BT Means Business

Buying into the future of retail

How smart technology choices can transform retail operations, customer experiences and sustainability

Foreword

It's not news that the UK retail sector is under pressure – but what should be making headlines and inspiring change are the routes thriving retail businesses are taking through this difficult environment. These businesses are leveraging technology to break away from a pure cost-of-living focus and shape a profitable future.

They refuse to let today's painful pinch on income streams trap them in a highly reactive, survival-based mode of operating. Instead, retailers across all specialities - from grocery, apparel, fashion and electronics to home furnishing and décor, automotive outlets and everything in between – are navigating towards a new era. Their sights are set on delivering customer-centric experiences that will help them to increase both revenues and differentiation.

The key to their success is identifying enduring changes in consumer expectations and preferences early – and then delivering solutions to meet them. This means the question of the moment is: how well does your current business vision match what your customers want?

Answering this involves a clear consumer-centric assessment of your industry and the levers at your disposal for both meeting and exceeding customer expectations and increasing your business efficiency. Whether you're running shops, supermarkets, online operations or field sales forces, it's time to investigate routes for evolution, to protect and grow your market position.

A critical part of this process is looking hard at how technology can support your ambitions. Naturally, retailers are already exploring technology options - but frequently only in relation to specific issues or business areas. And they're rarely thinking about how security and sustainability need to flow through every move forward. Shifting to a more holistic technological approach will unlock more extensive benefits and opportunities, and ensure you're ready for whatever comes next.

The foundation for a holistic approach is targeted investment in technology that enhances your ability to flex quickly to changes. However, achieving this flexibility will take concerted leadership from the C-suite. It will require a whole-business strategy, with input from the heads of operations, information, security, digital, IT, sustainability, customer services and innovation as a minimum.

This whitepaper is designed to kick off this process by spotlighting opportunities, flagging up critical considerations and sparking conversations that will help your business thrive.

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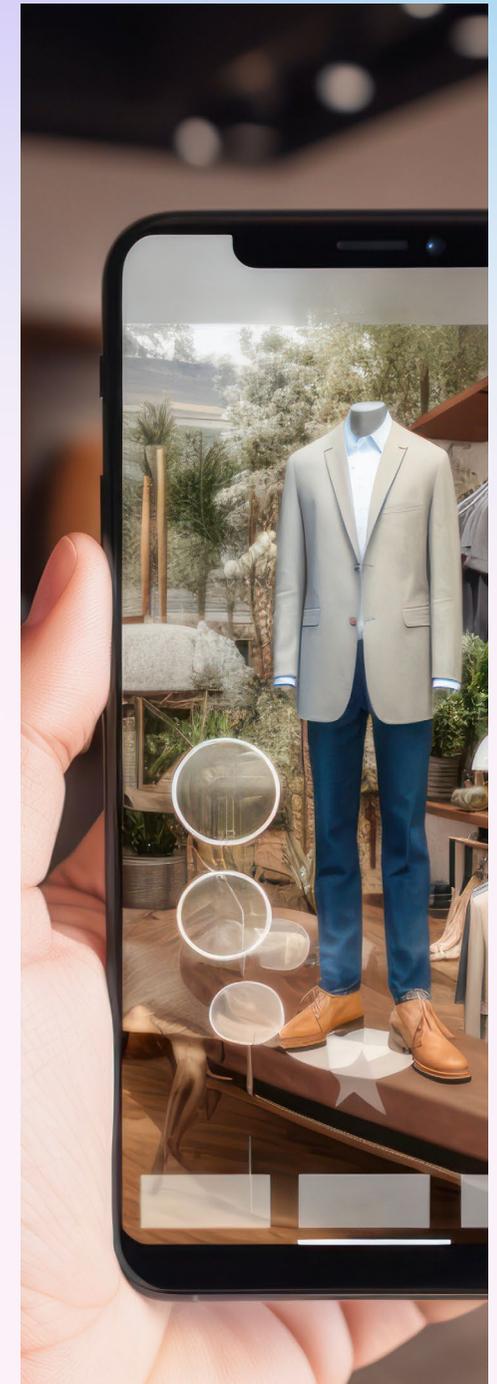
This paper's mission...

- To explore the factors impacting current decision-making and strategy planning in UK retail

- To investigate the scope and challenge of increasing optimisation, sustainability and customer satisfaction

- To unpack the technology foundations necessary to underpin today's initiatives and any future, undefined ambitions

Introduction

Very few strategy decisions in the retail sector are straightforward, particularly during the current period of significant evolution. Against a background of shifts in consumer behaviour and technology, as well as a volatile economic and geopolitical environment, retailers must proactively modify their business strategies to respond effectively.

Exploring this process in depth reveals that **six core drivers** shape every strategic move to some extent. Often these drivers are entwined, so work on one will enhance another, adding a further layer of consideration to C-suite planning.

The golden question that retail C-suite decision-makers must ask when kicking off any strategy planning is simple: **'How can we make sure this move addresses these core drivers?'**.

The six core drivers of retail business outcomes

1. The cost of living crisis and rising inflation

In response to the economic bite on most UK households, price-conscious consumers are increasingly focused on lower costs. They're willing to share their data in return for discounts, boosting expectations that retailers will offer loyalty schemes and personalisation. This cost drive increases pressure on retailers' margins, at the same time as supply chain costs are rising. Together, these factors make it an imperative that retailers' boost their operational efficiency to protect margins.

2. Supply chain optimisation

Rising customer expectations of next-day or same-day delivery to store or home is shrinking delivery timeframes across the supply chain. But, beyond this, customers want on-the-spot insight into stock availability and a smooth, efficient order fulfilment experience. The retail supply chain is the backbone of this, and optimisation is crucial to satisfying customers in a competitive environment.

