



N E W Y O R K · P A R I S

# A RETAILER'S GUIDE TO MANAGING

# DISPARATE SYSTEMS



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# INTRODUCTION

Technology has brought forth an ever-evolving and highly-competitive marketplace for retailers. Among the changes it has brought to the world of business, the most significant is arguably the explosion of data capture points, all promising retailers to get invaluable information about their operations and customers. Indeed, between the new generations of Points of Sales, CRM, Online eCom, traffic counting, Loyalty and even smartphone platforms, every single of these systems generate data feeds, which when correctly organized and compiled, can bring very valuable information to the retailers, on how to more efficiently manage their business and how to stay ahead of the curve. However, the current problem is that each data feed generated by the aforementioned systems is usually stocked in disparate containers throughout the many channels of the retail organization.

The primary goal of data collection is to gather important information that should enable companies to come up with informed business decisions. In certain isolated cases, retailers have hit this goal. But within the larger scope of the business, most retailers often fail to achieve it.

Since competition is at an all-time high in the retail industry, businesses must strive to find new ways to deliver exceptional solutions and customer experiences. However, these various retail channels each with their own systems of records have also led to several challenges. As simple examples of these challenges, we can name a few such as maintaining product and price information consistent across the different channels, reducing or controlling the maintenance costs of the various systems, enabling real-time visibility across the various channels and platforms.

For such reasons, there is a great interest in connecting the retailers' disparate systems and tools together into one coherent whole. Rather than looking for the perfect fully integrated system, which would already combine all the necessary functionality and modules allowing the retailer to manage and operate its various channels, a more realistic approach is to look at retail integration platforms allowing the retailers' already implemented separate systems to interact and speak to each other, in their native language. Indeed, when considering the significant investments in time and money that retailers have made, often over many years, to carefully implement and fine tune their current systems, it sounds not only reasonable but also very practical to avoid dismissing and dismantling all these disparate components that are now fully part of the retailer's organization and rather look at ways to connect them to each other to make them play fair together.

In this white paper, we identify what disparate systems are, explore the challenges of using them in retail, and identify their impact on business growth. All these points are essential to better understand the solution for one common problem retailers face –unstructured and disjointed data overload.

We will also take an in-depth look at retail management integration systems, examine how this technology works, and determine the importance of implementing such a solution within a retail organization.

Finally, we will explain how one can leverage this data collection technology to gain better control over the organization, and we will identify the factors that need to be considered when choosing such an integration solution.



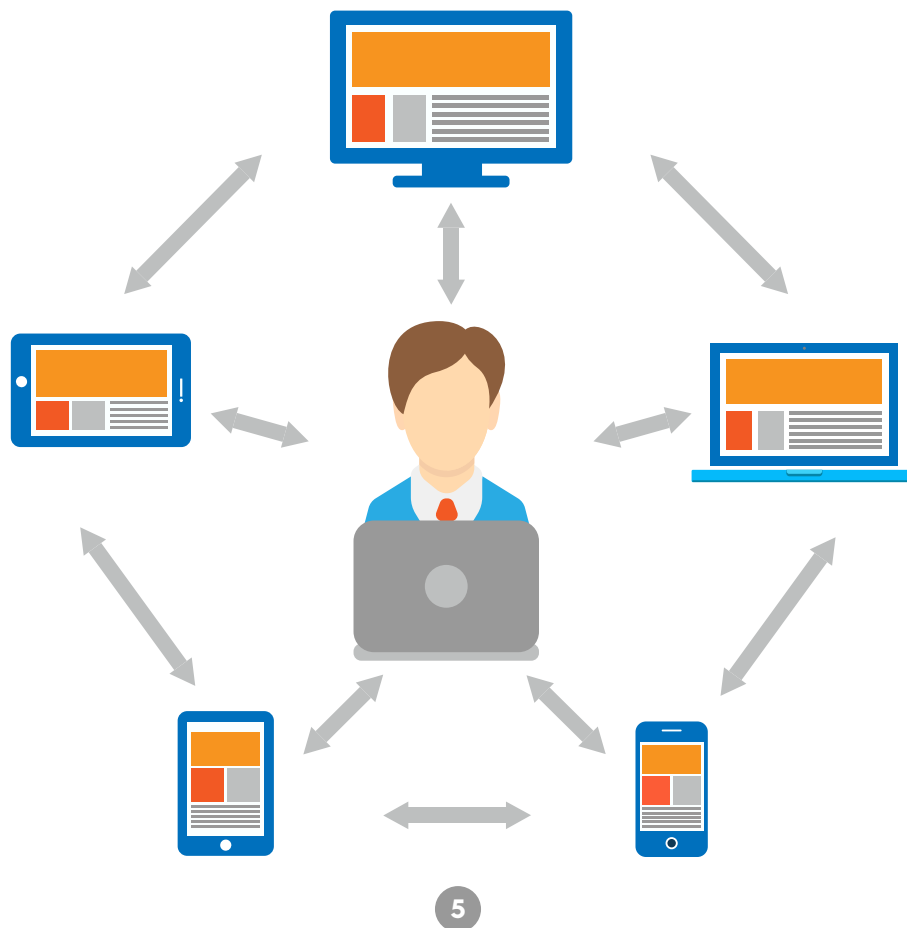
# THE CHALLENGES OF USING DISPARATE SYSTEMS

