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# THE OMNI-CHANNEL STORY: A PRODUCT'S JOURNEY FROM THE FACTORY TO THE SHOPPING CART



Through the supply chain, which connects goods with human needs and serves as the single unifying element of global trade, people overcome boundaries of geography, culture, and language in the pursuit of mutual cooperation.

The online retail experience can feel a lot like magic: click the "checkout" button on your shopping cart, and a product shows up at your doorstep as soon as the next day. But retailers, of course, know better. It isn't magic that gets a product from the factory floor to the shopping cart, but rather, the close coordination of dozens of people along every step in an often long and complex supply chain.

Today, consumers demand 24/7 access to an ever-broadening array of ecommerce channels. But fulfilling this omni-channel experience for customers is putting an uncomfortable strain on many retailers. Companies are no longer tasked with simply getting a product from A to B; they now must navigate a tangled web of ecommerce applications, cloud integration, in-store fulfillment, ERP systems, and touchscreen technology. Retail outlets are looking more and more like mini distribution centers, and smartphones have become the point of sale – a transformation that's both complicated and expensive for retailers.

As it is, many retailers have trouble visualizing end-to-end solutions that provide a truly streamlined customer experience, at least not without breaking the bank. These companies know better than anyone the hard work and logistical coordination that goes into sustaining the illusion of "magic" for consumers. For them, magic can be created by intelligently leveraging the right technologies in the day-to-day operation of their omni-channel network.

Below, we illustrate how this strategy can be put into action with the Omni-Channel Story – the journeys of both "Jenny," a college-aged student in search of hiking boots, and "Boot Company, Inc.," the retailer tasked with delivering those boots quickly and seamlessly. Seeing is believing, and with the omni-channel story in plain view, organizations should have a much clearer idea about how they, too, can put together an efficient, effective, and affordable omni-channel strategy.

#### OFF THE FACTORY LINE



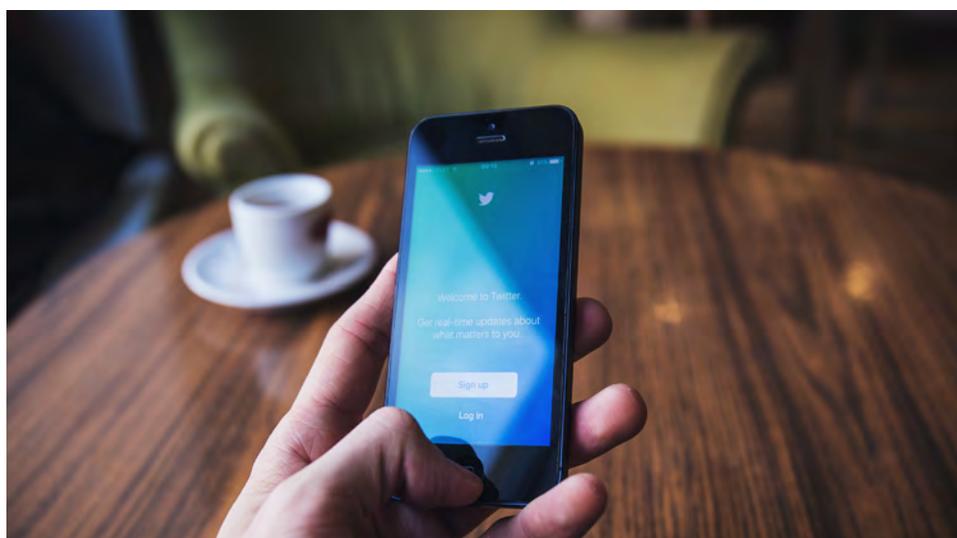
While our St. Louis-based customer, let's call her Jenny, is browsing her recent purchases on a smartphone, the heels of what will soon be her pair of hiking boots are being glued to a pair of soles at an Albany, New York factory 1,000 miles away. The finished boots tumble off the assembly line and into a packing box.

Back in St. Louis, Jenny has the e-retail site of Boot Company, Inc. pulled up on her phone. She casually swipes through different boot categories and colors – Casual, Outdoor, Rugged, Tan, Black, and every other variation in the company's catalog of product offerings. Suddenly she lands on an ideal pair, perfect for the fall camping trip she has coming up. She's tired, though, and doesn't want to commit to a purchase at this late hour. She adds the item to her shopping cart and heads to bed.

As Jenny calls it a night, the Boot Company supply chain is just getting into full swing. The floor manager is busy directing traffic, ensuring that the shipping labels – which are automatically printed – find the right box, and that those boxes are loaded onto the correct semi-trailer truck. He places a label onto the box containing Jenny's boots, scans the barcode, and the order is automatically integrated into the company's order management software. Each integration is confirmed by a quick glance at his handheld tablet.

At the same time, a semi-truck driver backs his vehicle into the factory loading port. As boxes are loaded into his trailer, he checks over his delivery schedule, driving route, expected truck weight, and other pertinent data on the dash-mounted smartphone in the truck cab. While the boxes are being scanned and packed, he checks them in with the smartphone's user-friendly interface and prepares for his departure. Before too long, he's hitting the road, on schedule to hit his all delivery targets.

