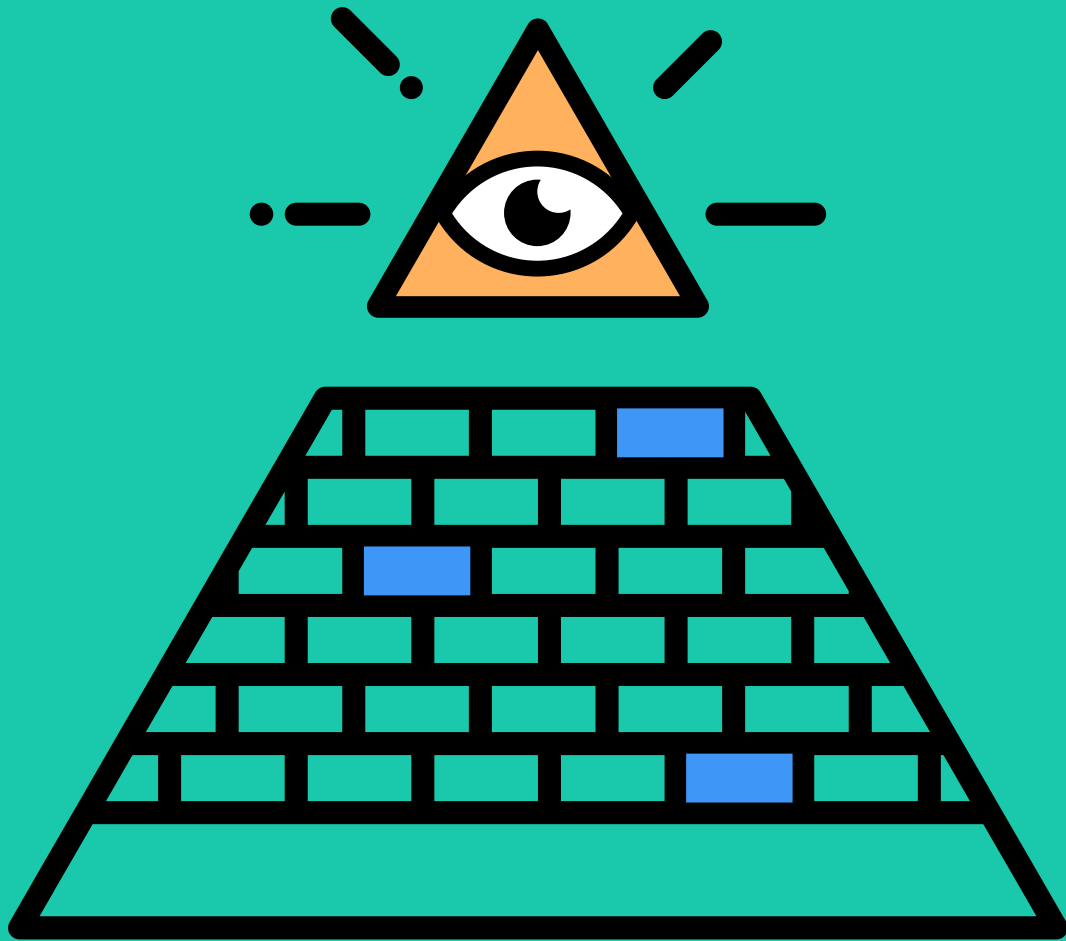
result in new needs related to technical functionality, delivery modes, and so on. This in turn requires IT teams to develop ERP and e-commerce platforms, as well as other support systems, such as CRM, PIM, OMS and POS, and systems for payments, marketing and logistics.

Companies also need to know how to prioritise changes in order to achieve their vision, while managing the cost and

deployment of new solutions and functionality. Since e-commerce can be complex, it is necessary to make decisions based on insights from actual data.

This is an overview of the various things you need to consider when implementing a Unified Commerce strategy in your organisation.





# GOALS

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Every successful strategy starts by setting goals.  
Your Unified Commerce strategy is no exception.

# 1. GOALS

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## Every successful strategy starts by setting goals and your Unified Commerce strategy is no exception.

Our recommendation is to always begin by describing the business idea. Simply put, what are you offering the market and why? What makes your business unique? You should also describe your specific goals and targets.

This mapping can include figures, percentages, customer and employee satisfaction levels, time and cost savings, etc. Also include the time frame and your company mission. In terms of the time frame, we recommend that you include both the short and long-term view (the short term could be 3 to 12 or even 24 months, while the long term could be 12 to 36 months).

Example: Unified Commerce is a common goal within e-commerce, especially for retailers and B2B players. The time frame is often between 6 and 36 months, and common KPIs include customer satisfaction/loyalty, market share, sales and efficiency. KPIs can also be related to marketing, including customer acquisition costs and cross-channel behaviour.

For example, you can look at what impacts the various sales channels have on each other. This is particularly important given the complexity of today's customer journeys, with many interactions and touchpoints, which form a mosaic rather than a linear pattern. A good set of goals will also benefit from a mission that gives a clear direction. For example, the mission statement at our sister company Star Republic is "Challenging the world of Unified Commerce with burning hearts and a beautiful mind," while the overall goal is to become the "Leading Unified Commerce agency in Europe".

A goal related to a new or abstract topic like Unified Commerce could be exemplified by using customer scenarios that clearly show what the company wants to achieve over time. A goal can also contain figures, often in the form turnover, market share, cost benefit analysis or ROI. A Unified Commerce strategy has an impact in all areas of a company and should be a top priority. It also needs to be regularly followed up by top management in order to be successful.

# PRO TIPS

## Define your Goals



Identify the right stakeholders and involve them early on.



Leave the office and team up in an inspiring environment.



Make sure your goals are both challenging and appealing. If possible, you should also make them emotional and purpose-driven.



Anchor your goals internally and get buy-in from your top management.



# ***AS-IS ANALYSIS***

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The aim of the as-is analysis is to get a quick overview of the area of e-commerce and its initiatives.



## 2. AS-IS ANALYSIS

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Performing an as-is analysis helps you to get an understanding of the current state. This is of course crucial input when creating your Unified Commerce strategy.

There are many different methods to use when conducting this and one of the most common ones is the SWOT analysis. A SWOT analysis maps out the strengths and weaknesses of your commerce initiatives, as well as the opportunities and threats that you can find both externally and within your e-commerce ecosystem.

One way to start a SWOT analysis is to gather your team for a “status quo workshop”, where you create an overview of the above areas and ask yourselves questions like:

- What is unique about your business model and what challenges it?
- What drivers and pains/gains does your target group have/perceive?
- What changes in your IT system ecosystem do you need to consider?
- Do you need to make organisational changes, in order to start working in a different and new way?
- Who are your competitors and how do they stand out from each other?
- What investments have you made in e-commerce?
- If you compare your investments with the ones made by your closest competitors, what other investments could your company make in order to get a greater and faster ROI?

When you work with external analysis, you can also use the PEST model, which focuses on Political, Economic, Social and Technology changes in the market. When looking at your competitors and benchmark, don't forget to also look at best-in-class examples from other industries. When something gains popularity, it often soon spreads to other markets, industries and segments.

Today, most companies work with data-driven analysis. Since we work with e-commerce, we often begin by looking at Google Analytics together with other relevant data. Data can be generated from the e-commerce platform, ERP system or other sources, such as surveys, focus groups, etc. The reason for this is to have real data in the as-is analysis. This is important for the next step. If we lack data, there is a higher risk that we will base our assumptions only on feelings and personal thoughts, thereby creating a biased view.

**“However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.”**

**— UNKNOWN**

It is also important to understand how your legacy affects this work. In addition to working with the SWOT or PEST model, you need to map out your existing IT ecosystem and identify what the key integrations are, since these will be an important foundation in the next phase. This is simply because if it is not broken, you do not need to fix it. It is also to avoid investing more in things that are not the future.

The aim of the as-is analysis is to get a quick overview of your e-commerce solution and its initiatives, as well as to identify pros and cons in each area before you move on to further analysis.

# PRO TIPS

## As-Is Analysis



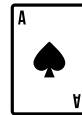
Don't underestimate your tech and organisational legacy.



Use external advice/benchmark.



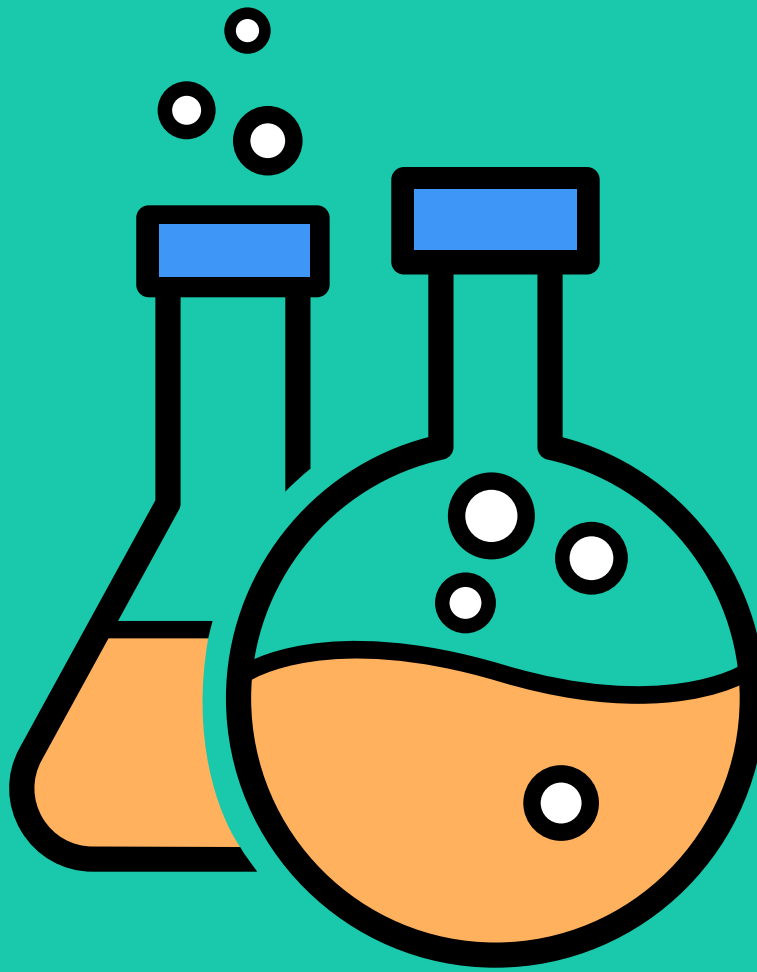
Always think long and short term.



Map out your existing architecture and key integrations.



Document your perceived limitations in key systems.



# ***UNIFIED COMMERCE ANALYSIS***

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The aim of Unified Commerce analysis is to understand what is needed, in order to deliver an exceptional customer experience.

# 3. UNIFIED COMMERCE ANALYSIS

The aim of Unified Commerce analysis is to understand what is needed, in order to deliver an exceptional customer experience.

From an external perspective, you need to really get to know your customers' needs, behaviours and expectations. And, from an internal perspective, you need to define your business goals, tackle challenges and identify opportunities. Everything starts with understanding the customer journey.

Let's look at a simple example of a user story for Unified Commerce and try to map out which unified components are involved in each step.