3. Omnichannel integration

Today's customers expect an omnichannel experience, seeing the retailer as one entity, rather than a collection of sales channels. As a result, retailers must integrate every touchpoint across online, mobile, instore and social media to deliver consistent and seamless branded consumer experiences. Legacy infrastructure is often unable to provide essential visibility across all channels, data synchronisation, accurate forecasting or targeted uses of automation in inventory management.
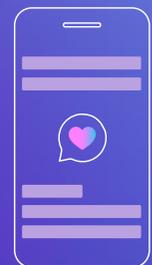
4. Customer experience and personalisation

Today, 76% of customers expect increased personalisation. They want, and increasingly expect retailers to understand and act upon their individual preferences, buying behaviours and contact history. To win custom, build loyalty and create footfall, retailers need to be in a position to leverage disruptive technologies to offer personalised experiences and tailored recommendations.

5. Data privacy and security

Retailers must balance increasing digitalisation with its greater risk of data breaches, identity theft and cyber attacks. On the one hand, 80% of consumers say that fraudsters are getting better at scam emails and calls, and 69% think it's now becoming difficult to tell a genuine text message from a fraudulent one. But, on the other, they want to operate freely in an omnichannel world and expect retailers to protect them as they do so. This makes improving data security and fraud protection, and maintaining trust priorities for today's retailers.

6. Boosting sustainability

Reliable and accurate data on carbon emissions is essential to achieving and quantifying the reductions demanded by Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and specific sustainability targets. Leveraging data analytics and Internet of Things (IoT) devices are integral to providing valuable insights into consumer behaviour and supply chain logistics. These are vital if retailers are to make informed decisions to improve sustainability practices and reduce carbon emissions and waste. Given the sector's current reliance on energy-intensive operations, transportation and supply chains, there's also growing pressure on retailers to grow sustainability by moving towards a circular economy.

Moving your strategy forward

With multiple trends at play in the sector, retailers looking to make fully informed decisions need to focus their investigations on three specific areas.

1. Increasing operational efficiency, agility and resilience

With costs rising across the board – particularly in terms of energy and rent - retailers are keeping a watchful eye on profitability. Their direct links to end consumers mean their revenues are particularly exposed to the current economic slowdown and rising cost of living. These cost pressures are exacerbated by the wage increases driven by the current 'war on talent', and retailers anticipate staff wages will have a 23% impact on their profits.

This culminates in a need to 'do more, better, and with less'. The spotlight is on operational efficiency, agility and resilience to help retail businesses withstand and adapt to disruptions, challenges and changes in the digital landscape, while maintaining their core operations, customer relationships and overall business performance.

While the primary push of digitalisation may focus on driving greater operational efficiency, retailers must also consider the resiliency of their critical infrastructure and keep a continual eye on the threat of cyber attacks specifically targeting vulnerabilities in the supply chain.

Key pain points holding back operational transformation

Leading retailers are looking to make technological investments to improve their operations, grow their resilience and prepare them to leverage innovation. However, deciding how to target their spending to address the following three areas is proving complex and causing delay.

1. How to achieve a more agile and scalable network infrastructure

Retailers want a flexible, resilient, and reliable network infrastructure that can scale business applications up and down in line with their strategy and customer demand. They know that thriving depends on moving with the continual evolution of digital transactions, online sales, inventory management, supply chain coordination, customer engagement and omnichannel expectations.

But, alongside this, they also want to be able to support the many varied network requirements that come from within the business for particular apps and data visibility capabilities in cost-effective ways. It's common that individual departments have specific requirements, and can be impatient in the face of central IT control. Ideally, the IT department will be able to use a flexible infrastructure to swiftly meet business expectations and easily support every request. However, a definite path to achieving this can be difficult to formulate.

Retailers are also highly conscious that increased digitalisation and ongoing evolution brings increased risks of data breaches, identity theft and cyber attacks. Customers also know this, and worry about their data; 63% of UK shoppers are confident that their personal information is secure when they provide it to an online company, 44% are concerned about how their data is used.

