THE SHIFTING RETAIL LANDSCAPE
As a retailer, you know how quickly consumer behavior, your competitive environment, and the technology landscape are changing. To drive profitable growth, you must provide superior experiences for your customers and align them with smarter decisions and processes.

In particular, the pace of retail sales growth conducted in or influenced by emerging channels like social and mobile is quickening, and the relationship between consumers and retail brands has forever changed. Empowered by anytime, anywhere access to information and a ballooning population of savagely competitive e-commerce brands, consumers are leveraging every touch point — from the Internet to stores to mobile devices — in their search for knowledge, deals and personalized experiences.

While fewer than 6% of total US retail sales are directly transacted on the Internet, the share of pure-play e-commerce sales is growing rapidly (up 13% in Q3 2011 and projected to surpass offline sales in dollar value by 2020). Meanwhile, the influence of the Internet on purchases that are ultimately made in stores is staggering. According to Forrester, the Web currently influences 48% of in-store sales, projected to be 53% by 2014. Web channels are the primary front in the battle for consumer mindshare, and retailers are doubling down on their efforts to influence. Forrester reports that Internet retailers spend more than three times as much (as a percentage of revenue) on technology than their brick-and-mortar counterparts.

Most retailers are not organized in a manner that facilitates successful execution amidst this shifting landscape. A clash of legacy systems and new channel technologies has resulted in siloed functional areas and redundant operations across channels. These have all but doomed attempts to share and use critical inventory and customer data across touch points, resulting in brand dissonance, customer dissatisfaction, and business inefficiency.

The time has come to move beyond the limits of individual channels and touch points and instead create well-choreographed cross-channel interactions. The unification of business applications and the data that feeds them makes this possible; allowing retailers to create a transparent, channel-agnostic, personalized customer experience. With an infrastructure that liberates all the knowledge trapped in channel-specific silos and puts it to work in a common platform that feeds every touch point, retailers really can achieve enterprise-wide alignment.

BUILDING A FOUNDATION, NOT A FACADE
There’s much talk in the retail community about connecting the cross-channel customer experience across the enterprise. There are even more point solutions in the market with grand intentions of doing the same. What sets the best retailers apart is their ability to align business processes that enable a truly differentiated customer experience. It’s not about creating a skin-deep façade of brand uniformity, it’s about creating connected internal and external interactions that put the customer at the center of your decision making — from planning to execution — on a single enterprise platform. Using technology to align roles and connect the cross-channel working environment of retail executives, merchandisers, planners, store associates, and more. This is your experience platform. With a business systems architecture that simultaneously enables insight, fosters interaction, and optimizes operations, the customer experience is transformed.
CREATING YOUR EXPERIENCE PLATFORM

Creating your ideal experience platform isn’t about changing the strategy and culture that make your company unique. It’s about three overarching goals that can be applied to any organization. When they’re achieved and executed collaboratively, you’ll create a world-class experience wherever your brand is touched.

• **Connect Interactions.** Connect customer interactions seamlessly across channels and touch points.
  Example: Create a common cart across your store, Web, mobile, social, and call center touch points, allowing transactions to be tracked across channels over time and adding to the troves of actionable insight you can leverage to optimize operations.

• **Gain Actionable Insight.** Enable smarter decisions by connecting siloed sources of data and embedding science and business intelligence. This will enable smarter planning, forecasting, merchandising, supply chain management, and marketing decisions. Connected interactions create actionable insight by supporting a cross-channel view of consumer demographics, customer profiles, purchase histories, customer segmentation, inventory, supply chain positioning, and more.
  Examples: Embedding science and BI into business processes to enable real-time trade-out decisions across channels and touch points; synchronized cross-channel planning, and channel/customer-specific pricing decisions.

With a comprehensive, accurate view of enterprise-wide data, critical retail decisions can be synchronized across channels.

• **Optimize Operations.** Align every aspect of your business to gain efficiencies and economies. When KPIs are aligned across departments and channels, internal conflict is mitigated and the customer’s priorities become your priorities.
  Examples: Aligning inventory to balance holding costs and service levels to best serve the point of possession; supporting new fulfillment models by projecting demand, inventory, orders and constraints across the supply chain.

When KPIs are in alignment, visibility across channels is ensured and fulfillment and customer satisfaction skyrocket.

*It takes all three* working in unison to create a new experience; focusing on just the connected customer experience will only disappoint if the insight and operations are not aligned. You need to create an experience platform that is *tuned to your specific business strategy.*

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY, PEOPLE, AND PROCESSES

Retailers almost never optimize operations or connect interactions until technology, people and processes are working in unison. Your experience platform is a comprehensive set of integrated, cross-channel business technology solutions, selected and operated by your retail business and IT team and deployed in accordance with your processes and strategy. It’s on this platform that a series of connected interactions can take place across all retail channels and touch points throughout the lifecycle of the customer relationship. What results is a differentiated experience that exceeds customer needs and expectations.

While Oracle has been driving value for retailers based on their specific goals and needs for years, it’s in anticipation of the continued evolution of retailing that we developed the vision for your experience platform. It’s a complete cross-channel retail practice comprised of hardware and software, engineered to help retailers successfully navigate the challenges of today and those we’ll face in the future.