		AWARENESS	CONSIDERATION	DECISION	DELIVER	USE
Action / Scenario →		See info on Social media	Visit Store to check balance	Buy online in store	Pick up from other store	Pick up from other store
UC components		↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
STORE						
CMS (App)						
E-COMMERCE						
PIM						
OMS						
POS						
CRM						
MARKETING / SOCIAL						
ERP						

After gathering your team and performing this type of exercise, you should be able to create a detailed functional specification for what you need to address in your Unified Commerce approach. Make sure you list the impact, cost, complexity and risk for each functionality discussed. For example, you should always identify whether an integration is needed and, if it is, with which type of system. This will make it a lot easier to calculate a time and cost estimate for the solution, as well as to prioritize the various functionalities that you want to develop. It can also be helpful in order to identify gaps in the existing IT ecosystem. Sometimes you discover that components have overlapping functionality, which makes it even more important to get a good understanding of the big picture, in order to make the right decisions.

A few questions that can be of use in this analysis are:

- **Does your IT ecosystem enable the desired functionality and scenarios or do you need to upgrade, change or complement it with another system, function or supporting solution, for example?**
- **Does your e-commerce solution have a good enough product catalogue or do you need to invest in a Product Information Management (PIM) system?**
- **Should you build functionality in your Order Management System (OMS) or in the current Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system?**

Unified Commerce analysis is one way to understand how well you deliver on your customers' expectations. Furthermore, this analysis aims to identify and understand what processes and functionality are needed to give your customers the best experience. It also helps you to get an understanding of the system architecture and integrations, as well as your data.

When customer journeys become more complex and data is stored in many different systems, it is important to sort out where the master data shall be placed and which rules and attributes apply. Otherwise, you run the risk of information overlap and presenting incorrect information in your channels.

**Let's look into each part of our Unified Commerce analysis in more detail!**

## 3.1. E-COMMERCE

Traditionally, a CMS (Content Management System) is included in the e-commerce component. The first generation of e-commerce solutions were plain content sites where the integrations to a back-end ERP system were built in the actual website. Many CMS providers have now developed or acquired commerce capabilities in order to broaden their CMS offering.

Today, you can find several e-commerce solutions on the market, covering requirements with varying degrees of complexity. User experience is, as we mentioned earlier, a key success factor. It is, therefore, important to consider functionality such as content management in your e-Commerce component.

**Examples of areas which a modern e-commerce component should cover:**

1. Content management/authoring
2. Presentation management
3. Contextual preview
4. Personalization
5. Landing pages
6. Site navigation
7. Pricing rules
8. Promotions/coupons
9. Customer account
10. Product recommendations
11. Basket/checkout
12. Product configuration
13. Advised selling
14. Quotes

**When conducting your as-is analysis, make sure you include these types of questions:**

- Is it possible to keep the shopping basket from one session to the next?
- Can you save the shopping basket and open it from different devices, and can it also be saved over time? (By doing this, it can be reused for campaigns, marketing and various updates to your customers).
- How does your current checkout work in detail?

- Do you have additional sales possibilities in the shop, such as up-selling, cross-selling, personalized sales and social selling?
- How do you handle prices in multiple channels and how often do you update prices and products related to them? How complex is your pricing strategy?
- Do you have functionality in place to use coupons or discounts, campaigns, loyalty points and customer statistics? Have you developed clear guidelines for your selling options?
- What navigation support, such as filters, searches, product recommendations, top lists, what is trending or selling fast and flash sales, are provided to assist your customers?
- Is your site scalable in order to serve many different countries and markets?
- Can you identify a pattern in user experience feedback which can/will impact your business?

## **3.2. PRODUCT INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (PIM)**

Product information management (PIM) can be hard work and it rapidly gets complicated when you need to import, refine and publish your information in several channels. PIM can either be included in the e-commerce platform or stored in an external product catalogue/component.

Product information is usually scattered in many places: ERP, CMS and e-commerce systems, as well as external systems, such as picture databases, digital asset management, Excel sheets, supplier systems and marketplaces. Today, market-leading PIM software can help you create both the structure and processes needed to make your work a lot easier.

**Some benefits of using PIM software are:**

- Control over the information flow. By using a single source of truth to feed all channels with product information, a change made in one place means that you update all of your channels. This also helps you to monitor the completeness of your products.
- Possibility to supply product data from external sources, like ERP, PLM and other third-party systems.
- Higher quality for all product information.
- Less administration. By automating many of your processes (reformatting pictures, categorisation of products, delegating tasks and much more), you can save a lot of time.



- Reduced time-to-market. By being able to automatically publish your products in the corresponding channels and markets, you decrease the amount of time spent.
- Structured processes with workflow functionality. Helps you ensure that everything is in place for a release and nothing is left out.
- A user-friendly collaborative workspace for improved visibility and consistent results.
- Ability to stay on top of the ever-changing requirements of the world's leading marketplaces and provide corresponding data quickly.
- Ensure a consistent message for all your third parties and distribution networks by facilitating outbound connections.
- Get catalogues and data sheets in the hands of customers faster using print functionalities.

**With a PIM solution, you can manage all aspects related to product information, including the following areas:**

1. Product taxonomy
2. Relationship management
3. Attribute management
4. Data quality
5. Product governance
6. Supplier portal
7. Digital asset management
8. Print

This picture shows part of a template we at Star Republic often use to conduct PIM-related analysis:

QUESTION #	DESCRIPTION	HINT	ANSWERS	IMPORTANCE
DATA				
DA.1	What types of products will be stored within the PIM?	Items you sell or transfer.		
DA.2	Is there hierarchy within the products?	Like product, type, model, version, variant.		
DA.3	Are there relations between the products?	Model A has Items B as spare part.		
DA.4	Are there bundles, packages, kits etc consisting of multiple products?	Product A and Product B together from Product X or 6x Product A from Product Y		
DA.5	Is there a classification present?	A market standard or internally used classification.		
DA.6	Are there more structures within the products?	Sales structure, E-commerce structure, Print structure		
DA.7	How many SKUs are there?	30.000 SKUs		
DA.8	How many attributes has a product in average?	300 attributes		
DA.9	How many digital assets does a product have in average?	Images and Videos		

Once your product information requirements are gathered, it is time to analyse which functionality is needed and then map it with the system solutions and the potential architectural impact. Based on these insights, you can decide whether or not you need a PIM solution. If there is benefit to be gained from deploying a new PIM platform or upgrading the existing one, you also need to calculate the cost-benefit of doing so.

### 3.3. ORDER MANAGEMENT

Customer expectations regarding flexible deliveries and pick-up options are growing. As a result, interest in Order Management and Order Management Systems (OM and OMS) is also growing. Today, companies need to be able to deliver both from stores, directly to the customer's home from a warehouse, as well as between stores. The various delivery combinations are complex to build in an existing ERP system and it can, therefore, be necessary to invest in an Order Management System.

**An OMS should include:**

1. Distributed order management
2. Customer service
3. Enterprise inventory
4. Payment processing
5. Tax and fraud management
6. Store fulfillment
7. Shipping rules
8. Returns management

**The following are examples of Order Management questions you can address when conducting your analysis:**

- Will the number of sales channels increase?
- Have you identified challenges/errors in data entry, purchasing, invoicing, accounting and shipping?
- Have you experienced trouble keeping up with customer demand?
- Do you often experience inventory surprises? (out of stock, unknown stock, too much stock)
- Are your teams working long hours to keep up with growing sales?
- Is your call centre workload growing?
- Are you struggling to provide the same view to customers when an order is placed?
- Have you noticed an increase in fulfilment errors?
- Are you able to communicate in a timely and accurate manner on the status of your customers' orders?
- Have you tried providing different delivery options to your customers? (pick up at store, home delivery, pick up at external location)
- Can you expand your assortment using your partner/supplier network?
- Are your inventory costs too high?
- Can your stores provide shipping and deliveries directly to your customers' homes?
- Can your e-commerce system use your stores as pick-up/return points?
- Can you sell products from all of your brands and units?

Once Order Management requirements have been gathered, we analyse the functionality need and map it with a system solution, followed by the architectural impact. Following this analysis, you can decide if an OMS is needed or not.

Handling Order Management in an ERP system can be both expensive and complex.

Usually, an interface, flexibility and various functionalities related to Order Management are needed, which ERP systems often fail to provide.

So, when it is time to look at your Order Management, make sure you consider the various aspects outlined above when deciding on your next step.

## **3.4. CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT**

When it comes to Customer Relationship Management (CRM), from a Unified Commerce perspective, it is all about knowing your customers and being able to treat them as the unique individuals they are. Since Unified Commerce is about shopping on people's terms, we need to understand their needs and shopping behaviour.

Customer data is central when working with CRM. We recommend that you keep your customer data in one place, making it easier to analyse. It also helps you be more relevant and personalized in your communication when using different channels, such as SMS, email and push notifications through your marketing automation tools.

**When looking at your company CRM, we recommend asking yourself a few questions:**

- Do you have a clear overview of your end customers?
- Do you know when a customer is close to churn and the customer lifetime value?
- Can you easily follow where, what and when your customers have purchased, as well as how often and how much? Is it possible to track how many returns they have made, when their birthday is, which networks they are a part of, what they like and their interests?

**When assessing your CRM performance, there are five important areas to consider:**

1. **Customer segmentation:** Enables you to send personal offers based on specific target group needs. Makes it easier to connect your customers to a loyalty scheme and have them subscribe to newsletters.

2. **Loyalty:** Do you have a loyalty scheme in place providing customers with different levels of rewards/bonuses? Maybe you use gamification to add an extra dimension?
3. **Campaigns/communication:** Campaigns/communication: How do you communicate with your customers regarding transactions and abandoned carts? Do you use social media channels in order to get more personal and create automated campaigns? Can you easily create emails for a chosen target group and then effectively follow up the results and ROI?
4. **Insights/reports:** Insights/reports: Do you find it easy to identify KPIs in order to make the right business decisions related to customer communication and loyalty?
5. **Automation and customer journeys:** Automation and customer journeys: Can you automate various applied customer journeys, based on both different target groups and individuals?

A lot of questions in need of answers. But once you have created a clear understanding of how you perform today, you can start making more use of the power in your customer data and create a more personalized and relevant shopping experience!

## 3.5. USER EXPERIENCE

We always connect the user experience with design principles. Our primary purpose is to design e-commerce solutions that both solve problems and offer a great user and shopping experience.

When working with user experience, we believe there are three main areas to look at: your overall mission/goals, insights into customer needs and your design principles. Let's take a closer look at these:

### DESIGN MISSION & GOALS:

Ask yourself what your product should achieve, improve, drive or maybe change. Describe this on a high level in order to better visualize the end result. For example:

"It is important that the webshop is perceived as exciting, interesting and dynamic."

"Our products are complex; we need to make them super easy to understand."

## DESIGN INSIGHTS:

It is important that you gather all the insights you can, in order to know what to act upon to reach your design goals. For example:

"The interface must offer and be able to handle a wide range of layout possibilities."

"We need to describe our products in a simple way that users can understand. Use graphics and USP to simplify."