## FROM STORE TO CONSUMER



The next morning, Jenny, a student, is hitting the books at a local coffee shop. During a break, she pulls up the Boot Company, Inc. website, where the perfect pair of boots await in her shopping cart. She's surprised that the site knew to transfer this information from her smartphone to her desktop, and can't help but notice the convenience – Boot Co. is more tech-forward than she realized. She enters her payment information, hits purchase, and sets the delivery date for the following day. The site even gives her the option to tweet about her purchase.

Meanwhile, the semi-truck driver is backing into the shipping bay of a St. Louis Boot Company, Inc. retail store. Because the company's integrated goods retail management system automatically determines which products should be kept in stock based on past demand, they have no need to house products in a local warehouse. Instead, retail outlets function as small distribution centers, syncing their inventory levels with their ecommerce sales and minimizing wasted time and space. As boxes are unloaded off the truck, a retail associate scans the attached barcodes and the deliveries' arrival at their destination is automatically confirmed and accounted for.

As the associate scans one box of boots and goes to unpack it for inventory, his tablet indicates to him that a mistake has been made; this box is due to be shipped out the



following morning, not today. Rather than waste time unloading and re-organizing, the associate can simply mark the box as accounted for and place it in an in-store fulfillment area for delivery the next morning.

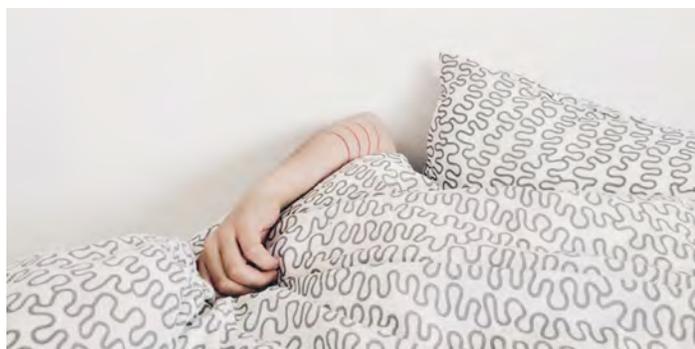


### READY ON ARRIVAL

For all that happened, this omni-channel story lacked one distinct feature: logistical mixups. Things don't always go as a retailer envisions – but a robust omni-channel solution keeps the ball rolling when complications inevitably arise. Suppose, for example, that Jenny doesn't like her boots and wants to return or exchange them in-store. More than that, she wants to return the boots to a different retail outlet than the one from which they were shipped and exchange them for a product that's currently out-of-stock at this location. For an organization without sophisticated omni-channel technologies in place, this situation might be a logistical impossibility.

With such a big wrench thrown into their perfect supply chain, can Boot Co. still create a seamless experience for Jenny?

### THE DREADED EXCHANGE



Jenny has come to the unhappy realization that her boots don't quite fit. She's scrolling through Boot Company, Inc.'s web store on her smartphone to see what can be done. She'd like to exchange the pair for another style and size at a nearby Boot

Co. retail location the next day. She's a little stressed because, generally, these things turn into a big ordeal – and what are the odds that the store gets it right on the first try?

But scrolling through the web store, Jenny finds that she can easily opt to exchange her pair for another, and can even select the location and time that she would like to return them. She selects the new product she wants, which the online store tells her is in-stock at that location. What she doesn't know is that the product is not currently in-stock; low inventory at that Boot Co. location has automatically triggered a replenishment order in the company's in-store fulfillment system. Because that shipment will arrive from a nearby store prior to Jenny's scheduled pickup time, she has the option to select the item on the ecommerce site.

This is not nearly as painful as Jenny had imagined it would be. The next day, she arrives at the store and quickly exchanges her boots. A store associate has already readied a box of the new, properly fitting boots for her, and the whole process takes a matter of minutes. While the fact that she had to return her boots was mildly annoying, the exchange process was completely seamless. What's more, she receives another promotional email offer on the behalf of Boot Co. shortly after the transaction, thanking her for her patience and loyalty. The company turned what could have been a stressful ordeal into another seamless, pleasant experience. And because the company has delivered on their promise twice, Jenny is likely to continue patronizing their business for her future hiking needs – and her friends will definitely be hearing her rave reviews of Boot Company, Inc., too.

### CONCLUSION



As consumer demands continue to evolve, there's little doubt that omni-channel will continue to be high on their list of priorities. Retailers must be prepared to manage every twist and turn of the omni-channel story as it develops. Boot

Company, Inc.'s story presents the best-case solution to these challenges: a single platform that seamlessly integrates each and every step of the process. From mobile web stores and in-store fulfillment, to order management software and integrated financials, their omni-channel solution refines the complexity of today's supply chain into an effortless, value-adding experience for both customer and company.

At HighJump, we've become a market leader in omni-channel solutions that help retailers to tell their own story. With our comprehensive suite of [omni-channel retail solutions](#), businesses can operationalize a unique omni-channel journey, meeting the demands of customers while rapidly building value through process optimization.

The rise of omni-channel supply chain demands certainly presents an evolving challenge for businesses, but with integrated platform technology, organizations can supply the kinds of solutions that will keep "Jenny" coming back again and again. At the end of the day, the magic of exceeding expectations –and of creating new value for the enterprise – never loses its sheen.

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