Clear priorities are to preserve customers' data privacy and keep their trust, protect the business' reputation and avoid non-compliance fines. However, although they want to protect their resilience by building an infrastructure that can support advanced defences, retailers often lack the expertise to make this happen.
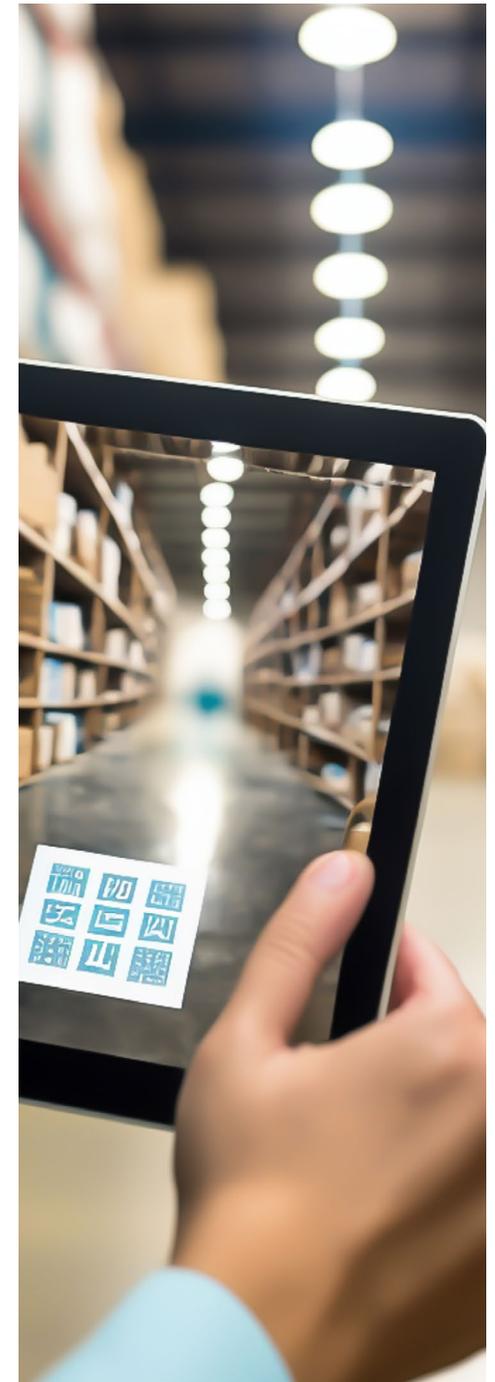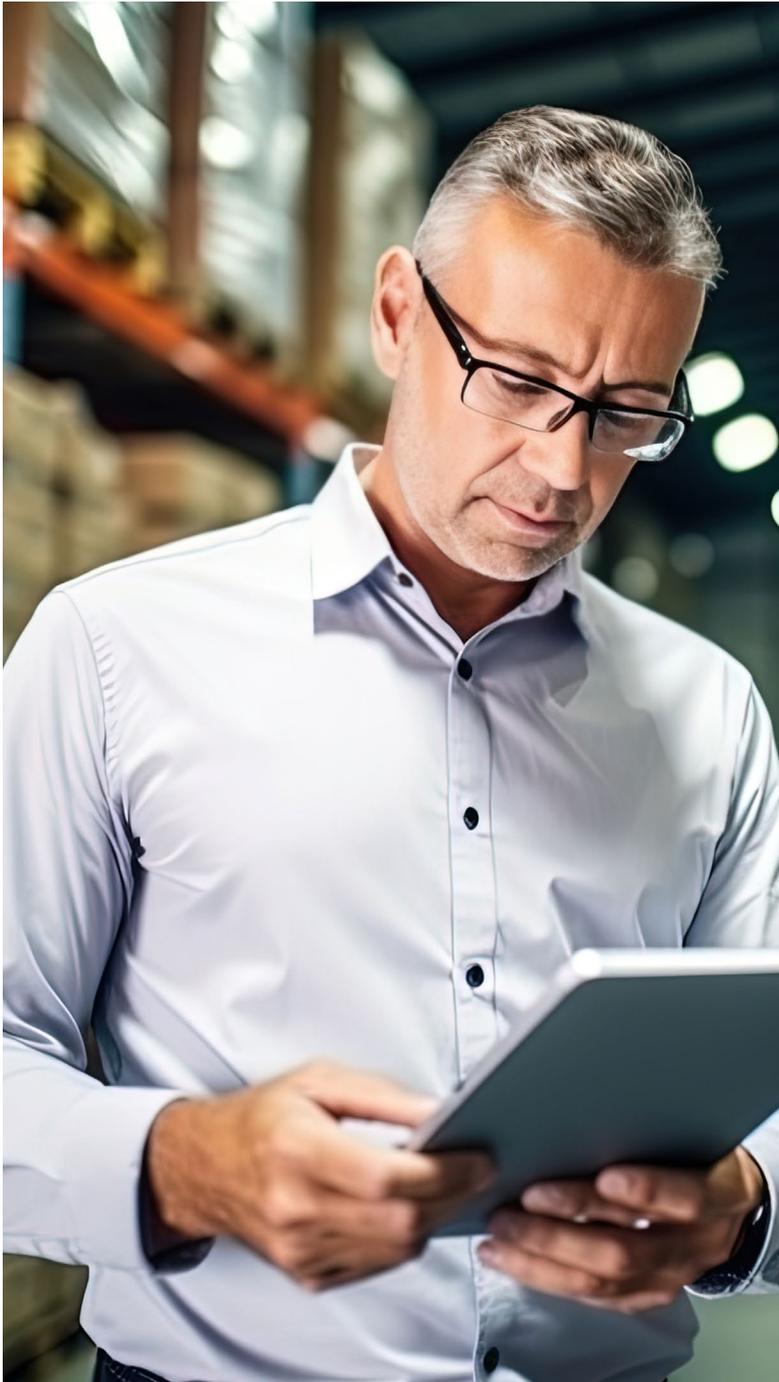
2. How to optimise retail supply chains

Warehouse automation is a hot topic, with 98% of British supply chain leaders recognising it as the best solution to overcoming the current cost of labour crisis and staffing shortages. But, in 2022, only 17% had managed to automate 20% of their warehouses.

Optimising supply chains is the gateway to automation, as well as to greater efficiency, enhanced visibility and transparency and the just-in-time fulfilment model so important to satisfying customers. Creating a 'digital first' supply chain underpins enhanced pricing power, effective product mixes, waste reduction achievements, process simplification projects, optimised final-mile deliveries and fresh thinking about inventory systems.

It's clear that Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be a force in how these benefits are brought to life, and it's a safe assumption that AI's role will develop further in the future. However, taking advantage of its benefits – now and those yet to be created – will only be possible from a digital-first infrastructure foundation capable of evolving in line with emerging technologies such as AI.