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

Design Principles help us stay on track when we make design decisions, unify our way of thinking and create a shared vision of the solution/product we're creating, as well as its purpose. For example:

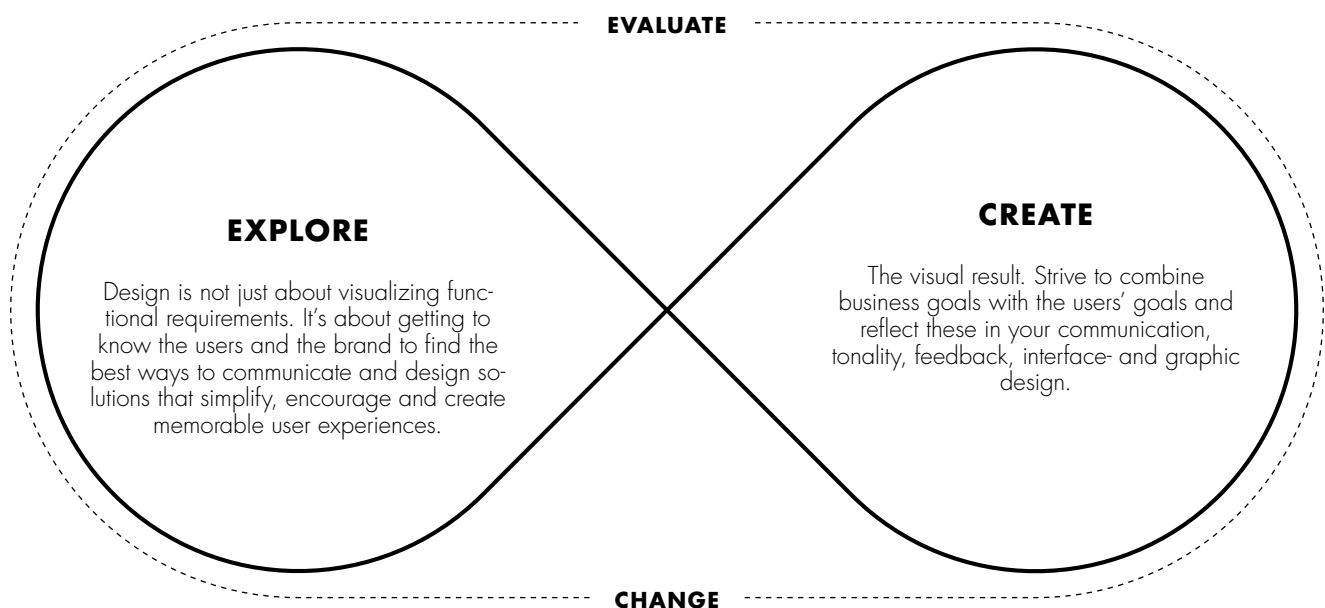
### LEADER OF THE PACK!

"We want to be at the forefront of our segment and challenge our industry. Our thoughts on design are no exception"

### AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE

"Good design should be invisible and help our users, not stand in their way."

Here is an example of a process model you can work with when looking at your user experience. The primary purpose of the process is to use insights as a driving force and design as a tool, to create better user experiences.



When looking at this model, you can use the following questions as a guide while exploring your thoughts:

- How can design take us to the next level?
- What are our strategies, in which channel and situation?
- What is our omnichannel approach?
- What are our common goals?
- How can this help us in our decision-making?
- How can we throw light on sometimes abstract user needs, feelings, thoughts, delight and fun, and bring them to the table?

Very often, User Experience processes are focused on creating a concept. With this type of work/model, you also want to focus on creating a common goal and direction with the design work, as well as to discover needs and thoughts that are often hard to grasp or describe. If you want to dig very deep into your customers' minds, you can (with the exception of customer needs) also look at people's driving forces. What motivates them? What creates relationships? How does loyalty occur?

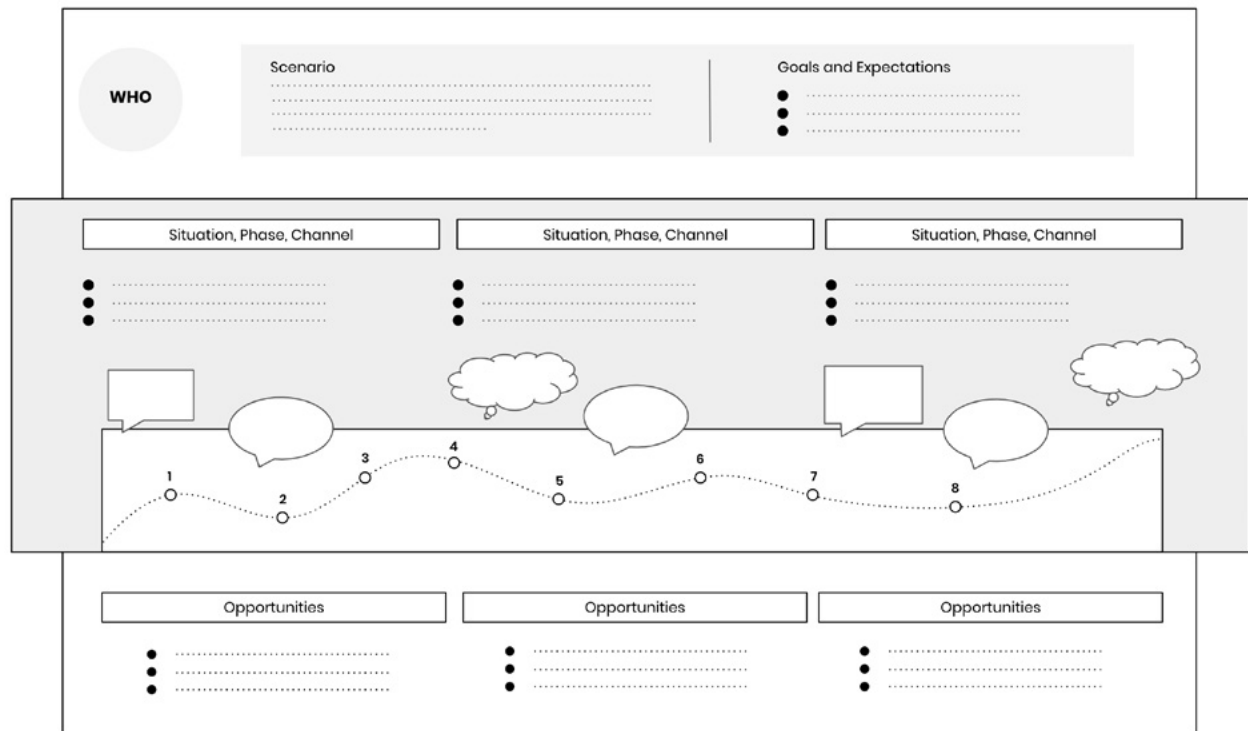
The model below is one example of how you can work with these types of questions. By mapping out the stages, the situation, the motivation and the expected outcome, and describing the solution/idea, you create a good foundation in order to start prioritizing your internal efforts and get an understanding of development costs.



VER. 0.9

STAGES		BEFORE <input type="checkbox"/>	DURING <input type="checkbox"/>	AFTER <input type="checkbox"/>	SOLUTION
SITUATION					Describe what features, information or functionality needed to support and fulfill the job described. Put yourself in the situation and list your ideas below.
●	WHEN				
MOTIVATION					
●	I WANT TO				
EXPECTED OUTCOME					
●	SO I CAN				
					INTERNAL EFFORT
					LOW HIGH
					DEVELOPMENT COSTS
					LOW HIGH

Another approach to use is the Customer Journey, which can be directly applied on your persona ("Who") and describes the related scenario, goals, expectations and motivations. From the scenario, you can identify users' opportunities, thoughts and feelings at various stages of the journey.



Involve people from different areas of the organisation in these creative sessions, to get a holistic view, and use the insights as fuel to create great UX, as well as your unique concept and market position.



## 3.6. CONTENT

One way to start your content analysis is to work with the following questions:

- Who do you want to be?
- What do you want to achieve and how do you measure success?
- Do you understand your customers' journeys?
- Why have you chosen the channels you advertise in? What are their specific strengths?
- How far from the buying button is your content?
- What type of content do you have and what is the ratio between inspirational and sales content?
- How can you be creative and think outside the box to boost your results, instead of just growing your media budget?
- How do you structure your content work today?
- Do some content pieces create more value and why?
- How can you increase quantity and speed in your content work?
- How can you automate your content analysis and trigger actions from it?
- What type of content do you think could create more engagement and increase traffic over time?

When it comes to content creation, we suggest that you put together a content team made up of people who know your business and products well. In order to effectively plan, we suggest that you arrange a content calendar/overview of the planned content and key activities, such as planned online/offline events and campaigns.

You can also divide the content into different types of categories, to get a better overview and make it easier to organise and analyse. For example:

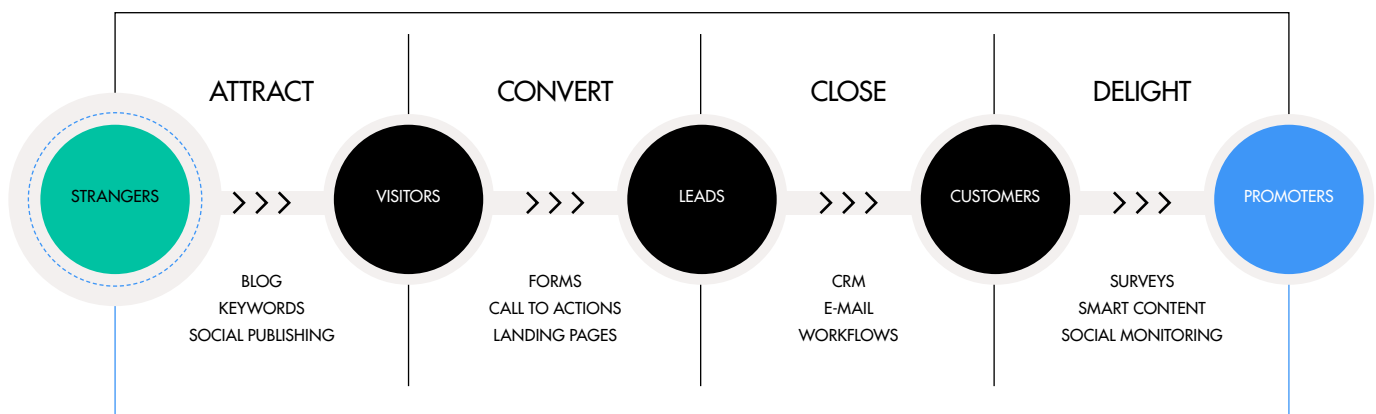
- Blog articles
- Video / Tutorials
- Social media posts
- Recommendations
- Interviews
- Collaborations
- Launches
- Events

A powerful strategy can be to mix content and sales. This could include product demonstration videos or collaborations with suppliers and influencers, for example. You can also explore opportunities to use your events as a way to create content. For example, a fashion retail chain could have a catwalk in one shop, which is then filmed and broadcast on-site and in other shops via screens. A coffee shop chain could hold an unplugged concert, record it and then play the music in all of its coffee shops, and of course use the content to attract traffic online.

Once you have a good content plan in place, it is time to set up your inbound marketing process and find a suitable marketing automation tool for your business.

An inbound marketing process requires a lot of content creation in order to help you be relevant and offer knowledge, advice and guidance for your potential customers during their journey. The main idea with content marketing is to create content that is not solely intended to sell your products or services. Instead, it is aimed at educating your customers and making them aware of new possibilities that can help them address a need. Once you have earned your customers' trust by being relevant, you can of course switch to a more sales-driven approach with the content you provide them.