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A lot of large enterprises today still employ complex heterogeneous IT systems that only prevent them from thriving in a global landscape. These disparate systems' inability to respond quickly to the ever-changing requirements of their respective industries spawns many challenges that only stifles the growth of the organization.

As companies continue to expand in size and scale, the complexity of their IT infrastructure and data grows even more complex. For instance, one might want salespeople to access only the information they need such as customer details, pricing, and stock availability. Similarly, project managers may not need to know about product pricing or stock availability, but they can be interested in who is assigned to which project and how that particular project is faring based on the plan established with the exec team of the company.

When distributed operations from different locations are combined with reporting relationships that cover probably dozens of departments, managing disparate systems can get out of hand. Let's look at various issues penalizing the company's efficiency.



## 1. NON-VALUE ADDED TASKS

Inefficient systems and disjointed processes aren't exactly navigable. Employees, for instance, can waste hours of their precious time, manually storing order information into their accounting and invoicing systems. Then, they might have to repeat that same data input in their POS system to possibly end up entering that same information a third time in the company's eCom platform. As a result, this keeps them from performing more important tasks. Not to mention, manually inputting the same data often may lead to data input error, which of course, will create inconsistencies issues down the line.



On the other end, other company employees, "data users", may also have to spend a great deal of their time reconciling information from the various companies platforms, before they can make the proper decisions as to, for example, what to put on sale to eliminate slow moving items or, what store is performing best and why.

Implementing disparate systems can lead to very labor-intensive tasks, which only strip employees' time and attention away from more important activities that could help the company grow.

## 2. ERRONEOUS DATA ENTRIES

Manually inputting data across multiple disparate systems can lead to several errors, which will only hurt the business even more. For example, when a customer's order is shipped to the wrong address, that could easily have been a result of the disconnection between the shipping and order entry system. The former might not have been updated and synced with the latter, leading employees to access erroneous and outdated information.



Companies often spend thousands of dollars implementing various applications, often referred to as "Best of Breed" applications, hoping it will improve the company's overall performance as well as customer experience, but in reality, it can also generate all kinds of issues which, if not carefully monitored, might even lead to financial loss.

### 3. NO REAL-TIME VISIBILITY

Businesses that make use of multiple disparate systems will have to deal with several overlapping databases. This often makes the life of employees more difficult as they have trouble acquiring a clear picture of the business performance in a timely manner.

Reports that reflect and combine the performance of various departments are fundamental as they provide an integrated view of a company's operations. However, with multiple disparate systems, it usually takes a lot of time to acquire and combine all the information from different departments. Employees have to go through screens after screens, reports after reports and spreadsheets after spreadsheets to get the right global information. It's time-consuming, error-prone and frustrating for everyone.

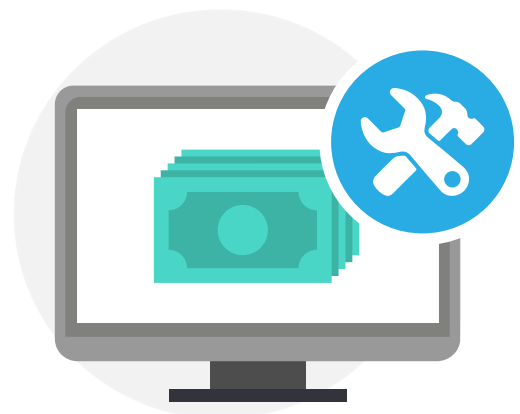
Simple questions such as "How many employees are working for a specific department from a particular geographic region?" or "How will a reorganization affect the department, division or the entire company?" are difficult to answer without effort and therefore, it leads businesses to avoid looking for answers to these questions.

