



# Commerce is unified on Shopify

Why brands win by choosing  
Shopify over BigCommerce



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# 01 Introduction

Let's begin this conversation with what has become an existential question: what is unified commerce?

Answering that question has become a mandate for brands. We've entered a new era in which customers expect brands to deliver more consistent and immersive shopping experiences across online, retail, B2B, and mobile touchpoints—and brands across all industries need software that enables them to meet these expectations.

Software vendors have responded to these demands in three ways, two of which are incomplete at best. Some believe that unification begins and ends with omnichannel selling. Others believe brands can achieve unified commerce through a messy combination of integrations. These approaches are so half-baked that a Forrester analyst recently declared that [unified commerce "is not a thing."](#)

While we disagree with that assertion, there is a third approach to unified commerce that means more than a list of features or integrations. The future of commerce is truly unified by design. Not only should customers have incredible shopping experiences everywhere they shop, but brands should have incredible software that is built from the ground up on a singular codebase with features explicitly designed to work together.

That's what Shopify offers to the most innovative brands on the planet today.



## 02 Unified commerce is a business strategy

Unified commerce is a business strategy where brands aim to know who their customers are and deliver consistent and personalized experiences across every shopping channel. To execute that strategy, brands need commerce software that combines all of a company's sales channels, data, and back-end systems into a single platform that provides a holistic view of each customer.

Businesses looking to execute a unified commerce strategy do so with three goals: providing a seamless shopping experience for customers wherever they shop, improving back-end operations, and getting a more holistic view of their business. Businesses that successfully execute unified commerce strategies ultimately gain a significant competitive advantage that includes:



**Improved efficiency.** Back-office operations such as order and inventory management are more streamlined in a unified commerce environment, which can eliminate the need for larger tech stacks and budgets.



**Accelerated growth.** Unified commerce unlocks more conversion opportunities, easier channel expansion, better business insights, and a deeper understanding of customer needs.



**Better customer experiences.** With more unified insights, businesses can deliver more personalized, innovative, and relevant customer experiences across all sales channels.

These benefits are just the tip of the iceberg that's driving brands to prioritize unified commerce. The problem is that much of the tooling on the market advertised to "unify" business strategies actually creates unnecessary inefficiencies, additional work for tech teams, and is ultimately a significant blocker to growth.

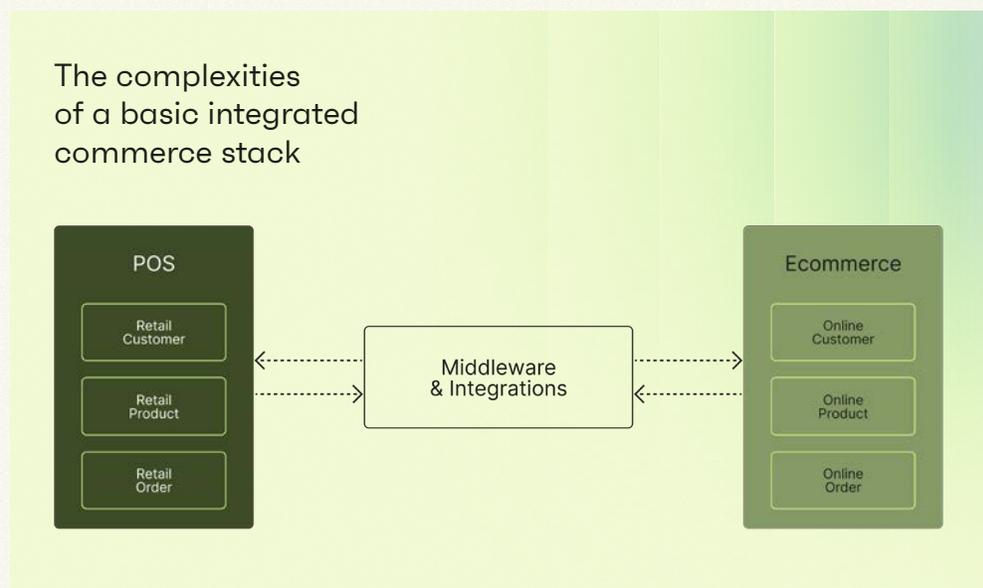


# 03 Most commerce software is integrated, not unified

As technology evolved rapidly over the last couple decades, so too did the number of new surfaces on which customers could shop. Today, customers want to be able to purchase items on [Facebook or Instagram](#) as easily as they can via a traditional online checkout.