Inbound marketing is the process and content is what we use to feed that process. The following model explains an inbound marketing process and the type of content that can effectively support it:



Source: HubSpot Inbound Methodology

One way to structure your content work is to divide your content into different themes during the year and link your content creation to them. The purpose of working with themes is also to guide and inspire your content production.

**A few examples of themes:**

- Purpose-driven content
- Content connected to your concept
- Big events/changes happening during the year internally/externally
- Content connected to your vision/ambition
- Content connected to your history/storytelling
- Content connected to something you are interested in

A theme doesn't have to be logical. It can be related to your company culture, for example. Choose the number of themes that suits you best. You can either work with the same themes or let them vary from season to season.

**Global trends of course impact our content in many ways. We have identified four trends related to content creation worth keeping an eye on going forward:**

1. When it comes to content, think mobile first. Customers use mobile phones more than desktops when they consume content and shop. A responsive website alone is not enough; think and live mobile first.
2. Use good images! For example animations, images from various angles, and images from your customers.
3. Video is a great format. People are increasingly consuming video content and it generally has a greater impact on your brand and customer experience. Furthermore, search engines prioritise video content.
4. People engage in different social forums. Use this insight to build relationships and invite them into a conversation about your content. Remember that your events are content too. Working with storytelling helps create a more emotional and social touch.

## 3.7. DIGITAL MARKETING

Digital Marketing is a vast area and sometimes it can feel a bit tricky deciding which channels to use and how to best optimize. When it comes to digital marketing in relation to Unified Commerce, you need to constantly monitor your performance and think ahead to achieve your desired outcome. Here are a few examples of questions to ask yourself during parts of that process:

- What are your online revenue goals for the coming year(s)?
- What are your target markets (countries/audiences)?
- Which channels do you currently use to generate more traffic? Which ones are actually working and do you have a clear channel strategy in place? Do you generate cross-channel traffic in a satisfactory way?
- Do you work with enhanced Google Analytics?
- How much does it cost you to acquire a sale? What is your current conversion rate (%) for a sale/prospect today?

When it comes to Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and other niche forums, make sure you evaluate the possibility of working on your overall business and strategy with fans/sumo customers and influencers.

When it comes to influencers, there are two different categories: major influencers and micro influencers. It can be very useful to work with influencers, but it requires a lot of work and we always stress the importance of connecting influencer cooperation to your concept in a clear way. Start small and gradually expand cooperation. Don't forget that the reward is huge if it works, since the cost of traditional marketing activities is often greater.

The purpose of digital marketing is to create loyal customers who can relate to your business. Working effectively with influencers supports that purpose.

## **3.8. DIGITAL IN-STORE**

A few years ago, the future of brick-and-mortar stores, for example, was thought to be threatened by the rapid growth of e-commerce. But more and more retailers today are finding that consumers still want to see, try and touch goods before purchasing.

An increasing number of shoppers today are using technology across a variety of channels and the line between online and offline purchasing is becoming more and more blurred. People are “webrooming”, a process that involves viewing items online and then purchasing them in stores, and “showrooming”, which means visiting a store to check out a product before ordering it online. As a result, consumers are better informed, more demanding and less loyal. In addition, they expect the same customer experience in store as they get online.

Certain high street brands are adopting in-store tech that complements the services provided by a traditional physical store. Some of these solutions involve communication with customers via their own devices, using apps, beacons, NFC (Near-Field Communication) tags and QR (Quick Response) codes. Nevertheless, most stores today still rely on a PC at the checkout to handle interactions with customers, including checking stock, order statuses, prices and product information, as well as payment. Customers that make the effort to physically come into a store expect to leave it with the item they are looking for. They are looking for a productive and enjoyable in-store experience that is as smooth as possible.

As a result, many brands are equipping their sales staff with a tablet, mainly for the following reasons:

### **ENRICHED PRODUCT INFORMATION**

A salesperson with a tablet can show customers product demonstrations, technical instructions, customer testimonials, ads and more, providing them with detailed information about the product they are interested in.

### **REAL-TIME STOCK DATA**

Another advantage of giving sales staff a tablet is that it enables them to access information and stock availability in real time, even when the items are not physically in the store. If this is the case, they can order the product in question for the customer on the spot and give the customer the option of either picking up the product in a store nearby or having it delivered to their home. This prevents customers from turning to competitors to purchase goods that are not in stock.

## **A HYPER-PERSONALIZED EXPERIENCE**

Tablets give access to a shopper's customer account record, including contact details, family status, preferences, likes, dislikes, motivations, browser history, purchasing history and more. Access to such data offers endless cross-selling and upselling opportunities. Take, for example, kitchen sales. When putting together the plan for a kitchen with a customer, a salesperson can use a tablet to recommend additional purchases, such as lighting or plumbing fixtures.

## **IMPROVED CUSTOMER INTIMACY**

One way to achieve this is by providing a salesperson with information on a customer's loyalty status. Once the salesperson brings up the customer's account record on their tablet, they may find out, for example, that this particular person is entitled to a 30% discount on a given product range on that day. Customers, however, do not just need product information; they also need consultative help. A tablet enables sales teams to be aware of customer expectations and provide helpful advice, enabling customers to make the purchasing decision that is right for them as individuals.

## **MOBILITY**

Working with a tablet means that sales staff can answer questions immediately as they accompany customers around the store, rather than having to rush off to the computer at the checkout to look for the information. As a result, customers are not left alone during their in-store experience. Additionally, this reduces the risk of a customer changing their mind concerning a purchase.

## **HIGHER SALES PERFORMANCE**

Access to more data via a tablet makes it easier for sales staff to be efficient and attain their objectives. Solutions that enable staff to have their commission calculated in real time, along with the level of discount they can offer customers (and the impact of this discount on their commission), are one way of improving sales performance. With a tablet, sales staff can find out how much leeway they have in terms of negotiating power, which in turn benefits both staff and customers.

## **FASTER PAYMENT**

If customers make the effort to physically come into a store, they usually expect to leave it with their desired products. It is therefore important to make the in-store experience as smooth as possible and remove any obstacles in the purchasing process, such as standing in line for half an hour in order to pay. Such a pain point can be removed by using a tablet, for example, which creates a more mobile solution for payment and other related administrative tasks, such as claiming back VAT, producing guarantees

## **TRACKING THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY**

The online shopping basket has a crucial role to play in Digital In-Store processes. When a customer visits a store and shows interest in a product, staff can use their tablets to place the product in the customer's online shopping basket with ease. Another possibility to consider is that a customer may browse the e-commerce website at home, put a product into their basket and then visit the physical store to make the purchase.

Let's look at an example from a shoe retailer. If the customer's online behaviour has been properly tracked, sales staff can get the information from the basket and, based on the reference number, size and colour, make sure that the shoes are waiting behind the counter when the customer visits the physical store. This type of sync between online and the physical store of course saves time both for the customer and sales staff. If, by any chance, the shoes in question are not the right colour, it would be useful to provide functions that enable staff to immediately order a new pair of shoes and deliver them to the customer's home.

## **SEAMLESS SHOPPING**

Customer behaviour in physical stores can be quite different from online behaviour. Being able to collect customer behaviour data in both channels is key, to avoid inconsistent offerings and align them with an overall customer profile, based on both behaviour in physical stores and, for example, interactions in apps or on the website. Studies have shown that consumers often experience a lack of consistency when it comes to discounts in-store versus online. Such experiences can be avoided by finding smart ways to collect shopping behaviour data and preferences while in store and blend that with data from online behaviour.

Mixed data can help us meet customer needs in a more effective and relevant way. Combining the data from in-store and online behaviour helps you ensure that customer expectations are met in terms of discounts, stock availability and more, which, in turn, creates a much more seamless experience for the customer. Various technical solutions can be interesting to try out in order to collect data in-store, such as digital mirrors, RFID technology and interactive screens.

## 3.9. POINT OF SALES

The point of sale (POS) is connected to in-store payment and a physical cash register machine. Picking the right system for points of sale is not an easy task, as there is a broad range of systems on the market today. As e-commerce is getting more and more seamlessly integrated with physical stores, the point of sale is an important area to consider in your Unified Commerce ecosystem, not only on the technical side, but also to be able to address your customers' needs and expectations.

**We recommend that you take a look at the following questions when considering the role your POS system can and should play in your Unified Commerce strategy:**

1. What needs and pain points do you experience in your physical stores (and/or the company as a whole) today?
2. What challenges do you experience when tracking your stock?
3. How can you optimize production and/or orders so you don't get too many items in stock?
4. How is the existing system set up? Is it complex, with many integrations, or is it composed of dedicated systems or platforms for different tasks?
5. What is your vision for the future set-up?
6. How much of your current solution is run on-premise vs. in the cloud?
7. Do you track and know your in-store customers today, or do you only think you know them?
8. How do you recruit customers?
9. Can you personalize your customer service individually?
10. Can you identify your most important customers easily in your store?
11. Is your existing POS system providing added-value and information that is easy to work with and easy to develop further?

## OMNI CHANNEL AND UNIFIED COMMERCE

As mentioned earlier, commerce today is moving into a seamless shopping experience, blurring the lines between the online and physical world. Payment in stores is no exception and the need for increased flexibility is growing. Staff need to be able to move around in the store, helping customers to pay wherever they happen to stand, as well as to have tools and functionality in place to assist customers with various payment options. Customers expect the service in-store to be integrated with the online experience and vice versa.



For example, if a customer has bought products both in different physical stores and online, it should be possible to see the overall purchase history in the 'My pages' function.

**When trying to create a seamless experience connected to points of sale, you can ask yourself:**

- What are the most common customer scenarios you encounter and what do the customer expectations look like for each of these?
- Which are the most important scenarios to be able to deliver on? Prioritise them into 'must', 'should' and 'could' scenarios, for example.
- Are your internal processes, such as information about stock balance, in sync? Are you ready to provide customer-centric solutions like click-and-collect?

## **3.10. PAYMENTS**

Customers' new shopping behaviours affect the payment aspect of your e-commerce system. Studies have shown, for example, that queues are something most shoppers see as a clear obstacle and are sometimes the reason for shoppers leaving the physical store without buying something. Queues can also be a reason for shoppers buying less in physical stores and more online. Paying for a product online and then picking it up in a store, without waiting in a queue to pay, seems to be the preferred scenario for today's shoppers.

When it comes to payment methods, customers prefer that the same payment options are available in all channels and that the whole payment experience works in the same way for things such as the registration of bonus points and gathering of receipts.

Based on these insights, we recommend that you provide payment methods that are as flexible as possible and work both online and in-store. Remember to adapt to local payment options when you decide to go international with your e-commerce.

**When creating your Unified Commerce strategy, the following areas can be interesting to take a closer look at, in order to create a great payment experience:**

- Do you enable your customers to log in on the website?
- Do you use your checkout to customize your e-commerce business?
- Do you integrate different kinds of functionality at the checkout? E.g. different delivery methods, different campaign options, memberships, physical gift cards, etc.
- Do you often need to update the checkout due to fine-tuning of things like conversion rates?

- Is your checkout design flexible?
- Do you offer the payment methods your customers want and do you need to add new ones going forward?
- Have you tried optimizing your checkout by using A/B-tests, for example?
- How do you handle different prices for each market? When you go international, we recommend that you evaluate global alternatives to start with, in order to be able to consolidate the number of payment partners you need. This will require fewer integrations, less administration and maybe lower overall costs.
- What types of reports do you have and which do you need to add regarding payments?