This can be a terrible move as it can affect the organization's decision-making processes. Worse, retailers could end up making decisions based on erroneous data, or they could make rash decisions based on gut feelings.



### 4. EXPENSIVE MAINTENANCE OF MULTIPLE SYSTEMS

Business management systems need to be maintained properly. Maintenance is important as it determines how the system performs and how the business benefits from it. However, the maintenance of these multiple systems can be quite costly. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the need to link these systems pushes retailers to develop distinct interfaces between each system which increases even more the overall complexity of the system as a whole as well as the related maintenances.



Based on the leading analyst firm Gartner, IT staff spend 91% of their time on software maintenance instead of innovation. That time could be used on more valuable IT tasks to make the business more productive. While the staff continues to focus on less important tasks, the maintenance costs shoot up.

Having multiple system providers and interface developers can also be a challenge in itself. When there's a problem that needs to be solved, each of the parties can shift the blame onto the others. That means unproductive and costly time during which nothing is being achieved and your business can be brought to a stop.

## 5. INCREASED CUSTOMER CHURN

In the digital age, small and local businesses have the ability to compete with global conglomerates. After all, the internet provides aspiring entrepreneurs with all sorts of online platforms where they can reach out to their target audiences and share the story of their brands. Today, even startups can compete on the same markets and appeal to the same audiences as world-famous companies like Walmart and Amazon.



Unfortunately, businesses don't always have the same limitless budgets that these large enterprises have. Hence, it is crucial to optimize their systems and related maintenance to ensure smooth customer experience. In a world where social media rules, bad customer experience can quickly translate into lost sales and sometimes worse, business failure.

Social media hubs continue to make word-of-mouth relevant. So, if consumers go through poor experiences with a brand, they won't hesitate to share it with friends and other individuals connected to them through social media.

These challenges validate the need for better and optimized tools for your IT services. Sometimes, it requires you to step back and take another look at your operations to possibly come up with a different approach at solving and/or improving your company's inefficiencies. We know already that looking for the perfect system which will fit all your company's needs is somewhat wishful thinking.



We also know that in today's market, a retail organization will need to manage and compete on different channels. Therefore, the probability for the retailers to eliminate some of the moving parts of their infrastructure without sacrificing functionality in any of its channels is pretty slim.

Finally, we know that a key factor for retailers is their ability to, at least, react very fast when problems are detected or, at best, be very pro-active in their management style to avoid or be ready for the last minute change of plans.

We started this document by saying that the retail landscape has drastically changed in the last few years. So did the technology readily made available to businesses in general. The Internet of Things (IoT), the smart cloud, Artificial Intelligence among other things are no longer tools of the future and, only mentioned by techies during tech-fest events. They are available now and you should seriously consider familiarizing yourself with them because, if you don't, your customers do and so does your competition.



# A REALISTIC SOLUTION: CONNECTING YOUR DISPARATE SYSTEMS

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Whether you are launching a new Startup or you are a seasoned retailer veteran, you need to implement front- and back-office systems. Whether it's for accounting, order management, Point of Sales, warehouse management or eCommerce, businesses need to implement the applications they need one at a time. However, instead of treating each application as a separate small functional entity within your organization, each with its own silo of information which you will need to combine and reconcile with the others eventually, you should consider a more holistic approach and see each of these distinct applications as one of the building blocks of your company's entire platform. Instead of focusing first on the distinct requirements and/or applications of your company, consider first to have a global approach of your entire business needs, so that you can come up with a global company strategy and plan.

As an analogy:

You don't build a house by focusing on the specs of the entrance door and the ones of each window first, but rather by working with an architect who will work with you to define the size, the shape, the look and feel, the number of rooms of the house. In other words, once you are ready to shop for an entrance door, you already have the perfect vision of what your house will look like when completed. You already know and inventoried all building blocks of the house and you know how to interconnect them or to cement them together so that the end result is what you need and want.

In a retail organization, like in any other business, you want to first work on your business before you even think working in your business. Treat your business as a whole and not as the sum of distinct parts that hopefully will talk to each other when you already know they are not designed originally to do so.