3. How to leverage technological innovations

There's an ever-expanding range of possibilities for how retail can use innovation, and outlining these - such as using smart delivery robots to cut staffing costs and increase efficiency, and frictionless stores to smooth the customer experience – is valid and helpful. However, the true value of the technological innovations available is the holistic customer experience they create, and how that experience can entice further sales and drive profits.

Implementing the innovations to reach that point of business strength often involves finding a way through a series of complicating factors. These can include fragmentation, an absence of standards, cost implications, operational friction, reliability issues, and visibility and control limitations. This level of complexity can slow down strategies and adoption. Proactive retailers will expect disruptions as part of business, and will work with a partner to build in capacity to react swiftly and effectively, pivoting from a network infrastructure that can support development in any direction.

How can retail businesses pull ahead in this market?

Focus on establishing a future-ready network infrastructure

As our dependence on technology continues to grow, it will become increasingly important to prevent interruptions or outages in communication systems that may have a substantial influence on productivity, customer contentment, and the overall financial health of an organisation. Building an agile, high-performance, cloud-centric network infrastructure is essential to adopting any advanced digital capabilities or innovations.

It expands visibility into every area of the supply chain

Advanced network control and optimisation tools bring clarity and the data and analytics to inform smart, cost-effective decision-making. Greater access to data helps retailers to develop more customer- and product-specific information to improve planning, identify where costs can be reduced or avoided, and increase efficiency. It's easier to track and trace products, which gives a better handle on inventory, supports just-in-time delivery structures, and enhances the customer experience with accurate, real-time details on orders and availability. It also helps retailers to be proactive – they can see what's working (and what isn't) before making adjustments accordingly, boosting efficiency and tailoring what they offer to customer preferences.

It provides cost-effective ways to operate

A cloud infrastructure can bring valuable reductions in spending on software, infrastructure and licensing fees. It delivers a range of angles for holding down costs, including cutting IT energy use and reducing the IT management and maintenance burden. There are also broad opportunities to make efficiency savings by optimising application performance and using the flexibility of the cloud to scale capacity up and down in line with requirements – rather than over-provisioning with 'just in case' capacity.

It boosts resilience, protecting business continuity and customer service

Cloud-based solutions for data storage, applications and services can offer more resilience than traditional on-premises setups, through redundancy, automatic failover and disaster recovery options. This means reliable connections for all sites and the uninterrupted business that keeps supply chains flowing, sales outlets operating and omnichannel activities aligned and effective. It's this resilience that's key to delivering satisfied customers and protection against outages that could affect trading and cause reputational damage.

From there, retail businesses can build on this robust foundation, layering on advanced network overlay solutions and a blend of fixed and 5G access networks to make the seamless integration of new services with existing workloads easy. As a result, they can access a whole vista of innovation opportunities to improve and extend their operations.

Possibilities include using IoT and 5G end-to-end connected solutions to increase supply-chain visibility, intelligence and control; to improve worker safety with automated material handling, as well as sensing and safety solutions; and to drive optimisation through all aspects of operational productivity.

Use partnerships for easy, rapid access to expertise

Technology partnerships are a particularly effective route to technological transformation. Now the widespread digital skills shortage is a fact of business life, with 57% of businesses across sectors stating the digital skills gap is a challenge, factoring this into technology strategies is imperative. A partnership approach can provide access to the specialisms necessary for robust, informed and decisive technological change, with additional experience of applying these technologies in other retail situations and industries. It can bring an external view to existing systems and operations, before identifying ways data optimisation can improve operational efficiency and enhance the customer experience.

A cloud-centric, flexible network is fundamental to bringing together data from across the business – from procurement to supply chain to shelf – to drive profitable outcomes.

2. Becoming more sustainable

With its reliance on energy-intensive operations, transportation and supply chains, retail is a major contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions. Retailers take full ownership of this, and improving sustainability is shaping the boardroom agendas across the sector. Many retail businesses are committing to carbon-neutral or Net Zero targets, aligning with the UK government's goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. And, as part of their commitment to Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) activity to be a force for good within society, retail businesses are increasing their focus on reducing their carbon emissions by adopting more energy-efficient practices and investing in renewable energy sources.

UK consumers are on a sustainability journey, too. They're increasingly interested in supporting businesses that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability; 88% of consumers would rethink purchasing from companies that aren't ethically or environmentally sustainable, and 81% would actively choose more sustainable retailers.

Retailers are responding with more ethically produced and eco-friendly products, and clear information about the environmental and social impact of their offerings. They are also exploring options for sustainable purchasing, energy efficiency and eco-friendly packaging. And they want their biggest suppliers to help them identify, measure and reduce Scope 3 emissions, because up to 95% of all organisations' emissions come indirectly from their supply or value chains.

Key pain points holding back increased sustainability in retail

Within their far-reaching ambition to make retail greener, finding breakthrough solutions to **two main areas** are creating headaches for businesses.

1. Managing inventories and supply chains sustainably

Ensuring sustainable and ethical practices at every stage of sourcing, production and transportation is a significant challenge for businesses managing complex retail supply chains. Increased visibility, open communication with third parties and an end-to-end view are essential if retailers are to be able to accurately measure, monitor and report Scope 3 emissions. The sheer number of third parties involved makes this intensely time consuming and, although supply chain partners will be on a similar sustainability journey, they may not be in a position to share accurate and useful carbon data. They also need to achieve this against a background of evolving regulations related to sustainability and environmental impact to avoid penalties and maintain compliance.

2. Embracing the circular economy

Transitioning to a circular economy model, where products are designed for longevity and recyclability, is crucial to reducing waste and resource consumption – but making it a reality is difficult. As part of their approach, many retailers are looking to embrace recycling initiatives, offer re-usable and eco-friendly packaging, and minimise unnecessary product returns. But shifting to this new model will require a radical reshaping of their consumption patterns, production processes and resourcing strategies – and it's likely to need cooperation across the supply chain.