Do the numbers differ between the various touchpoints and markets? This data is important to look at, because payments directly impact conversion rates in all sales channels. They also impact integration and maintenance, as well as administration and profitability (different payment methods enable different types of business models).

## **3.11. SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION**

Search Engine Optimization is an important area to keep track of. SEO is about optimizing organic traffic to your website through different search engines, such as Google, Bing, YouTube, etc. Your ranking result in these complex search engines depends on many different factors. However, your own webshop is one major contributor to traffic and, when it comes to making larger changes to your website, it is very important to work through all factors in order to avoid missing out on any crucial organic traffic.

**A first step when talking about SEO as part of your Unified Commerce strategy can be to take a closer look at how you work with SEO today:**

- What activities have been carried out and what were the results?
- Do you work with optimization and how?
- Do you have goals and are they being followed up?
- Have you performed keyword analysis to get input for your optimization efforts?
- When was the last time an SEO audit was conducted?
- What did you find in your audit that needs to be addressed?

As-is analysis can be conducted with a broad range of SEO tools that you can find on the market. Using these tools, you can get a good understanding of the potential, as well as the risk, and decide on a strategy for how to approach the user experience, new development and the navigation structure. Insights from the analysis should be documented and you should make sure that there is consensus around different values and KPIs among the interested parties.

**In the as-is analysis you can, for example, take a look at:**

- Website visibility in organic searches (SISTRIX Visibility index)
- A broad technical audit using tools that can help you with spider tracing, sitemaps, XML, link structure, navigation and site speed, for example
- Positions for priority keywords (look at an existing list and/or identify new ones)
- Reviewing existing positions (ranking)
- A comparison with competitors using broad data to find out if search words overlap or if you can identify new groups with potential
- Data that is a priority for monitoring

## **3.12. MARKETPLACES**

It is predicted that external marketplaces, such as Amazon for example, as well as more local marketplaces, will account for more than half of e-commerce growth in the future. If this feels like a huge threat, it is important to remember that there are many benefits with marketplaces and, if you include them in your overall Unified Commerce strategy, you will be well prepared to use them in a way that suits your business:

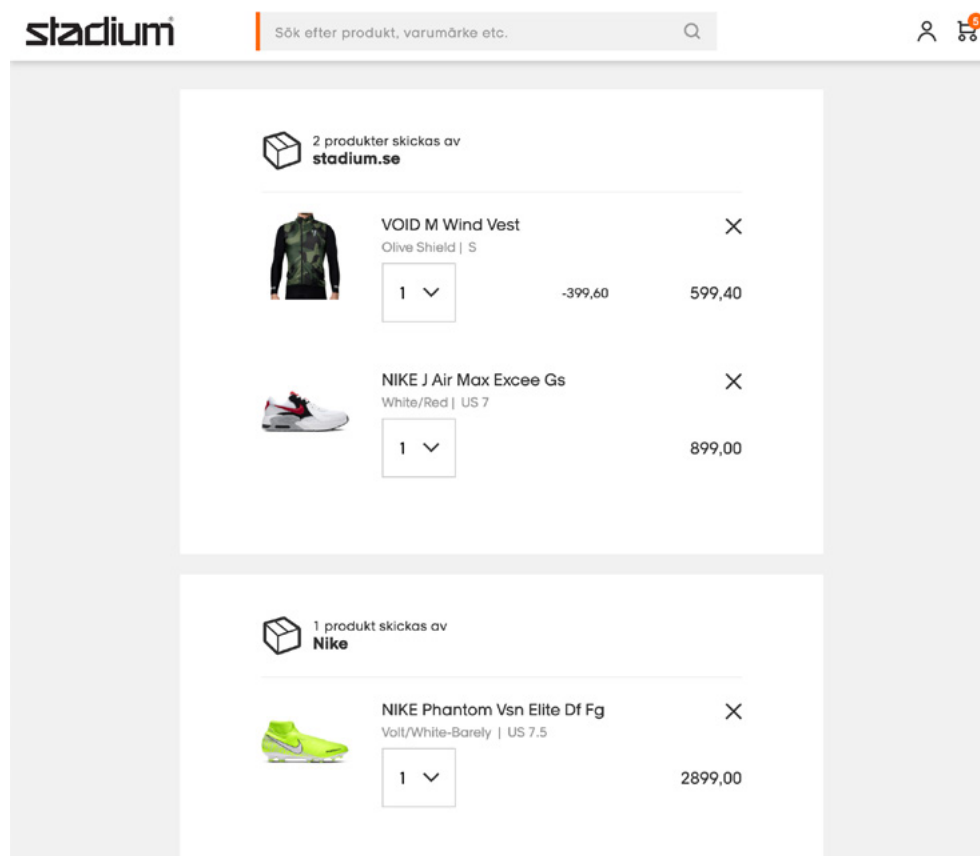
- Marketplaces have a large and often new product assortment, which can increase visibility on search engines and attract visitors to the marketplace in question first and then to your website.
- They can rapidly enable new markets and visitors to find what you sell. If you are new to the market, they can act as a well-known first step directing customers your way.
- Marketplaces can complement your sales strategy. For example, you can choose to sell your products on marketplaces for a higher price due to the wide reach. They can also help you speed up your sales process if you experience a need to quickly sell products, to gain cash flow for example.
- Marketplaces offer tools to make the customer journey consistent, combining physical and digital in a smart way.
- Many marketplaces provide retailing tools to help you quickly set up shop, both for pop-ups and new entrants.

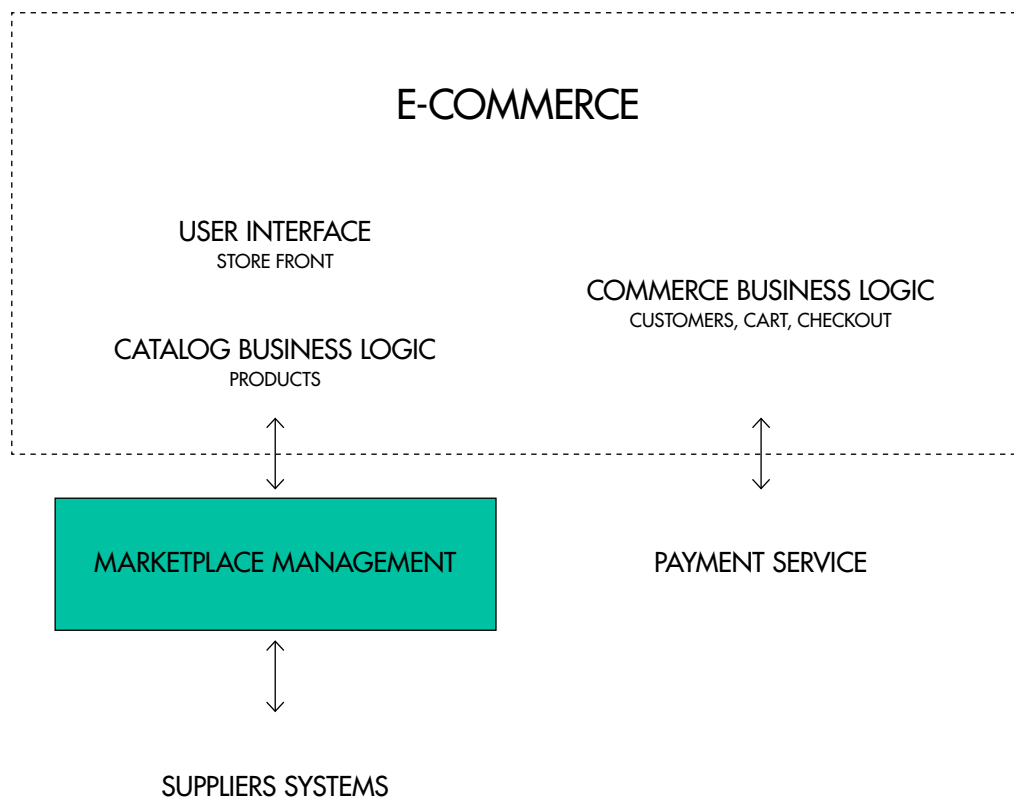
- You can get a lot of data from marketplaces, which they are usually happy to share with their tenants for further product development.

In an integrated marketplace architecture, there are some major areas to consider:

- User interface
- E-commerce business logic
- Marketplace management
- E-commerce pages created

The e-commerce business logic will be managed by the e-commerce component, which will hold product availability, prices, customer information, baskets and orders. In marketplace management, you manage the catalogues, etc., and integration with your suppliers' systems. The pictures below show how you can integrate a marketplace business model with your existing e-commerce system. The shopping basket has three items: The VOID Wind Vest and the Nike Air Max are sold and shipped from the company/ website, Stadium. The Nike Phantom shoes are sold and shipped from the producer, Nike.





In summary, marketplaces have to be considered in your Unified Commerce strategy.

You need to find a balance between your external and your own sales channels. One strategy can be to use marketplaces to gain new visitors and customers, and then build your own direct relationship, so the customers go directly to your online shop in future. Another strategy can be to differentiate your assortment and use these types of external sales channels to build your brand and increase market share.

### **3.13. CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Customer service is simply about meeting your customers' support needs. Common support issues include returns, wrong items, broken items, late deliveries, deliveries to the wrong address, price issues, payment concerns, registration of member points, general feedback, and the list can rapidly grow...

In order to handle support issues in the best possible way, you need to make sure that you have a clear overview of your customers' needs, no matter which touchpoints or interactions are involved. You also need to make sure that customer activities are transparent and accessible at all times for your staff, in order to help them effectively handle the customer conversation.

There are a number of things you can consider to make your customer support best-in-class:

- **Design your customer support in a way that helps you collect feedback.** Maybe you can include an FAQ or chat function in your solution? If you have an intelligent FAQ in place, as well as a chat function, it usually helps minimise the risk of missing out on sales opportunities. If it is open 24/7, a chat can be a good option outside working hours, and the advantages that come with being that accessible are often bigger than the actual cost. A customer service process that includes a learning process and effectively handles feedback helps you keep track of improvements, product range and quality issues, customer service problems, website and store improvements, etc.
- **Create accessible self-service functions.** Just like e-commerce is a kind of self-service shopping experience, customer service can also partly be provided as self-service. For example, if you provide your customers with an intuitive search function and navigation, and enable them to see their order history and receipts when they log in, they can very often solve support issues themselves.
- **Provide your staff with the right tools.** Equipping your staff with tools like a smartphone app for customer feedback can be helpful for your data collection. The more data you get, the easier it is to analyse and categorize it, and then take the actions needed to improve your service. In order to help customers make their purchases, regardless of which channel they decide to use, it can be wise to train your front-line customer service staff to be able to handle questions about the assortment in both the physical and online shop. Finally, keep the language barrier in mind when you go international and make sure your customer service team can speak the languages of the markets you operate in.

Finally, remember that flexible, personal, fast and available customer service generally increases your customer satisfaction rate. Customer service can also be a competitive advantage when your product is more expensive than your competitors.

## 3.14. LOGISTICS

The way you manage logistics and supply chains has a great impact on your business. With new technologies and business models emerging in recent years, this area is an important one to keep track of and include in your overall Unified Commerce strategy. In short, logistics involves the processing and tracking of factory goods from warehousing and inventory control all the way up to transport and final delivery to your customers.