Far too many enterprises find their operations expanding faster than they can handle. If you happen to run one of those businesses, your chances of successfully managing the expansion will be directly linked to your ability to keep a clear vision of what your business needs as a whole, as opposed to what specific appendice or extension needs to be implemented to momentarily absorb the added activity brought by the business

expansion in a specific department. While each building block is important and must meet your business requirements, the cement or glue making it work together is equally important to keep the business running as a whole and not as distinct disconnected parts. In an IT and digital world, the famous saying that states that the sum of 1 + 1 equals more than 2 is correct but, please understand that the "more than 2" refers usually to additional headaches and maintenance costs.

Planning your business expansion should rhyme with plans for better and enhanced integration. The key points addressed by an enhanced integration of your systems are:

## 1. AVOIDING MANUAL AND ROUTINE TASKS

Implementing an integration platform enables all your disparate systems to speak a common language and communicate with each other. Accurate data should be shared in real time, and employees should easily find what they need, when they need it. They should be able to do it simply and quickly.

Successful systems integration translates into employees inputting data only once and the information entered becomes readily available to everyone who has been granted access to it.

Successful systems integration also means easier automation enabling companies to minimize the time employees have to spend doing non productive mundane activities so they can focus on higher-value tasks.

Successful systems integration also means employees gain better insights into important business processes, and get answers to questions like "How's the business performing?" "Did I reach my goals?"

Successful systems integration means employees can resolve customer inquiries in no time and improve customer experience and engagement. This translates into better customer satisfaction which usually leads to improved sales.



## 2. ACCURATE AND RELIABLE DATA EXCHANGE ACROSS DEPARTMENTS

Successful systems integration means employees no longer have to spend hours double checking or comparing the information from different systems. When critical business processes are connected, employees and managers can have a holistic view of their operations.



## 3. ELIMINATING DATA ENTRY ERRORS

Successful systems integration means entering data once which can reduce and even eliminate erroneous data entries that can lead to major issues.



## 4. REDUCED OPERATIONAL COSTS

Apart from expensive hardware and software licenses, companies with multiple disparate systems have to spend a lot of time feeding each system with the necessary information. By reducing the number of data entry points in your systems, you reduce the operational costs by eliminating double data entry times as well as frustrating and highly unproductive reconciliation times.



## 5. ACCELERATED GROWTH

Successful systems integration allows companies to obtain faster and easier executive summary views of their strengths and weaknesses, helping them to be more competitive on their target markets, giving them clues as to what to do to improve customer experience and satisfaction, increasing productivity, improving sales and margin and in turn, accelerate growth.

In the mid to long run, well integrated systems can lead to significant growth and expansion across different markets and geographies. Businesses can really work on development strategies rather than Fixing/Coping strategies and become victims of their successes.

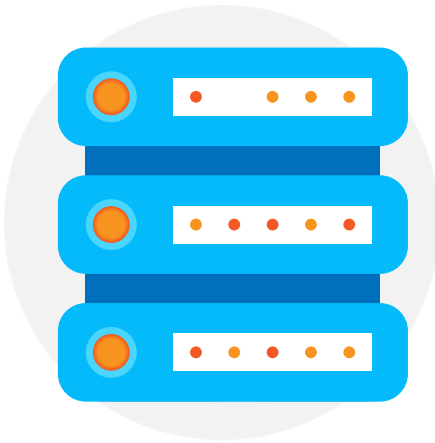
As companies continue to expand, they won't have to be as worried about ever-increasing operational costs that stem from expensive maintenance and operation costs of disjointed applications.



# THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION

If we do know by now that there are many advantages to integrating disparate business systems, it should not be considered necessarily as a simple task. There are many challenges that you'll need to face and resolve before you can become successful at it.