# How can retail businesses pull ahead in this market?

Retail businesses need to tackle the sustainability challenge from several angles to make recognisable and measurable reductions in their carbon footprints. Working more closely with supply chain partners, and taking a deep dive into how advanced technologies can support carbon reduction offer strong potential.

Cut energy use through network transformation

A retailer's IT infrastructure is a notable source of carbon emissions, particularly energy-hungry data centres. A cloud-centric approach can free the business from legacy infrastructure with large power requirements and enable the use of specific solutions for reducing and monitoring energy performance across the entire network.

Transforming to a cloud-centric network infrastructure can also support seamless and secure connectivity between their physical locations and the cloud, ready for optimisation and decarbonisation. This includes providing both IoT sensors for a better and more sustainable workplace and computing at the edge to run AI that has the ability to drive energy and carbon savings.

Make the most of data analytics and IoT capabilities

With the right underlying infrastructure, retail businesses can embrace smart retailing approaches that leverage data analytics and IoT devices to access valuable insights into consumer behaviour. This insight is at the heart of tailoring retail businesses to customer needs. It's the key to anticipating demand before it surfaces, and creating products and services to meet it before competitors do, delivering market advantage.

In the sustainability realm, data analytics combined with IoT capabilities can drive actionable insight to enable practical and long-lasting reductions in carbon emissions.

Retailers should look for:

- carbon calculator tools that can take carbon footprint data from their network infrastructure and any associated services to deliver accurate, reliable and consistent data. These should provide everything needed to baseline the carbon emissions of network assets, identify and prioritise actions to reduce emissions, chart the impact of changes over time, and simplify annual sustainability reporting

- ongoing carbon monitoring and management tools to surface key information for strategic sustainability decision-making. These should provide a real-time, in-depth view of total energy consumption, identify carbon intensive devices and system inefficiencies, generate performance reports, deliver accurate energy usage forecasts, and use machine learning to predict and detect anomalies for fast fixes.

Based on this, retailers can make informed decisions that target sustainability improvements where they will have the most impact, and also ensure that their production and supply always mirrors demand to minimise waste.

Effective use of IoT technology can optimise energy costs and carbon emissions, reducing consumption by up to

30%.
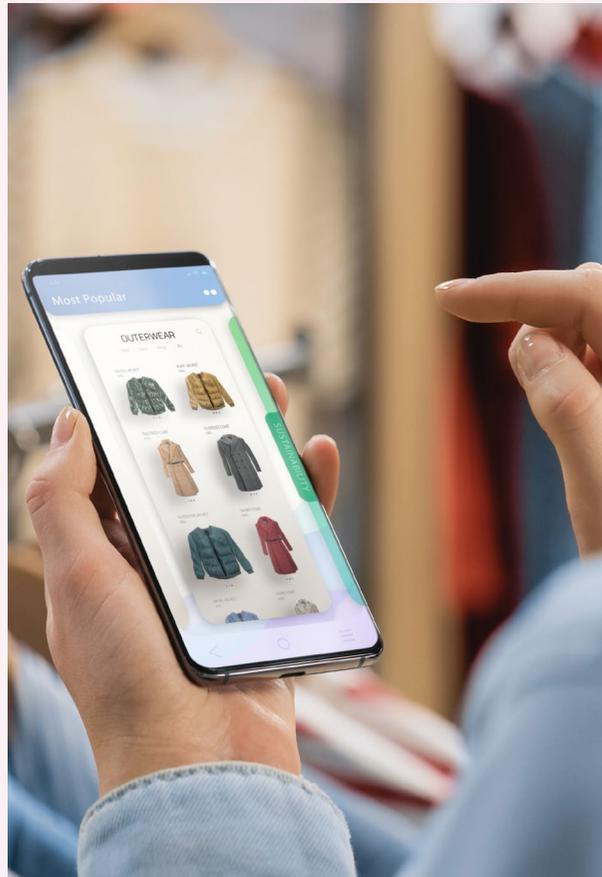
Making strides in retail sustainability calls for a careful blend of technology, targeted ambition and a willingness to change ways of working.

3. Meeting evolving customer experience expectations

Consumer buying preferences and shopping habits have changed, and price, range and convenience are no longer the drivers of purchasing that they once were. Convenience, in particular, has morphed into a given in the consumer's mind – if it isn't there, they move on without hesitation.

Instore and online channels both have strong claims on the consumer's wallet, with January 2023 figures showing that 61% of shoppers preferred in-store, while 39% shopped more online. Mobile, too, is a distinct presence as the fastest growing segment of the retail sector in the UK, with 43% of retail conducted through smartphones and tablets.

It's important to note that preferences for in-store shopping don't necessarily equate to wanting interactions with staff; 61% of customers would be more likely to shop at a store that offered self-checkout services, and 53% would rather use a self-checkout than wait in line for a cashier. The logical extension of this for many retailers may be exploring frictionless store options, and it's wise to bring this possibility into the scope of network infrastructure planning.

The key takeout here is how an omnichannel approach is so well placed to meet consumer preferences for seamless purchasing journeys across their choice of online, mobile, social media and bricks and mortar stores. Starting from representing a third of journey types in 2019, omnichannel purchasing continues to rise, and will be a force into the future.

Key pain points holding back outstanding customer experiences

Retailers can read these trends and have clear ambitions for where they'd like their customer experiences to end up, but they're finding it hard to define the best route to getting there.