To give its brands a “unified” experience, BigCommerce updated its platform in the early 2020s by acquiring two small startups: [Feedonomics](#) and [BundleB2B](#). However, neither were developed from their roots to work natively with the existing platform. Instead, they were stitched into existing systems in an effort to get to market with the features their clients craved. In the case of Feedonomics, it was integrated so loosely into BigCommerce that [it still appears in its app store as an add-on with custom pricing](#).

Ultimately, this combination of integrations and applications resulted in a mess of spaghetti code that’s difficult and time-consuming for brands to manage. In the example below, POS and ecommerce technologies are connected via some combination of middleware and integrations.





While this model technically connects both systems, it also means customers may have multiple profiles, purchase histories, personalizations, and more for both the POS and online sides of the business. Managing just this one inefficiency can create hours of unnecessary work for technical teams and higher operational costs for the business. When you extrapolate this architecture to include the channels customers expect today, the mess of spaghetti code can devolve into chaos, likely getting worse over time.

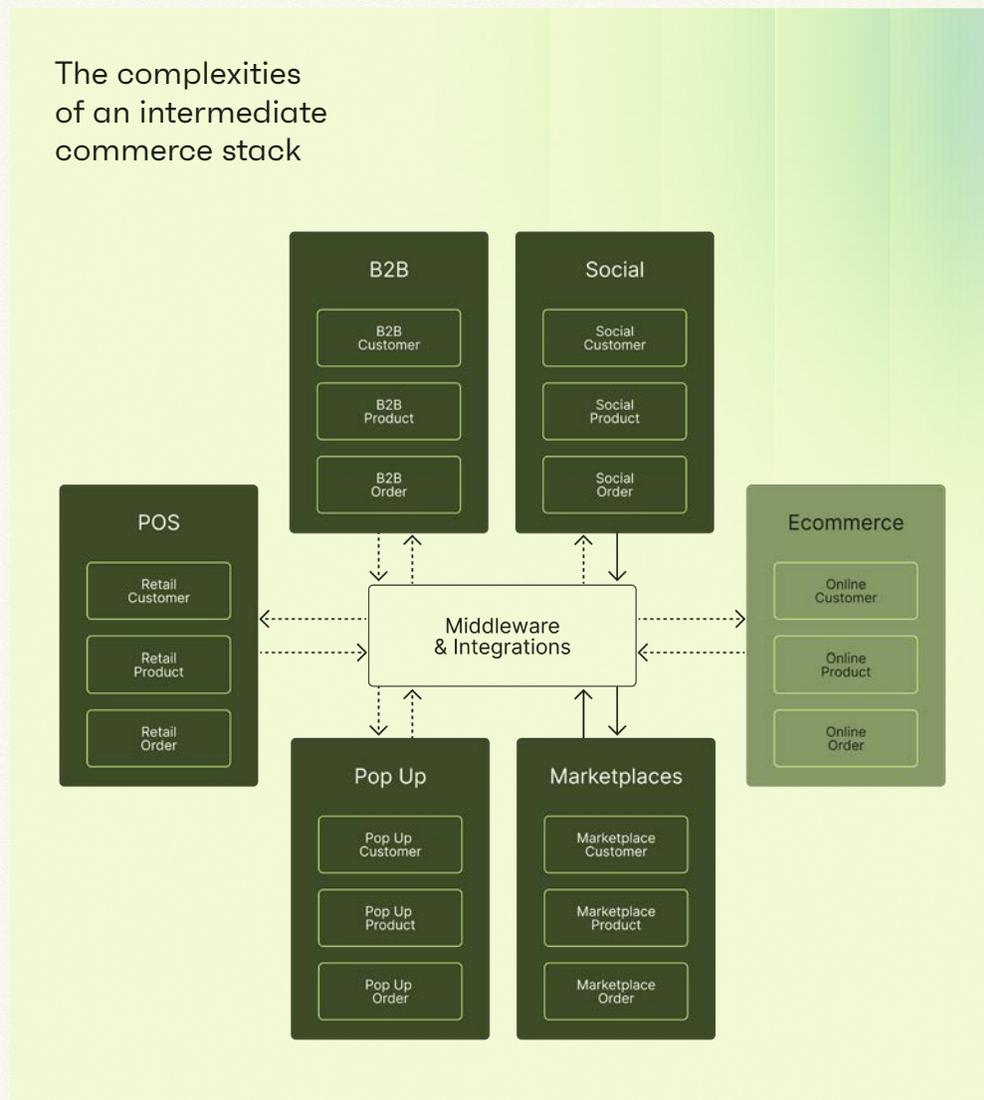
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*There was always something to solve and no time left to think about and implement new strategies.*