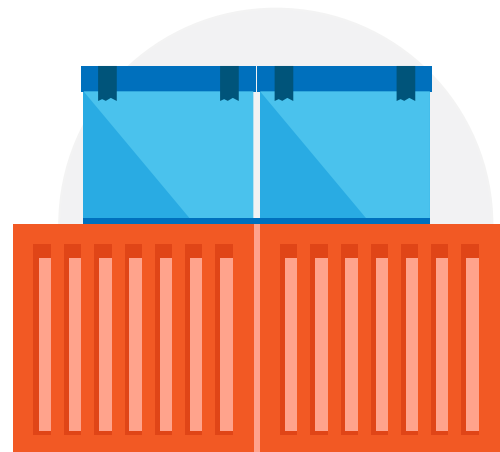
## LEGACY SYSTEMS



Many retailers still use old legacy systems that are based on ancient technology stacks which were not designed to communicate with other systems. If you are in this type of situation, you may be forced to either upgrade your ancient systems, if upgrades are available or, consider a more extreme approach, which is to replace your old systems with more modern ones. Remember, your goal is to treat your business and its needs as a whole. If one or more of your existing systems forces you to fragment your processes or does not allow you to freely get data in or out of it, you should seriously consider eliminating it as, keeping it will most likely result in your organization managing an isolated silo of data

## FRAGMENTED SUPPLY CHAIN AND INVENTORY

Various channels often offer diverse products coming from different vendors and/or warehouses, each using different software platforms and/or logistic partners. For these reasons, your company might need to implement various inventory monitoring processes as well as spend additional efforts to keep everything in line. As an example, you know that you need to avoid situations where for the same product, one system of your supply chain says that you are out of stock while another might report that you are fully stocked. If the various components of your supply chain are not integrated with each other, it becomes very difficult for your team to quickly spot and correct inconsistencies.



Consequently, this may have a negative impact on your customer experience and service and, therefore, it can affect profitability.

Like for legacy systems, you will need to get full cooperation from your third party partners and vendors to make sure they allow you full access to their platforms so that you can seamlessly integrate their systems to yours. You may have to consider switching vendors or partners who do not want to cooperate.



## DIVIDED ORGANIZATION

Most of the time, various divisions of a retail organization are neither encouraged nor motivated to collaborate with each other to provide better customer services. Their vision of the business often narrows down to only the success of the departments they manage. This can be explained by the lack of appreciation of the impact that their inability or ability to perform adequately has on other company departments. Furthermore, you might also be facing internal

competition between the various departments of the company. For example, brick and mortar store managers, whom stores have been selected as online orders fulfillment centers, might find that providing fast and excellent online customer services might compete directly with their brick and mortar store activities and/or affect the sales from physical stores. To guarantee great customer service across multiple channels, these store managers often have to be provided with the right information and incentives. They need to be reassured that the new integrated systems you will deploy will help them in their daily routines, make better informed decisions and have less frustrations while improving their sales and commissions.

## LACK OF ARCHITECTURAL PERSPECTIVE

As mentioned earlier when making the analogy between running a successful business and building a great house, challenges pop up when retailers don't have a clear idea of their business strategy and goals and when they don't know their systems landscape. Simply saying "I want to improve sales and, in order



for me to do so, I need to implement the best POS package” is simply not a strategy, nor is it realistic. Though enterprises often make meaningful endeavors, many undertake conflicting initiatives and lack the proper roadmap for the selection and deployments of their various IT platforms as well as their necessary integration with each other. Again, when making tough calls about what to eliminate and/or add into your company’s landscape, always look at the big picture and look at your company’s strategy as a whole rather than focusing mainly on one part of the puzzle. Always keep in mind the “What” you need to achieve, way before you start wondering “How” you will achieve it.





# HOW TO CHOOSE A RETAIL INTEGRATION PLATFORM?

Finding the right integration platform isn't either exactly a breeze. As we have seen, it is the cement making all your building blocks appearing and functioning as a whole. Again, the ultimate goal is to keep the grand vision of your business functioning smoothly as a single business unit as opposed to a mix and match of distinct and disjointed processes.

It is arguably one of the most important platform you will have to select, as it will affect all of your business processes, from inventory management, to fulfillment, to replenishment, to security and eventually to customer experience. Below are some steps you might want to consider when choosing the right integration platform.

## STEP:1

### CONSIDER THE DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD AND EXPERIENCE

Service providers with great track records might be what you're looking for. There are existing companies that have been in this business for a while, and there are others who just recently entered this market. Some of them only provide generic integration platforms while others have developed their expertise in strictly focusing on integration of retail systems.

Do a little research to understand how long a service provider has been developing management systems for your industry as it gives you an idea of their knowledge about your niche.

However, looking at service providers' performance history won't guarantee that their retail software systems will fit perfectly with your organization's needs. To make sure that it does, you must also consider the service providers focus & values and make sure they're in line with yours.