Today, there is a clear trend for companies to switch their logistics processes from more traditional push systems (based on forecasts) to pull systems (based on demand). E-commerce enables customers to personalize and customize their products, which in turn makes it possible to cut out many logistics chains. Today, there are also many more options for the last mile (delivery), something that traditionally has been both costly and cumbersome.

When selecting a logistics and supply chain strategy, there are some areas to consider in order to create the best customer experience possible:

### **Inventory management**

- How can we reduce inventory?
- How do we keep the right stock levels in both stores and our central stocks?
- How can we make sure we have the right stock balance in real-time?
- How can we automate warehouse pick-and-pack routines?
- How do we handle packaging?
- How can we expand our assortment?
- How will you handle the stock and logistics info in your ERP or warehouse management system, or maybe both?
- How do you handle sub-suppliers and integrations with their systems?

### **Shipping/Delivery**

- What are our customers' expectations in terms of delivery?
- How do we manage the last mile?
- What transport options are available on the market?
- How do we integrate with tracking systems?
- How do we set the price for different shipping options?
- What kinds of marketing and campaign possibilities are there in relation to shipping?
- How can our customers choose between different shipping alternatives, change them and track them?
- Are we able to provide drop shipping?

### **Returns**

- How do we handle returns?
- What are our return policies, locally and internationally?

- How do we track customer shipping and return behaviours?
- How do we avoid fraud related to shipping?

As you can see, the list of things to consider when discussing logistics can easily grow quite long. We believe that shipping is key, in terms of both effectively executing your Unified Commerce strategy and successfully scaling your e-commerce business, locally and internationally. It is impossible to create a great customer experience if the order is not delivered according to customers' expectations. It is also difficult to make money if you don't understand all the costs involved in shipping and make sure you keep control of them with a well-executed process.

## **3.15. CROSS CHANNELS**

Simply put, customers want to shop on their own terms and in the most convenient and rewarding manner. They will use the channels that will serve them best.

However, the issue of channel conflicts is still holding back many companies from exploring non-traditional sales channels or establishing their own e-commerce storefront. With a growing number of customers preferring to shop online, manufacturers are of course eager to capture the growing online market, but at the same time they are generally worried about creating conflicts or issues with long-standing partners, such as distributors, dealers, retailers and staff working in the store.

If you choose to expand your sales through cross channels, it can very well result in disaffection among physical stores, distribution partners, and even the company's own sales teams in the field. However, if handled well and managed correctly, it is possible to grow multiple sales channels without damaging existing relationships.

Here are a few examples of methods that can be adopted to avoid channel conflicts and grow your sales at the same time:

### **1. EXCLUSIVE PRODUCTS ONLINE**

As a manufacturer, you can offer exclusive products on your e-commerce website, such as products that are not available through other websites or via your channel partners. Selling shoes or jackets that are customized according to the customer's size or preferences, and can be purchased only on your website, is one good example. By working with this type of customization, you can avoid channel conflicts, because your products are not competing with standard products, and you are not lowering the price level.



## **2. SELL AT RETAIL PRICE**

A manufacturer can sell their products at a lower price compared to their retail partners. However, by selling products at the same price online and in stores, through distribution partners, dealers and retailers have an opportunity to match the manufacturer's online pricing. This will ensure that they do not lose sales to the e-commerce channel due to differential pricing. Manufacturers can offer loyalty/spend discounts to consumers, rather than offering price discounts, in order to avoid a price war with their own channel partners.

## **3. LESS EXPENSIVE PRODUCTS ONLINE**

If a manufacturer's product portfolio is vast and has a variety of products, across the price range, they can try offering inexpensive products only through their website or online. Customers will then visit the company's website to buy less expensive products and the reseller's or dealer's for the more expensive ones. This method is mainly suitable for products that require demonstration or are more technical.

## **4. USE A SUB-BRAND**

Another strategy for selling products online through an e-commerce website, without affecting existing channels, is by launching sub-brands, or bundles of products or accessories, which are not available for sale with channel partners. These are types of products that retailers don't stock, or new products that the manufacturer wants to make available only on their website. A company can also sell spare parts or accessories for their primary products exclusively on their website.

Channel conflict doesn't only occur between manufacturers and resellers; it can also involve different departments or teams within the same organisation.

Different teams working with telesales, marketing, e-commerce, in-store sales, etc., are all trying to achieve sales for the organisation and may be interacting with the same customers during various stages of the sales cycle. Working towards creating a Unified Commerce experience, and making sure that guidelines are understood by all internal channels, helps you avoid internal channel conflicts. This can be done by making sure a single customer overview is in place, to help staff create a homogeneous experience across different channels, offering the same experience for customers, regardless of the touchpoint in the sales cycle.

Here are some examples of scenarios that can help you work cross channels effectively, in order to create a seamless shopping experience, in line with your Unified Commerce strategy:

- Offer flexible and convenient delivery options, such as:
  - Buy your product online and pick it up at a physical store.
  - Buy your product online, get it delivered to your home, and then return it to a physical store.
  - Buy your product online or in a physical store and get it delivered to your hotel.
  - Buy your product in a physical store and pick it up at another store later that day.
  - Visit a physical store, reserve the product in another store and buy it later the same day.
- Provide real-time stock balance, including both physical and online stores.
- Align your online and in-store campaigns .
- Provide flexible return options. For example, let customers who have bought a product in a physical store return it to the online store via their post office or delivery point.

## 3.16. INTERNATIONALISATION

One of the benefits with e-commerce is that you can expand your business quickly to new markets with a low entry cost. However, the opportunities are so many that they can also feel a bit overwhelming at times. Entering new markets usually means that you have to overcome a number of barriers, such as language, customer service, currency, logistics, returns, laws, culture, competition, etc.

To make your internationalisation a smooth journey, you should take a closer look at a few areas:

- **Analyze your international expansion plan.** Maybe you have international potential and customers already without even knowing it. "Follow the money" is a good guiding principle when identifying new potential countries and markets. How large is the potential in the market? What is your brand awareness in the market, what does the competition look like and what is the potential ROI? Also take a look at the cost of rolling out in your target markets and make a proper estimate of the operating cost, to avoid running out of money.
- **Test your international expansion plan.** Start by testing new markets quickly, easily and nearly risk-free, in order to get an idea of how profitable they could become.

By testing, you also get a chance to take a closer look at licences, laws and the various rules, regulations and local policies in the new market. If a market works, then expand it! The general idea is to “nail it, then scale it” and then, of course, move on to opening the next market. An expensive mistake often made is entering too many markets at the same time and then trying to scale them without testing them out first.

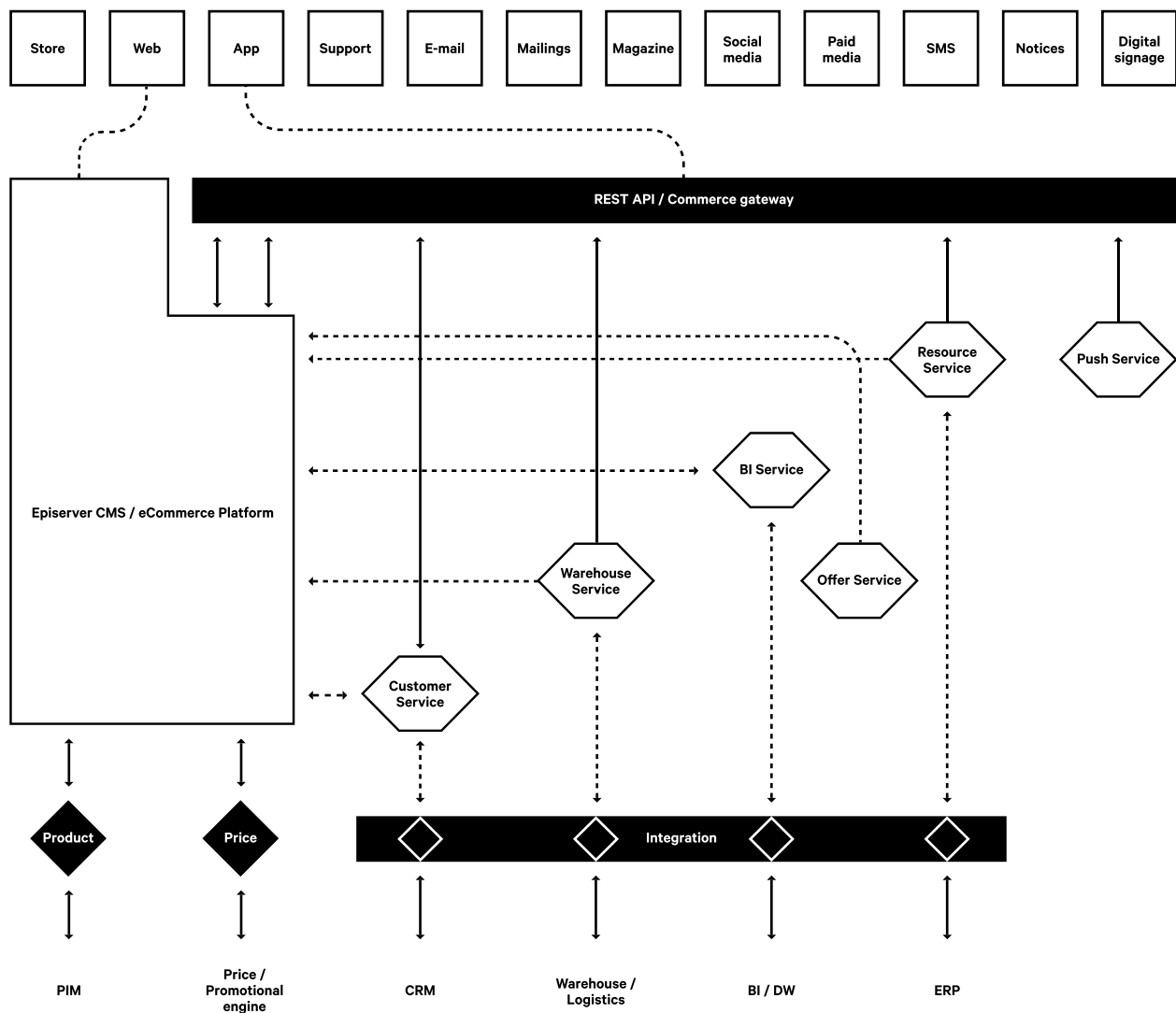
- **Adjust to local standards.** Expanding into a new market means that you have to learn a lot of new stuff. You need to offer local payment methods for each market. You also need to establish a cross-border shipping network and keep track of cost and environment aspects. This means that you need to understand local taxes, customs and duties, as well as local laws, related to distance shopping, guarantees, the environment, product content and ingredients, for example. You may also need to learn local shopping behaviours, which can vary a lot, especially between different continents. Such aspects can also vary from southern to northern Europe, or between different states in the US, for example. India and China are very large, unique markets, which require additional preparation and specific tactics. However, the reward is, of course, huge if you become successful there.
- **Centralize for operational excellence.** When you scale your business, you need to become better at sharing success stories, business cases and failures within your organisation to create a learning process. You will also need to optimize the global customer experience, as well as customer service.

In short, there will be a lot of work involved in expanding your business internationally, but, more often than not, it is well worth the effort. To effectively manage your expansion, you need to be prepared to update your e-commerce organisation with new leadership roles. You will probably also need a local e-commerce manager in each country, as well as some extra coordinating roles centrally. In the end, it will be the economy and customers who set the agenda. You have to be prepared, and have staff in place, to deliver accordingly.