**Giacomo Antonelli**

Head of Omnichannel, Slam Jam

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Even when teams have time to innovate on this model, the development cycle can be disjointed. Engineers have to constantly mitigate risks as new integrations are added to the platform, respond to security vulnerabilities both proactively and reactively, and keep the entire tech stack up to date with the latest software patches. When a critical integration isn't available, businesses are forced to accept the burden of building one from scratch and stitching it into their existing tech stack.

All too often, a single custom integration can cause errors across several other systems, leaving brands with complex and irritating problems at the worst possible times. Giacomo Antonelli, head of omnichannel at Slam Jam, says that every solution had to be custom-built prior to moving to Shopify—and their previous platform struggled with uptime during peak sales periods.

### **BigCommerce is the textbook definition of integrated (not unified) commerce**

BigCommerce's approach to unified commerce is built on the backs of integrations and acquisitions. BigCommerce also does not offer an in-house POS solution. Instead, it relies on third-party systems that ultimately offer an integrated, not unified commerce experience. This is not just ineffective, but it's also expensive. The middleware required to run these third-party systems can lead to added costs for the business, including additional technical debt, data silos, and operational inefficiencies.

For B2B operations, the challenge is that B2B and B2C data does not live in one data model, which means data is passed back and forth between APIs. When issues arise, brands are forced to submit tickets to BigCommerce and work directly with their team to resolve them.

For mature B2B businesses, shared organizational data is more likely to reside in an ERP system, which represents yet another substantial cost and integration point. According to [Top10ERP](#), a small to mid-sized business can expect to spend between \$10,000 and \$150,000 on a basic ERP implementation on average. These costs compound with each additional sales channel or business model a brand expands into.

This is in stark contrast to the total cost of ownership (TCO) of Shopify. Research commissioned by Shopify to study TCO across major platforms in North America and conducted from November 2023 to February 2024 found that Shopify's TCO is 31% lower on average than BigCommerce's<sup>1</sup>. The report also found that BigCommerce's operating costs are 21% higher than Shopify's due in large part to the typical technology stack and support costs outlined in the example above. Shopify's commerce architecture reduces middleware costs by having both POS and ecommerce channels natively unified on a central platform. A separate 2024 study commissioned by Shopify and conducted by a leading independent consulting firm found the [TCO of Shopify POS is up to 37% lower than competitors](#) and 22% lower on average.

<sup>1</sup> Based on a 2023 study commissioned by Shopify with a leading independent consulting firm to study TCO across major platforms in North America, including Shopify, BigCommerce, Salesforce Commerce Cloud, Adobe Commerce (Magento), and WooCommerce.



# 04 Shopify is the only platform that enables unified commerce

As brands look to deliver great customer experiences across all sales channels, Shopify is the only commerce software that allows them to execute a fully unified commerce business strategy fueled by consistent and personalized shopping experiences everywhere your customers shop. Each of our commerce primitives were born from a singular roadmap, built from the ground up, and thoughtfully designed to work better together.