It's always best to look into the company's background even when your organization is primarily concerned with the features and functionality of a management system. It is highly similar to the selection process of a new employee or team member. You might have the perfect candidate on paper, with all the qualifications that you believe are important for the position you are trying to fulfill but, if the core values and business ethic of that new employee or team member are not in sync with yours, you may run into a clash.

## STEP:2

### GET FEEDBACK

Before making a decision, look at reviews and ask for feedback from numerous sources. For this part, knowing who to ask is key. Most of the time, info sources don't have the correct experience or understanding of your challenges to adequately steer you in the right direction. When these opinions are overvalued, you might end up making choices you'll regret. Without a doubt, it's imperative that you seek input, but keep in mind that, when asking for advice from people in different trades than yours, their comments and/or advices might not apply perfectly to your world.



A few things to keep in mind when asking for feedback:



### RETAIL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Retail management systems may vary greatly among different industries. Hence, if you're looking for relevant opinions, turn to those who are familiar with your retail industry specific management systems.

Not everyone who works in retail is well-aware of how these management solutions operate. For instance, friends with minimal experience in this industry might be poorly informed on the solutions available on the market. Though they have used retail software programs before, they might not have been given the chance to administer it as of yet. Being a software user does not make you a software admin. That means that while they have some experience in dealing with the use of the software, they don't have the necessary experience dealing with key factors of the software from an implementation point of view and/or from an integration with other systems point of view.



## IT EXPERTS

At the very least, if you want to ask the opinion of those who have little experience with retail management systems in general, you ought to know, in what capacity they've operated the system. This will give you the necessary frame of reference for making up your mind when ultimately choosing the platform that best fits your company's needs.

Companies who have IT managers often leave this decision all up to them, which is unfair and ineffective. Although these experts should have a say in the decision-making process, they shouldn't shoulder the entire decision burden.

As you already know, retail management systems come with a variety of functions that go beyond the knowledge of IT managers. While they can share relevant suggestions when it comes to data management and technical requirements, they aren't the best choice in terms of evaluating the software program's capacity to provide customer and employee experience or carry out marketing efficiency.

Get your IT managers' suggestions for aspects that they are knowledgeable of, but don't leave the entire decision process up to them.

## STEP:3

### WEIGH YOUR NEEDS AND WANTS

Nowadays, you can come across dozens or probably even more retail software integration solutions. Each of them comes with its own strengths and weaknesses. Most of them, if not all, promise to cover all aspects of your retail needs and more. But that's not more important than the way they are able to carry out this promise. Despite what consumers are told, a lot of service providers can't live up to the announced expectations.

Inventory the main features that your business needs. Once you're done, determine which factors are top priority, which are important and which are nice to have.

Another way of separating what the company wants from what it needs is by considering the budget. Looking at the possible costs and your budget will trim down your list of options. The prices of retail integration systems can range from a few hundred dollars to a few hundreds of thousand dollars and even to a few million dollars. By setting a flexible range, it will be easier to find the best solution that fits the budget.



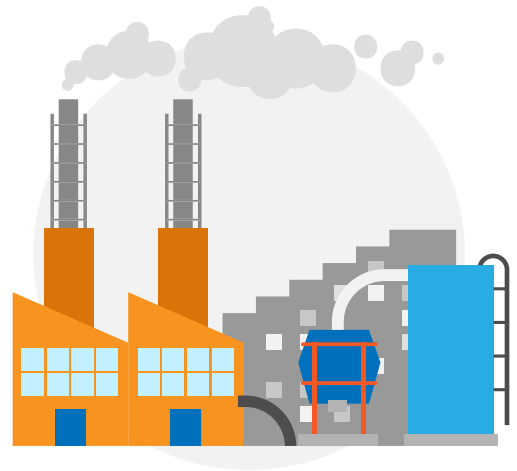
## STEP:4

### CHECK FOR INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC CAPABILITIES

There is an ever growing variety of retail integration platforms these days, and a lot of them cater to specific sectors such as food, soft goods, hard goods, etc.. Nowadays, you can also find more generic systems that can handle different retail verticals. Be mindful of the fact that if they can be attractive with attractive concepts, equivalent to a “One size Fits All”, these packages are often plagued with shortcomings, especially when you start to dive into specifics. They usually deal and offer solutions at a very superficial level and aren't as robust and efficient when dealing with the complexity and singularities of your industry and/or company. Furthermore, they may also be ineffective when placed in large-scale environments, as they are usually designed for smaller companies which attempt to emulate the features and functionality of larger ones without having the same budget.