Addressing **three particular issues** is proving challenging.

1. Establishing omnichannel integration

Most leading retailers are looking for ways to effectively integrate multiple channels - including online, mobile and instore – to deliver seamless, personalised and tailored omnichannel experiences. However, true omnichannel integration depends on achieving advanced channel management and a cohesive technology estate. Increasingly, retailers are realising this depends on being able to underpin their choice of technologies with the right network infrastructure foundations – and establishing this is a complex and specialist process.
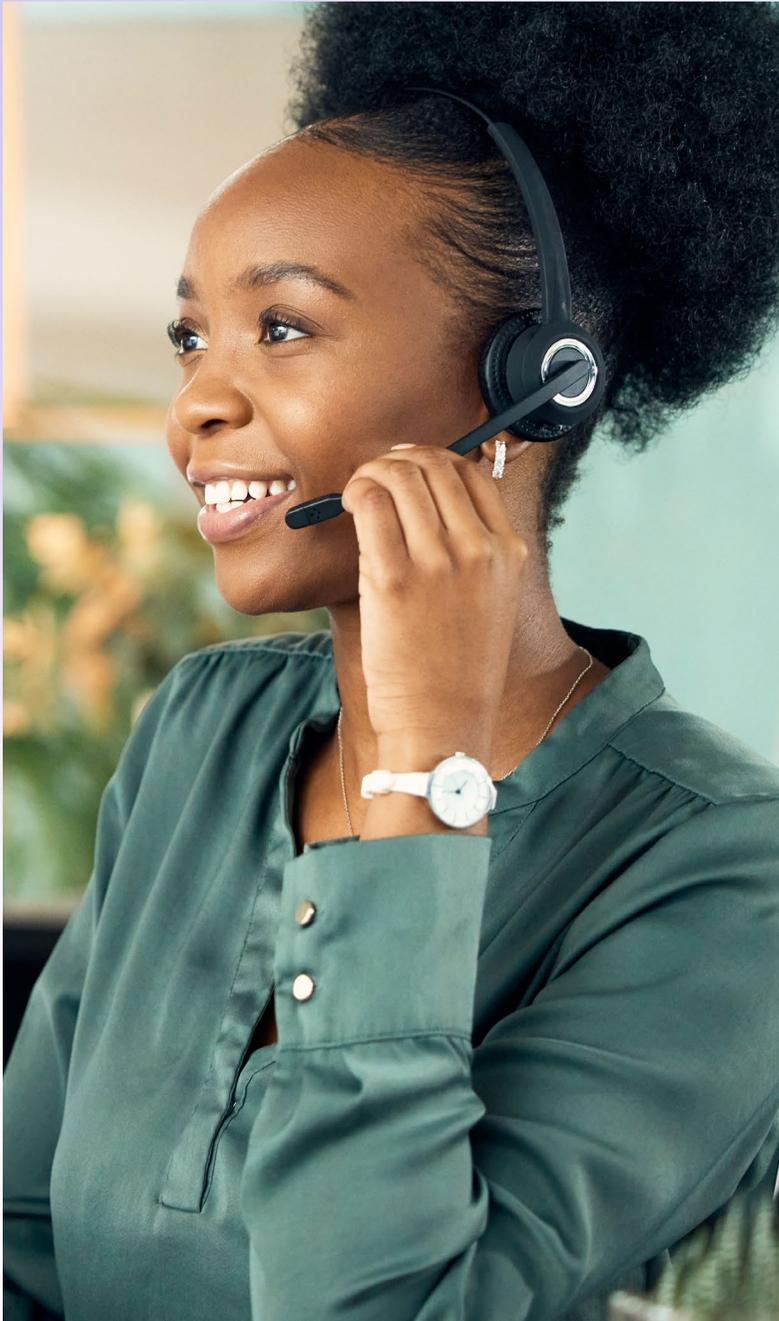
2. Delivering the personalisation that delights customers

Today's shoppers want products, services and experiences that make them feel valued, demonstrating that brands understand them and remember who they are. Delivering this level of hyper-personalisation can potentially create and maintain a healthy market position. In 2022, <u>49% of consumers said they're likely to become repeat customers after a personalised retail experience, and 62% would withdraw their loyalty after an experience that wasn't personalised</u>.

However, this personalisation is only possible with the insight that comes from accessing data and applying advanced analytics to understand customer behaviour and then deliver relevant recommendations and tailored experiences. As part of this, retailers would like to leverage technology to provide subscription-based models and loyalty programmes that offer exclusive perks, discounts and personalised offerings. But selecting, implementing and integrating the right technology at the right points into existing infrastructure requires distinct expertise that may not be part of the in-house skillset.

3. Establishing omnichannel integration

As retailers collect more customer data for personalisation and targeted marketing, ensuring the privacy and security of this information becomes crucial. Data breaches and mishandling of personal data can severely damage a retailer's reputation and trigger financial penalties. What's more, the risks increase as mobile commerce grows. In <u>2022, 43% of UK consumers made in-person and e-commerce purchases from their mobile device on a weekly basis</u>.

Retailers recognise that defending customer data requires constant vigilance, advanced cyber threat surveillance capabilities and embedded security across all network infrastructure and access points. However, again, these specialised skills may not be ones the retail business supports in-house.

How can retail businesses pull ahead in this market?

Technology is the primary lever for bringing to life retailers' visions for personalised, secure omnichannel experiences. Forging strong partnerships with technology providers is a reliable and low-risk way to tap into the resources and expertise required.