Shopify's unified commerce architecture

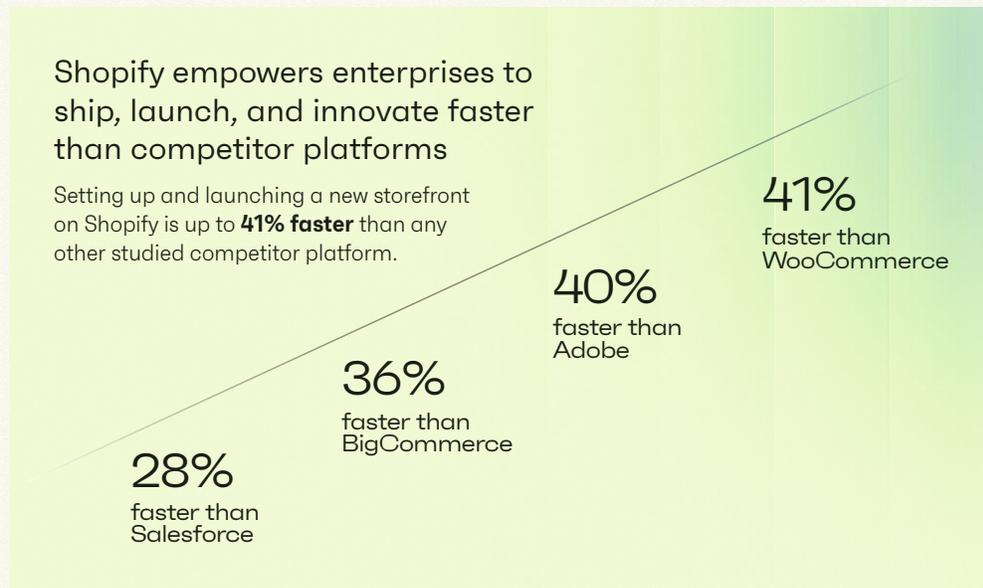




This approach to building software gives brands the peace of mind they need to install new functionality without worrying about how it might impact the rest of their tech stacks. Industry-changing software makers also build apps for Shopify first because of the sheer volume of brands and customers that use our platform daily. In 2024, a sale by Salt & Sundry tipped Shopify's cumulative gross merchandise value (GMV) over the \$1 trillion mark. These are just a couple ways that Shopify helps brands tap into the [\\$3.3 trillion global opportunity](#) of unified commerce.

Brands that choose Shopify also benefit from:

1. **Lower costs and fewer operational complexities than BigCommerce**
2. **The world's best-converting checkout, outpacing BigCommerce by 12%**
3. **More frictionless experiences that drive ROI**



### 1. Lower costs and fewer operational complexities than BigCommerce

Some of the world's leading brands have reported that switching from BigCommerce to Shopify has accelerated their time to market with innovative unified commerce strategies. Skullcandy, one of the most beloved headphone manufacturers in the world, found themselves hamstrung by BigCommerce's platform, which stifled their ability to be agile, experiment, and reach new markets.

Jenny Buchar, director of digital strategy and product at Skullcandy, says that the business struggled to capitalize on new market opportunities while they were on BigCommerce. While BigCommerce promised more self-sufficiency, Skullcandy quickly discovered that things were unnecessarily complex on the platform and the development flexibility they gained ultimately led to an extremely brittle site. Jenny adds, "We noticed some vulnerabilities and an aging code base that was starting to hold us back."



In search of a more stable platform on which they could be more agile and increase revenue, Skullcandy migrated to Shopify in just 90 days. With more streamlined experiences on the front and back end, Skullcandy was able to develop and execute a testing strategy that allows them to iterate, learn, and improve in a more agile way.

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*Even with unique or edge cases, designing tests is straightforward. We can easily say, ‘I want to try this, I want to test that,’ and the ecosystem provides the flexibility to make it happen.*

**Evin Catlett**

VP Global Ecommerce + Growth Marketing, Skullcandy

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Skullcandy also reduced technical complexity on the back end thanks to more seamless integrations with their partners, which allows them to focus more of their efforts on enhancing customer experiences. Today, they can bring a new product to life on their site in less than 30 minutes, compared to one to two days it previously took on BigCommerce.

After migrating to Shopify, Skullcandy gained several other benefits, including:



The ability to launch new products on their website in just **30 minutes, compared to one to two days on BigCommerce**



A faster and more stable website, with **homepage load times improved by 0.8 seconds from 2.6 seconds on BigCommerce**



**An increased focus on strategic growth initiatives** and reduced anxiety over managing platform limitations on BigCommerce

## 2. The world’s best-converting checkout, outpacing BigCommerce by 12%

In April 2023, Shopify partnered with a Big Three global management consulting company to [study the checkouts of all the major commerce platforms](#). After months of independent study, the firm found that Shopify Checkout has a 12% higher conversion rate than BigCommerce. In many cases, brands report an even more dramatic lift to conversion after switching from BigCommerce to Shopify.



Mark Nagelmann, director of web operations at Lull, says that while BigCommerce appeared to be a reasonable choice due to its perceived affordability, it ultimately ended up being more expensive than Shopify. On the checkout side of the platform, Mark reported significant drops in KPIs such as conversions and intent to buy.