So, size is another important factor. Retail software integration solutions cater to businesses of all sizes. Some may be designed for organizations with 1 to 20 stores, while others can manage over hundreds of them. Make sure you are comparing Apples to Apples, and make sure to not go overboard. If your business is a 5 to 10-store operation, you most likely do not need the horsepower of the Amazon platform.

Research is important when it comes to choosing the right integration solution. Don't rush the process and try to look into as many references as you can because many service providers tend to highlight what their software solutions can handle, but fail to disclose what goes beyond their capacity. It is best to find retail integration solutions that are specifically designed for your sector of activity. Look at customer references in the same sectors of activities than yours to better assess the quality of the systems you're eyeing and to ensure that they can fit your organization's needs.



**STEP:5****LOOK AT YOUR GROWTH PLAN**

Integration platforms are a long-term investment. They must grow with and easily adapt to your business. Remember, they represent the glue which unites the various building blocks of your organization. As such, they should perfectly accommodate situations where you decide to replace one building block by another. Your perfect integration platform should not limit you in the number or type of systems you wish to implement in your organization. It should help you and facilitate your life as you expand stores and revenue. As an example, should you further develop your business model and now accommodate franchisees as part of your new business strategy, your integration platform should not become a hindrance to your evolving business model and goals.



You want your software integration platform to rhyme with flexibility and not rigidity.

By looking into your growth plan, you should figure out where you want your company to be in five years from now. Keep these projections in mind when shopping for your various systems including the integration platform.

Significant income growth usually goes along with increased/reinforced security and redundancy. A \$100-Million business is not managed the same way as a \$1-Million one. Are the various components of your retail platform compliant with the rules and regulations that larger organizations must enforce?



Should your business go global and span borders, data management becomes even more complex. Is your retail platform as a whole designed to manage high volumes of data from various locations in the world? Can it manage various languages, localizations, currencies?

Are you working online? If yes, is your online channel integrated to your brick and mortar one? Can your integration platform accommodate this portion of your business adequately and effortlessly? Your web presence and sales could grow immensely in just a few years. Can you easily absorb this growth?

# WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A RETAIL INTEGRATION PLATFORM?

Once you've clearly laid out your business road map for the three to five years to come, inventoried what your current system platforms are and, what they each can and can't do, you are better equipped to identify and choose the integration platform that will eliminate fragmentation in your company and that will ease the way toward success.

## FLEXIBILITY

This must be the key word defining your integration platform. By design, that integration platform should transform rigid and disparate systems into one smooth and harmonious whole. That integration platform goal is to make all your systems blend in with each other, resulting in a sharp decrease of your overall operating costs and a steep increase of your operations efficiency



## AFFORDABILITY

Your integration platform acquisition cost should not break the bank. Remember that you are trying to streamline non-value added tasks and reduce operating costs. Therefore, the Return on Investment of such platforms must be quick and painless.



## REDUCED MAINTENANCE

Your integration platform should be easily deployable and require minimal maintenance. Remember that overall, you still need to maintain the different software systems that your integration platform will connect together. The last thing you need is to have another complex piece of software that requires serious technical skills to maintain. A few companies offer their integration platforms as part of a SaaS offering, which makes it extremely easy for the retailer to use, as there is nothing to physically deploy at the retailer's sites and nothing to maintain. Basically, the only thing that the retailer keeps maintaining is his/her already existing software systems.



## EXPANDABILITY

It goes with Flexibility, the Retail Integration Platform that you choose may not have all the necessary connectors that you need to connect all your various software platforms but, its vendor must give you the assurance that new connectors can be developed to meet your needs. Furthermore, you cannot always precisely define your future needs, so even if the integration platform happens to interconnect all of your systems today, you might decide to add a new brick to your existing company retail platform tomorrow and you need to rest assured that it won't be an issue for your integration platform of choice.



