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The reason omnichannel technology has been adopted so widely in retail is that it places an emphasis squarely where it should always have been—on the shopper. This is notable because it represents a shift away from the traditional emphasis on POS, merchandise planning, supply chain and all the other inward-looking systems. Instead, omnichannel commerce requires retailers to be outward-looking, to focus on customer needs, wants and behaviors. However, omnichannel retailing is easy to describe and difficult to achieve. The problem is that omnichannel services and functions touch so many systems in the retail enterprise that reconfiguring them requires a major overhaul that encompasses a long list of updates, upgrades and replacements. NetSuite, which was recently acquired by Oracle, is one of the original (if not the original) cloud-based omnichannel platform providers. Its deep understanding of the challenges facing retailers today is due to its background as a cloud-based ERP pioneer

and an innovative software company that has filled out its retail platform with a broad range of customer-centric applications. "We are known as a cloud-based ERP provider, which is a strong suit for us, but our actual value proposition, our big idea, goes beyond ERP," says Branden Jenkins, GM of Global Retail at NetSuite.

"What we offer is a system to run your business and the foundation for delivering a great customer experience."

The NetSuite platform offers a singular view of inventory, transactions and the customer. This level of integration solves the omnichannel customer experience problems that many retailers face. For example, it makes it possible for a wish list to function in all channels or a store associate to know which products a shopper has abandoned in her online cart.

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To get this kind of functionality many retailers believe you need to start on the front-end of the customer experience, but the truth is you need to get your house in order first on the back-end and then leverage consistent real-time data from all channels in a holistic way.

"Retailers need to understand their channels from both a standalone perspective and in a unified way," adds Jenkins, "because consumers don't operate in tidy channels. They use all channels and with the NetSuite platform, we enable retailers to manage a unified experience across all of their channels through integrated tools like master data management, ERP, order management and CRM." With the NetSuite commerce platform, retailers can move their omnichannel transition forward in a logical way that consolidates their databases and systems. And because it operates in a cloud environment, NetSuite can deliver two major releases per year that includes hundreds of improvements to ensure retailers are never left behind. "What we offer is a commerce platform, a commerce-everywhere platform, including the store," says Jenkins. "We brought everything we do together including traditional POS functionality, payment processing, cash management, peripheral support, mobile device support and created something that is neither POS nor an ecommerce platform. It's unified and both."

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