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*While testing BigCommerce’s checkout, conversions plummeted by 15% compared to our legacy site. Session-to-purchase rates went down 13%, as did intent to buy by almost 8%.*

**Mark Nagelmann**

Director of Web Operations, Lull

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### 3. More frictionless shopping experiences that drive ROI

When all channels, data, and systems are components of a single, unified platform, brands have stronger data at their disposal to build better retargeting campaigns and loyalty programs. Brands can also create the seamless shopping experiences today’s buyers expect, such as BOPIS and buy in-store, ship to home, just to name a few.

After choosing Shopify POS to power their retail presence, Mizzen+Main says in-store employees can make better recommendations to customers. Trey Pritchard, store manager at Mizzen+Main, adds that Shopify is especially critical to helping customers find the right sizes quickly. He adds, “We open a customer’s profile and can see their full purchase history, which helps us make the right recommendations.” The team at Jenni Kayne Home gained similar benefits by unifying their online and retail operations with Shopify. Sam Mella, director of home experience at Jenni Kayne, tells us that Shopify POS allows

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*When wives, girlfriends, and moms are looking for gifts, they often don’t know the difference between things like a trim, classic, or no-tuck shirt. Pulling up the customer profile of the man they’re shopping for with Shopify POS quickly clears up a lot of confusion.*

**Trey Pritchard**

Store Manager, Mizzen+Main

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the brand to build deeper relationships with their customers thanks to a tagging system that allows team members to identify if a client is part of their Trade Program or Home Membership Program, just to name a few. He adds, “If a client is looking at sofas, pillows, or anything for the home and they’re not a member, then we can quickly and easily find that out and suggest the program to them, which is super useful.”

Brands are reporting that Shopify’s unified commerce platform allows them to be creative in ways that impact the customer experience. Lull shared that their sales instantly jumped after exploring new channels offered by Shopify. Mark Nagelmann, director of web operations at Lull, adds that the Shop app now accounts for 1% of total sales.

These seamless shopping experiences aren’t exclusive to traditional online and in-store, either. Shared customer, product, and order data across sales channels gives brands a deep understanding of their customers that enables them to tap into new customer pools on Shopify, including:



**Innovative pop-up experiences:** BÉIS hosted their first popup in 2023 with Shopify POS, which allowed customers to check out and apply discounts on an iPad and have their purchases shipped to them at home. Adeela Husain Johnson, CEO of BÉIS, reports an [average 30% increase in traffic during popup activations](#) and revenue lift of 10%, which she attributes to the reliability and scale of Shopify.



**Faster and more creative product launches:** To capitalize on the popularity of the Barbie movie, Mattel turned to [Shopify Collective](#), a native Shopify tool that enables brands to connect and sell each other’s products. Shopify Collective allowed Barbie to partner with Funboy and launch a Barbie-themed pool floatie in just two weeks. Mattel reported 31% AOV for the Funboy floatie compared to evergreen products on their website.



**Access to new pools of potential customers:** [Lalo](#) doubled down on their strategy of partnering with content creators and growing their affiliate sales network with [Shopify Collabs](#), an all-in-one solution to help businesses find influencers and run an affiliate program. Their cofounders reported a 3X leap in attributable sales from influencers in the first six months using Collabs.

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*With all our sales unified in Shopify, from Facebook and Instagram to TikTok, Amazon, and even B2B, Lull is able to deliver exceptional sleep experiences to new audiences.*

**Mark Nagelmann**  
Director of Web Operations, Lull

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Retailers have a crystal clear idea of what their customers want. But as commerce evolves yet again and shoppers demand more personalized and seamless experiences, the technologies on the market have been too costly, created too much operational toil and complexity, and hindered innovation.

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*Shopify has helped us fulfill our omnichannel vision and provide a customer experience that is smooth and seamless. We can sell everything from clothing to dinner tables all in one system. Everything just feels easy for our clients and our team.*

**Sam Mella**

Director of Home Experience, Jenni Kayne Home

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Today, we're hearing more stories about brands who have successfully delivered unified shopping experiences with software that's equally unified under one code base, with products developed in-house specifically to play together nicely—including some previously outside-the-box products that give brands access to new customer pools and partnerships.



When you're ready to explore a truly unified approach on Shopify, we're here to help.

➤ [Get in touch](#)



# Sources

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