## **3.17. ARCHITECTURE**

Once you have gathered all of the information related to the customer, as well as organisational needs, touchpoints, processes and systems involved, it is time to create a system architecture. In the architecture, the various use cases can be applied based on how the different systems are affected. Then you can create a clear integration system, in which every integration has been clarified with the questions ‘why’, ‘how’, ‘when’ and ‘what’.

One example of an architecture is a “loose architecture” (Microservices).



The general idea of this type of architecture is to create a rule-based communication system, where different functionality works as different modules. The benefit of setting it up this way is that it is easier to build on the architecture with more functions, as well as to maintain and support, with lower system architecture risk.

If one functionality is launched and it has a bug, the rest of the system works as before and you can update that single function instead of the whole system. A more loose architecture reduces the time for error search as well as facilitates working in a “best of breed”-way as a module, function or even a system can easier be replaced with a new one. This means that the technology can be in a constant change, helping you change your system flora according to new development on the market.

Another benefit with this type of architecture (and what has made it quite popular among big e-commerce companies) is that it is scalable, which means that you can launch new functions faster.

Some extreme companies can launch functions as fast as every minute. One downside with a more loose architecture is that it often requires a larger investment initially and it can require more technically skilled staff. It can also be a bit of an “overkill” if your need is more simple and there are not that many systems and functions involved.

In your Unified Commerce strategy, it is central to choose an architecture that suits your vision and needs, both short and long term. A hybrid architecture combination is therefore the best alternative for many companies, especially when there is a legacy/system already in place. A hybrid architecture is simply created by applying a Microservice architecture upon an existing platform/solution (just like the example in the architecture image with Episerver CMS and Episerver Commerce). With the hybrid architecture you can easily replace parts connected to the platform and the CMS.

## **3.18. ORGANISATION**

To succeed with a Unified Commerce approach, an organisation needs to be ready, both on a strategic and executional level. If this is not the case, you need to rethink.

Once your strategy is ready, the challenge is to prepare the business. This can be done by recruiting roles like a Chief Digital Officer, or an e-commerce manager, and/or by handing out new tasks to existing roles (often on the business side). A shortcut can be to start by giving a project owner and/or project manager the task of creating a project set up to keep momentum going.

A Unified Commerce strategy is a cross-organisational initiative; not a silo initiative. This is challenging for many mature organisations, which have to break down silos and legacies in order to be able to execute and get the impact they want. Cannibalism between physical stores and e-commerce can be a challenge, for example on the KPI side.

We therefore recommend that you create new KPIs, which support the organisational transformation necessary, and avoid channel conflicts early in the project. An example of a sales KPI to begin with is “store-to-online” and “online-to-store”, i.e. how much traffic and sales physical stores and e-commerce generate for each other. By doing this, you get a fair picture that motivates the business case and improves the chances of creating a better customer experience.



# ***CREATE YOUR BUSINESS CASE***

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At the end of the day, you need to be able to  
present a great Business Case.

## 4. BUSINESS CASE

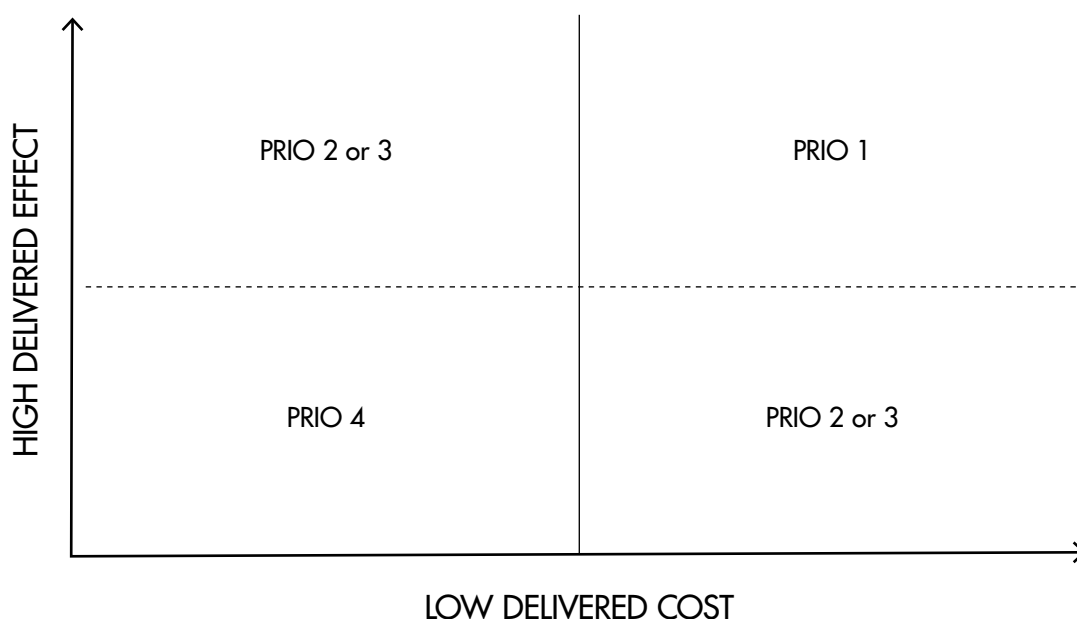
When you have conducted your analysis of the various parts of a Unified Commerce strategy and created a clear picture of what you would like to achieve, it is time to secure a budget for the actual project(s).

By putting together a business case that clearly shows the ROI and the type of business impact your proposed changes will create, it is usually easier to get all the stakeholders on board and approve the budget.

Since stakeholders connected to a Unified Commerce project are usually scattered across the company, a good way to get everyone on board, and make sure you get their combined input, is to invite them to a business workshop at the beginning of your project. The aim is to agree on the bigger picture, by looking at the goals and mission, as well as pains and gains related to each business area, and then prioritise the various tasks on that basis. Usually, these types of workshops help you get a good set of ideas related to specific functionality, the infrastructure, and which initiatives to focus on during different phases of the project.

There are many ways to go about creating your business case. Here is one example of a model that can help you gain insights about where to start and how to prioritise:

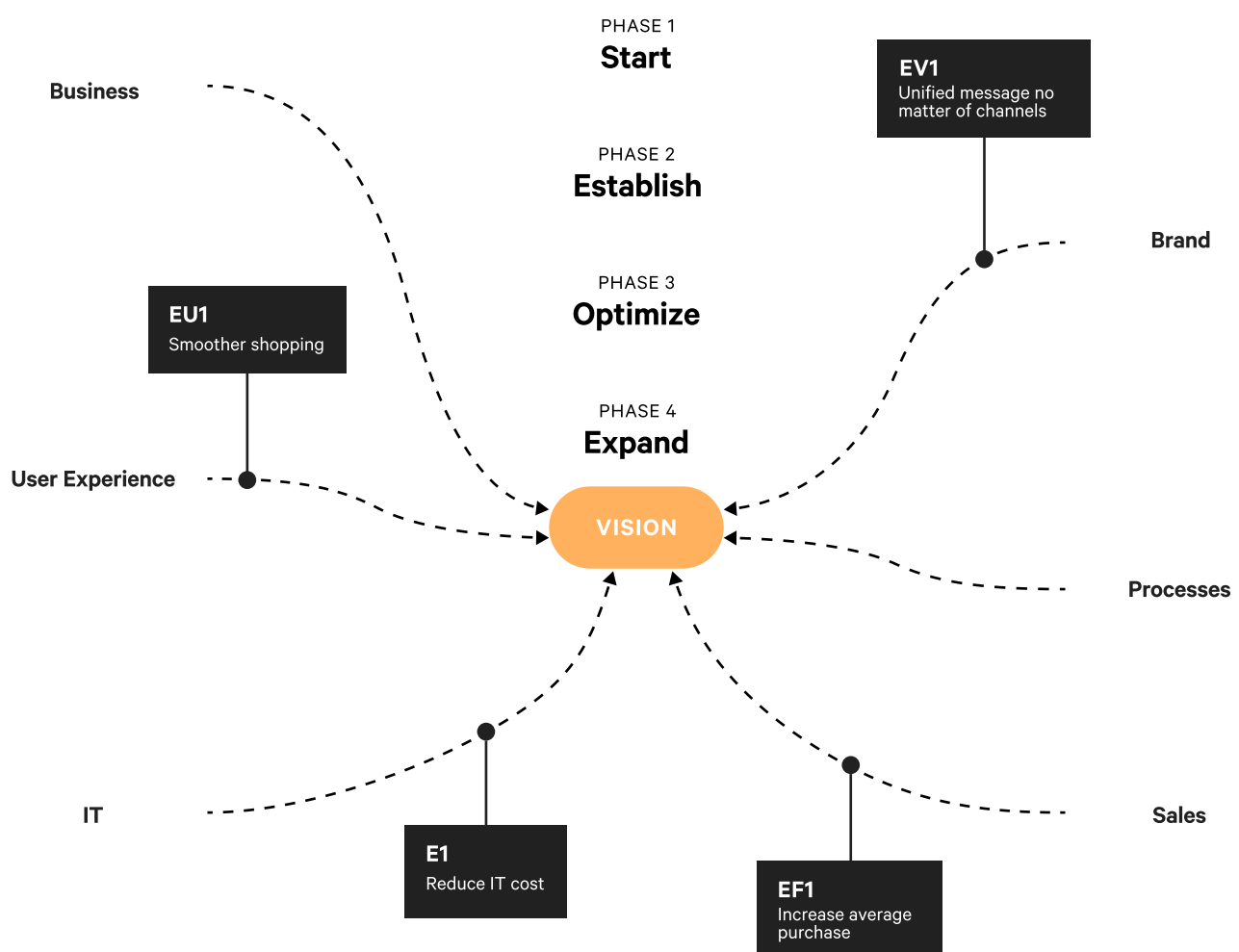
### Business Case — Priority Model



The next step is to document and summarise your priorities in a business impact card. Make sure that the following areas are included: Cost for function; cost for project; impact per function; impact type and risk.

The business impact analysis below shows the stakeholders, the programme phases over time, the business impact and when it will occur.

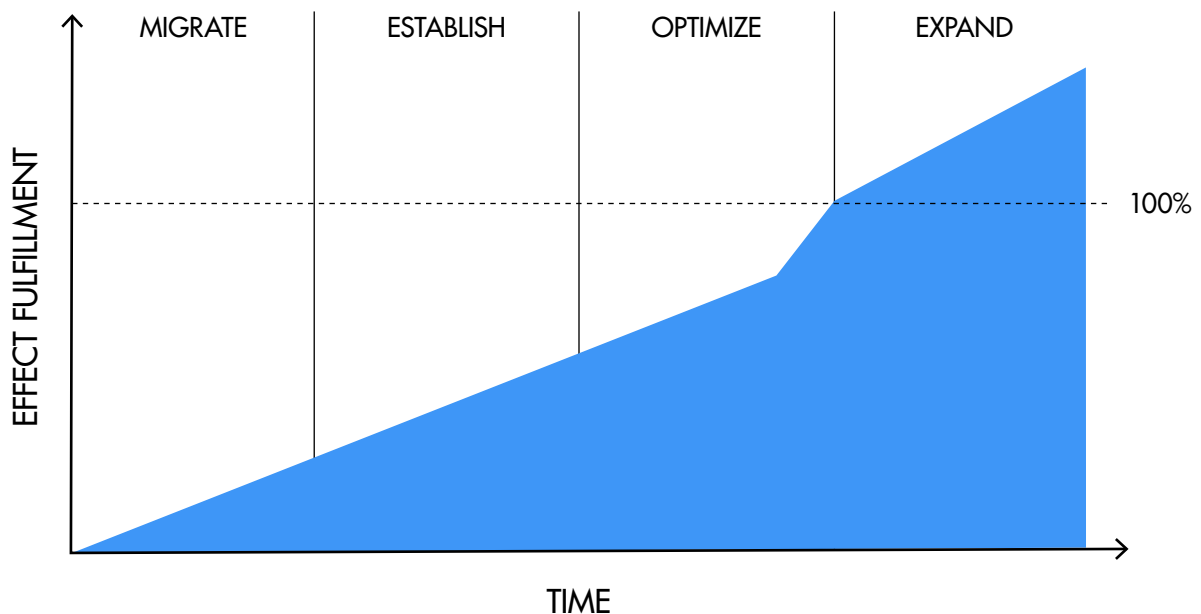
## **BUSINESS IMPACT ANALYSIS**



Once the business impact analysis is done, the various phases can be linked to time and the degree of fulfilment of the desired effects. In this way, it becomes clearer when the desired effects have been reached and you are moving closer to the vision. It also helps you explain why things are done in a certain order.