Establish the fundamentals

Delivering the frictionless, easy omnichannel experiences consumers expect is less about integrating specific technologies, and more about focusing on creating a 'base plate' that combines reliable, fast connectivity solutions with a strong and stable network. This resilient, future-ready foundation can then support the optimal operation of any technology the retailer wants to layer on.

With a cloud-based infrastructure at the heart of the business, retailers can easily scale their capabilities to meet customer demands efficiently – whatever form those demands take in the future. And by integrating voice, video, collaboration and messaging tools, retailers can stay connected to their customers and employees, improving communication and responsiveness.

Factor in security

Securing sensitive customer data, maintaining the integrity of online transactions and safeguarding the retail environment requires layering in robust security services to defend against potential cyber threats. Again, this is about focusing on the underlying structure rather than seeing technologies as individual capabilities, and creating foundations that have security built in.

Advanced security is particularly important to retail in terms of:

- protecting the 'crown jewels' that are customer data – from preventing unauthorised and / or malicious access to central systems to defending the increasing data gathering strategies of loyalty apps

- protecting point-of-sale (POS) devices to secure customer data as well as reducing downtime and helping to optimise costs

- delivering easy site connections and management as the business opens new outlets

- complying with PCI DSS regulations for online payments as this sales channel grows.
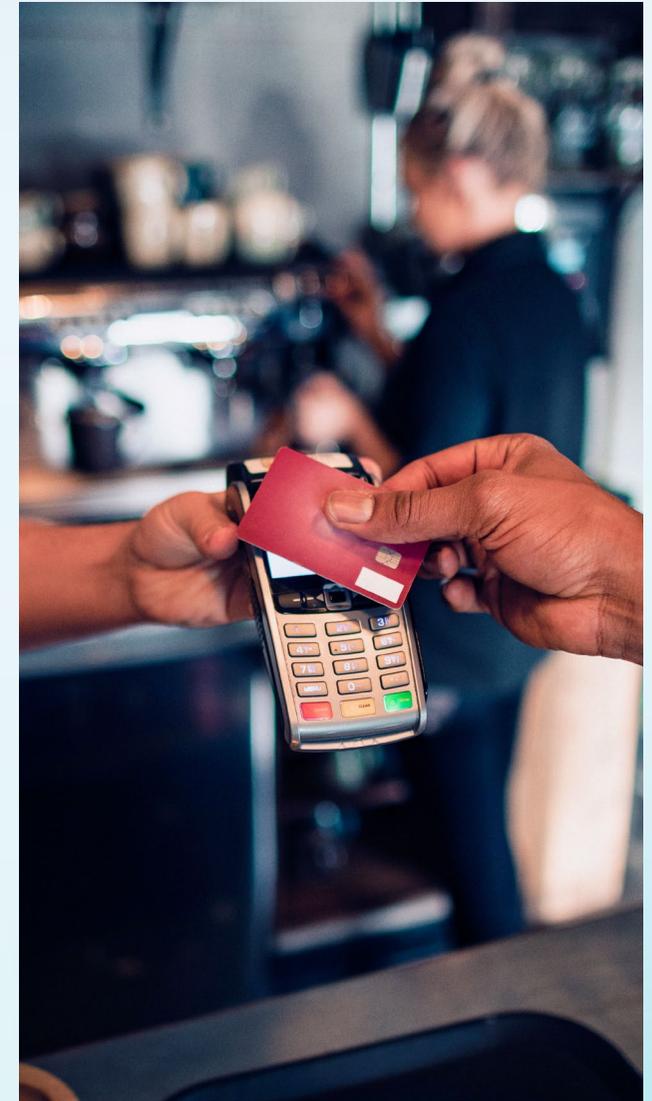
Focus on how technology can enhance specific aspects of the customer experience

With plans in place for secure, strong infrastructure and connectivity foundations, retailers can look at how building in the power of AI, intelligent data analytics, augmented reality, virtual reality and IoT solutions can deliver benefits across the business.

Today, this can enable the creation of smart stores, including tracking foot traffic, optimising store layouts, managing inventory and enhancing personalised shopping experiences. It can also include supporting contact centre solutions capable of efficiently handling customer inquiries, complaints and support requests. For example, AI-driven chatbots can free up agents and provide simple information to customers 24/7.

This blends well with choosing customer service tools that can provide a consistent and positive customer experience throughout the customer journey.

Assess the degree of outsourced expertise and experience needed

Successfully implementing the right technology mix to achieve these capabilities may take a blend of in-house and outsourced expertise. Retailers that establish collaborative partnerships with a technology provider are able to fast-track their easy, smooth and effective network infrastructure transformation and bring all aspects of a solution together.

Outstanding customer experiences require a laser focus from retailers on increasing their omnichannel value proposition.
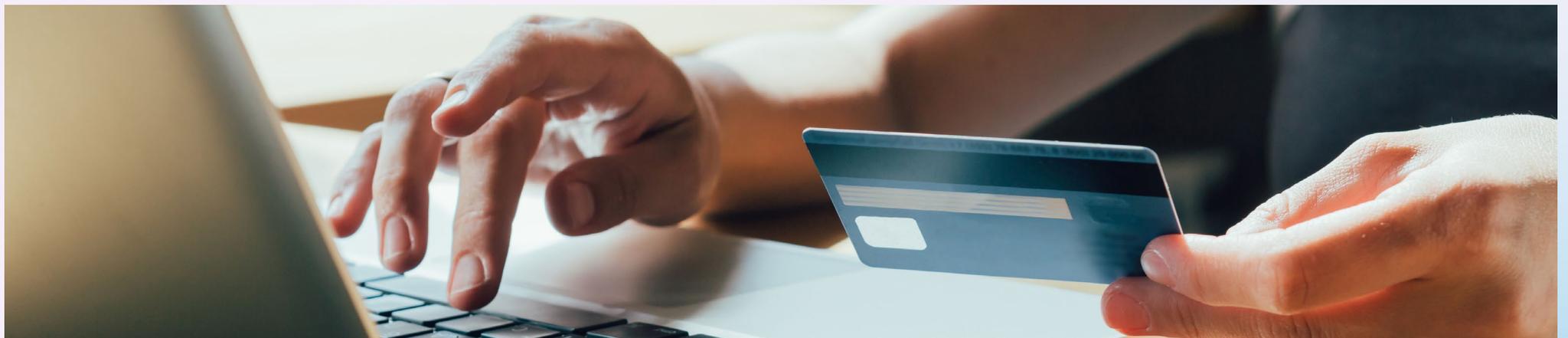
Why UK retail businesses choose us as their partner