## SMARTNESS

A Retail Integration Platform is not a simple ETL and it should bring value to your business while automating its processes. Its net effect is that it should enhance your various business processes. Remember, you are most likely looking beyond a generic integration platform simply designed to make separate systems exchange data with each other. You should rather look for a retail centric platform which should help you expedite various standard retail processes that you otherwise would have to do manually. Examples of such processes are:

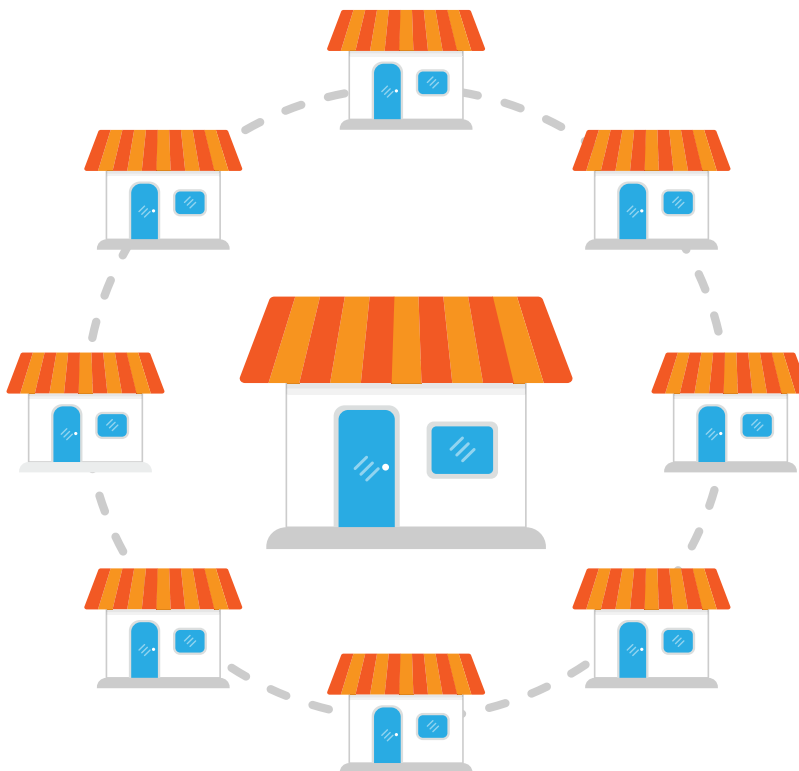


- Automatic inventory allocation for order fulfillments (Based on your allocation rules)
- Automatic selection of a shipping method based on shipping rates and/or shipping distances and shipping carriers with automatic generation of the shipping label
- Automatic creation of the proper transaction documents in the various company retail systems managing and controlling inventory to maintain them in sync in real time
- Automatic emails sent to your customers, your customer service agents, your vendors and partners to inform them of various orders statuses, if and when appropriate
- Automatic alerts generated for the support agents when one of the systems did not respond to a query from the integration platform

- Automatic creation of packing lists, each specific to a fulfillment center or warehouse, indicating to each packer the exact list of items to be packed and readied for shipping
- Automatic credit card settlement for online order fulfillment
- etc...

As you can judge by the non exhaustive list of tasks that a smart integration platform should accomplish, it goes well beyond the simple ETL process and it should substantially increase your company efficiency as well as its ability to cope with increased volume of business while maintaining operating costs down.

That level of smartness will only come and will only be correctly implemented by developers and/or companies who understand your business and go beyond the technical challenges of making two distinct systems speak to each other. This is why it is important during your selection process, to make sure your platform provider is familiar with your industry standards and processes.





# CONCLUSION

While implementing multiple disparate systems may be necessary to manage different aspects of your business, it won't be enough to help businesses thrive in today's digital landscape. As mentioned, using different applications which are unable to communicate with each other, can hamper growth especially when manual data entry is required as it accommodates erroneous and out-of-date information. When inaccurate data is distributed across all channels, business processes are affected.

Today, integration platforms are necessary to swiftly and efficiently handle day-to-day operations.

Without a [smart retail integration platform](#), retail businesses will continue to struggle to keep up with their growth. They won't know how to deal with increased volumes of data and they will fail improving their business processes while increasing their operating costs.


If you are interested to learn more about the various gains and returns on investments you can expect from a retail integration platform, [visit our integrations page here](#), or contact M.X. Data, Inc at [info@mxdata.com](mailto:info@mxdata.com), or give us a call at (212) 727-1200

M.X. Data is a 30+ year veteran leader in the development and deployment of retail management applications. M.X. Data has acquired the expertise and insight knowledge of the best retail practices available today by working and consulting with the most prestigious retail companies on the planet. M.X. Data's staff will work seamlessly with your teams and will work as your best trusted advisors.





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