## **BUSINESS CASE – EFFECT MODEL**



## **PROTOTYPING**

One way of introducing new ideas on how to create better offerings and services for your customers is to provide your stakeholders with one or multiple prototypes. This is a visual and clear way of presenting new business possibilities, making sure that everyone can see the benefits and business potential of a new solution, which in turn often makes it easier to get budget approval for further development.

## **CUSTOMER INSIGHTS**

Another way of proving your point, in order to get the desired budget, can be to use customer insights. Putting together a report about how your business is actually perceived from an outside perspective, showing how well your delivery meets your customers' expectations, is usually a quite effective method. Gathering customer insights can be done in many different ways. Some common ones are face-to-face or phone interviews, pop-up meetings in physical stores, data analysis, workshops and market analysis. Regardless of the method, it is important that the information gathering is conducted in a personal and agile way.

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These are just a few examples of methods to use when creating a Business Case to secure a budget. However, as always, there are no magic pills, blueprints or solutions that fit all and can be applied for everyone. Always make sure your Business Case is formed according to your unique situation and needs.

# PRO TIPS

## Business Case



Don't forget to put together a business case.



Budget for 50-100% more than your estimate.



Always stretch your deadline a bit in order to have a margin. However, try to reach your time-to-market goal.



Don't forget to include scalability/roll-out in the business case.



Don't forget to prepare for an international roll-out, "follow the many - chasing the dream"



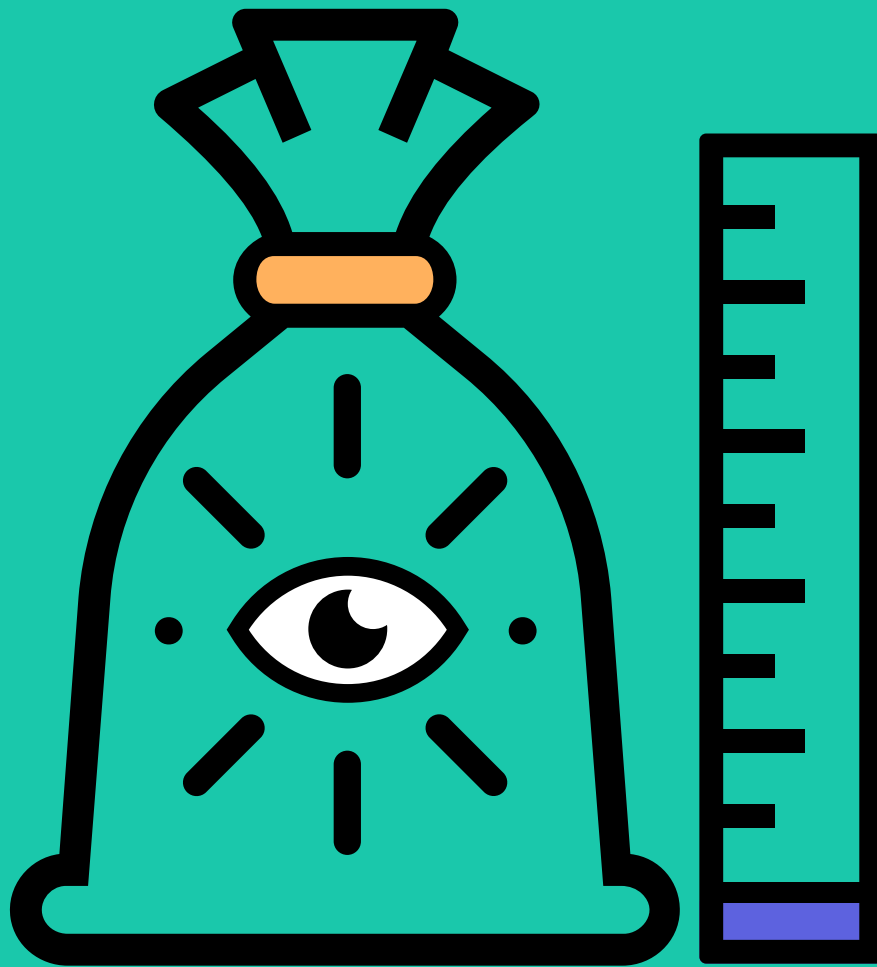
Understand the business models/licences for the various Unified Commerce components, also when scaling the business.



Don't underestimate the running cost for maintenance and further development.



Have confidence!  
Nothing, or at least very few things, give better ROI than e-commerce does, both short and long term. It is the future of your company.



# ***PROJECT PLANNING AND EXECUTION***

A crucial part of every project is to define the scope, gather requirements and set up the project team.

# 5. PROJECT PLANNING AND EXECUTION

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How you decide to plan and execute your project is equally important when you decide to build a new Unified Commerce solution or just continue developing your current one.

When planning your project, these are a few important areas to consider.

## **CHOOSE A PARTNER, NOT A SUPPLIER**

The best digital solutions are created in close collaboration between you and your partner. Try to keep a transparent approach and build a strong relationship, based on cooperation between your team and your partner's team, rather than ending up in a traditional supplier-customer relationship.

## **EXPERIENCE IS (ALMOST) EVERYTHING**

Make sure your partner has extensive experience and competence in launching e-commerce solutions. This will help you avoid unnecessary mistakes during the project and you will find it much easier to get a customized solution in place, while you can also take advantage of your partner's experience from other projects and implementations.

## **KEEP A PROACTIVE ATTITUDE**

The key to achieving your project goals is to have an open conversation. If you find a proactive partner to join you on the ride, make sure you take the opportunity to really collaborate, dare to be challenged and try new things that will drive your business forward. Use creative workshops, trend reports, inspirational lectures, etc., to make sure you innovate and benchmark in the best possible way. Identifying relevant trends before the mass market finds them helps you gain first-mover advantage. By using observations, customer interviews, experiments/prototyping and service design, you can easily adapt to challenges in order to achieve the desired results.

## **IDENTIFY KEY PLAYERS**

In order to achieve a more agile way of working, you need to put together a team with key players, including the following roles. This can, of course, vary somewhat and should be taken as a recommendation, rather than an absolute truth.

### **Product Owner**

The product owner is your representative and is constantly involved in the process. This person can be an e-commerce manager or project manager, if the term 'product owner' is not used in your organisation. Your product owner assists the team with solution issues on a daily basis, and is mandated by your organisation to make decisions about how your solution/product should be designed. The product owner is the person who is ultimately responsible for setting priorities regarding development of the solution/product, in consultation with the team.

### **Team**

The team consists of all the skills used to develop your solution, from all perspectives: strategic, creative and technical. E.g. strategist, information designer, interaction designer, graphic designer, content producer, interface developer, system developer, digital marketer, data insight analyst and more. The team communicates product issues with the product owner.

### **Project Manager**

The project manager is, among other things, responsible for planning and coordination, as well as ongoing monitoring of the budget and progress, and risk management. They also communicate with product owners and steering groups regarding these aspects. Often, the project manager also has the role of Scrum Master, which is described in the next section.

### **Scrum Master**

The Scrum Master is responsible for monitoring the process, both on a daily basis, with status meetings (Daily Stand Up), and in the long-term, with sprint feedback, for example. Usually it is the project manager who has the role of Scrum Master.

In some development projects, the role of Scrum Master may instead be assigned to a member of the development team, to distribute responsibilities where specialist expertise in a particular area is required. Scrum Master is usually a role assigned to someone in the team, in addition to that person's regular professional role / profession (designer, developer etc.).

## Steering Committee

Your product owner is a person who has knowledge of and insights into your business, as well as the mandate to design your solution/product to meet your users'/target groups' needs. In order for your product owner to be able to make choices and decisions about your solution/product, they need a group of people from your business to consult. It is this grouping that controls your solution/product, along with the product

## **STICK TO AN ESTABLISHED METHODOLOGY**

Using established tools, methods and philosophies will help you reach your business goals more smoothly. Make sure to use test-driven development, continuous integration and continuous delivery to ensure that your solution/product is and remains stable, optimized and secure from a technical standpoint.

Another important factor for successful development and management of digital solutions/products is to work with DevOps. Make sure that interaction between the various roles in your team is possible, including development, management and operations, and that your digital partner can guide you to be able to operate with your solution/product for a long time, and continuously develop it in an efficient and smooth way. If you decide to use an agile methodology, you need to go through three basic phases. Each phase is equally important in order to be successful. Make sure you don't skip the initial phase, when you clearly define your project, before moving onto the development phase.

## Define

The purpose of this phase is to define the project and prepare for the build phase. Here, you agree with your partner about the various aspects of working together and what you aim to achieve. For example, you can define the following:

- Vision
- Practices
- The first version of the product backlog
- High-level architecture

## Build

The purpose of this phase is for your partner to deliver what has been prioritised and agreed with you. The Build phase will of course differ depending on the project and what was defined in the Define phase. If you decide to work iteratively, in "sprints", these usually last for a period of about 2-3 weeks. It is in the sprints that joint work on your product/solution with your partner takes place. A sprint consists of certain standard activities:



## Approval & Launch

In each sprint, a product increment is approved. In this way, you will approve each delivery separately.

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The delivery of each sprint will give you and your stakeholders a part of the new solution to test and look at. At a very early stage, this will give you a chance to get a feeling for the final delivery, and also to come up with new ideas that can be planned in coming sprints. This is one of the main advantages of working in an agile way: you are able to change priorities along the way, adapting to you and your organisation's needs.

When the solution is approved by you as being ready for launch, all launch activities will be performed. However, the work does not end here. You will still have a lot of things to add, which form the solution's roadmap. Now is the time to continue working towards your vision and goals, continuously improving the solution and adapting to changing needs.

# CONCLUSION

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E-commerce is big business and calls for a true understanding of your customers' needs.

In order to be successful, you need a winning Unified Commerce Strategy that connects all the dots, making sure that your customers, employees and other interested parties get their desired experience, no matter how, where, when or why they want to shop or connect with your brand.





# ***THANK YOU!***

We would like to wish you the best of luck with your Unified Commerce strategy. Don't hesitate to contact us if you need help in this area. We will be more than happy to help. E-commerce never sleeps!

Get in touch