Leading retail businesses recognise that we bring a unique perspective and skillset to their technology requirements, combining experience in retail from our EE operation, with advanced network infrastructure, connectivity and security expertise. As a proactive technology partner, we identify emerging needs and innovate to meet them, so you can integrate your choice of technologies to bring all your different points of contact into one, easy-to-manage whole.

Strengths of our partnership include:

Market-leading advanced connectivity and networks

Connectivity is at the heart of retail. It's critical to connecting vital in-store elements such as tills, kiosks, customer Wi-Fi, customer apps, and frictionless shopping experiences. Beyond this, backed by a strong and stable network, it forms the essential foundations for efficient omnichannel and supply chain operations that can flex to meet customer expectations and take advantage of emerging trends and technologies.

Our robust connectivity services mean your business can be 'always on', able to call on the bandwidth it needs with the confidence that everything's expertly connected for seamless operations.

Our expertise in network services is recognised by Gartner, and we've built on this to create our new network-as-a-service concept. Global Fabric is our brand new, cloud-centric network. It's built to address customers' needs, giving them the performance, choice and flexibility they need to adapt to a constantly evolving landscape. Global Fabric makes it much easier and quicker for retail businesses to connect employees, customers and devices to multiple clouds – the clouds that host their ever-increasing number of applications and surging volumes of data. It's designed to be flexible, scalable and resilient in terms of high-quality connectivity and convenient pay-as-you-use-it commercials. By combining the power of cloud and networks, retailers can optimise application performance, user experiences and cost.

Advanced, tailored cyber security support

Our security services will underpin whatever connectivity and network evolutions you make with the latest threat intel and National Cyber Security Centre accredited encryption. Our 3,000 security professionals, 350 highly skilled consultants and global security operations centres use our ringside seat on the complex security threat landscape to deliver market-leading managed security services, as recognised by IDC.

For retail businesses that need round the clock support, we provide a 24/7 service through our 2,600-strong managed services team, backed by SLAs (Service Level Agreements) for service resilience and 'always on' connectivity.

Strong investment in R&D and innovation

As the third largest investor in R&D over the past ten years, and with a portfolio of over 4,700 patents, our commitment to innovation is so long-standing it's become part of our DNA.

We have a particular focus on technologies that will shape retail, developing combinations of advanced connectivity, networking and point solutions to help retailers retain and incentivise customers by delivering outstanding, immersive, and personalised digital and in-store experiences.

Our innovation scouting teams are always scanning the horizon for ideas and expertise generated by third-party organisations that we can incorporate into our search for the next technological breakthrough.

The ability to deliver sustainability gains

2023 figures show that poor environmental practices will alienate 84% of customers from a brand or company so, increasingly, retailers need to be able to withstand scrutiny and prove their credentials. Measuring and monitoring emissions within their operations and supply chains, and making improvements, is now essential.

Growing sustainability both within our organisation and within our partners' operations is one of our core commitments and we're aiming for net zero Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions by 2032 and Scope 3 by 2041.

Our efforts have been recognised with a platinum EcoVadis rating that puts us in the top 1% of sustainable organisations worldwide, and we're on the Carbon Disclosure Project's 'A List' for the eighth year running that puts us in the top 2% of 13,000 reporting companies.

Through our ongoing work and investment to reduce our own carbon emissions, we enable our partners to reduce the carbon footprint of their supply chain. We also offer specific pathways to improve the sustainability of your retail IT infrastructure, such as a portfolio of tools to measure, manage and reduce carbon emissions across your network, plus options for reducing e-waste. And we fold sustainability-by-design into any solution we create for you.

A heritage of retailing expertise

Our retail insight comes from working with retailers around the world, as well as from our thriving EE enterprise here in the UK that includes over 600 stores and serves more than 31 million mobile connections. Our market is highly competitive, so we embrace the need to innovate to thrive – and we bring this ethos through to our support for our retail customers.

We've recently rolled out a new platform and online marketplace to offer new ways to shop, organise devices, subscriptions and services, available via an app, the web, or an advanced digital identity. This expands our product range into new areas and enhances the customer service and support experiences we can provide.

A global choice of vendors

As part of our collaboration, we give retailers access to our ecosystem of industry-leading partnerships with vendors that offer the best-in-class solutions for retail. We're widely recognised by technology-defining businesses as top-flight partners, and our partnership scope is rarely matched.

Buy into the
future of retail

Partnering with us is a smooth, direct route to the secure and sustainable digital infrastructure and connectivity foundations you need to deliver market-defining retail experiences.

Our role is to create the technology base that can take you wherever you want to go, now and into the future.

Visit our <u>dedicated webpage for more information</u> or contact your account manager to explore the possibilities for your business.

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November 2023