Data Agility Accelerates Transformation for Retailers

From supply-chain innovation to improving customer experiences, data is the lifeblood of effective transformation. Here's how retailers can make data work harder.

By Peter Bartolik

There's growing recognition in the retail industry that data agility drives innovation and business transformation. Emerging from the pandemic, proactive retailers are focusing on the value of their data to personalize experiences across the customer journey, gain end-to-end visibility into their supply chains, and unlock new opportunities for innovation.

Many retailers however, face challenges:

☞ **Data siloed in legacy systems**

☞ **Lack of visibility or insight into their complex data environments**

☞ **Inability to effectively protect the sheer volume of data they collect**

☞ **Overprovisioning of cloud-based applications and storage solutions leading to unexpected costs**

☞ **Agility to quickly respond to market forces or take advantage of new opportunities**

Resilience and growth relies on data accessibility

Retailers responded quickly to the effects of the pandemic—shifting to digital channels, offering new services like curbside pickup to address consumer needs, and adapting to remote work environments. In fact, despite unprecedented disruption, retail sales quickly rebounded to pre-pandemic levels in just a few months. The most successful retailers generally had greater expertise in managing their data. They were able to lean into their agility and quickly adapt to leverage e-commerce, digital platforms, and process automation.

"Retailers are realizing that they can and must innovate faster, so there's a great deal of focus on digitizing processes across the business and discovering what they can do with data," says Sue McMahon, retail and consumer goods industry advisor with Microsoft and a former Macy's executive. "Nonetheless, for many retailers, data is still siloed in legacy systems of record that don't talk to each other very easily."

Without full access to useable data, organizations lack insight into their supply chains. This makes it difficult to forecast what they can or should stock on shelves, to understand the inventory levels they need in warehouses, and to quickly shift to meet consumer preferences and unexpected challenges. They'll also find it harder to deliver a personalized shopping experience across customer touchpoints or leverage new technologies to differentiate their offerings.

For example, retailers of big-ticket goods such as furniture and appliances are avoiding customer frustration and shopping-cart abandonment by offering immersive experiences like augmented reality to help shoppers decide the color and style of their new living room sofa and providing real-time shipping updates and delivery tracking for purchase fulfillment. These experiences are enabled by agile data flows—and in some cases, they can make a retailer a brand leader as opposed to just another enterprise competing in the market.

Intelligent data management unlocks data's value while keeping it safe

In many ways, retailers have muscled their way through pandemic-related disruptions. They quickly switched to digital platforms, yet inadvertently exacerbated an already fragmented landscape of siloed data across their business. This hampers retailers' ability to realize new operational efficiencies and to fully leverage the value of the data they're collecting. It also raises retailers' vulnerability to cyberthreats like ransomware.

Integrating data sources to gain a comprehensive picture of the business is crucial. A whopping 81% of organizations lack an enterprise data strategy to capitalize on their data assets, and 84% lack the right platform to connect and contextualize data across the enterprise, according to Accenture.

An intelligent data management platform that uses advanced analytics, automation, and artificial intelligence (AI)—and spans a retailer's entire data landscape—is essential. It simplifies oversight with a unified view of data wherever it resides, automating routine protection processes and reducing key compute and storage costs. It ensures an enterprise has solid business continuity/disaster recovery (BCDR) capabilities in place in the event of employee error or when a cyberattack occurs. It also gives organizations the confidence to move faster in leveraging new technologies like digital twins, virtual reality, advanced analytics, and automation.

For example, retailers leveraging digital twins to simulate processes in a virtual model of their operations require capabilities to easily access a broad range of data flows without posing risks to the original data used. It will also likely require new users having access to data. A unified data management platform enables IT groups to easily extend appropriate access and enable self-service features. In addition, the platform provides the visibility and insight needed to determine how to most efficiently and cost effectively secure and protect data.

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Transforming for operational excellence

The power of a cloud-first approach to digital transformation is dependent on a retailer's ability to efficiently identify, migrate, and protect data across a wide variety of systems. This ability is critical to integrating systems and creating a single source of truth to drive insight and innovation and also helps retailers cope with an exponential increase in the volume of data they are responsible for safeguarding, including the personal information of customers.

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Leveraging the cloud along with comprehensive data management capabilities allows organizations to realize digital transformation goals faster and with confidence that their data is protected and always recoverable. Benefits include:

☛ **Eliminating on-premises infrastructure costs** while leveraging the latest innovations provided in cloud-based solutions

☛ **Managing cloud storage and compute costs** with increased insight and improved controls

☛ **Scaling infrastructure on demand** to instantly respond to new business requirements

☛ **Reducing cyber-threat risks** like ransomware

☛ **Improving data management agility and resilience,** particularly in hybrid and multi-cloud environments

☛ **Enable a robust** Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery (BCDR) strategy

Without proven tools, transitioning from traditional on-premises systems to cloud can be frustrating.

"One of the biggest challenges we see is when organizations try to just 'lift and shift' their on-premises systems to the cloud, which often transfers existing inefficiencies into the new environment," says Denny Munson, a senior sales engineer with Commvault. "Being able to manage data from on-premise systems more efficiently and cost effectively is critical to making the transition to the cloud."

As retailers move growing volumes of data to the cloud, they face challenges in managing cloud compute and storage costs, as well as determining what data to back up and how to store it. Enhanced data management capabilities address these challenges and offer comprehensive deduplication and compression features designed to better manage compute and storage costs. These capabilities are the foundation for a more effective, cloud-based approach to data protection and recovery of data from loss, leakage, or a disaster event.

Leveraging data to enhance the customer experience
The pandemic has proven the importance of digital sales channels and forced many retailers to reconsider the shopping experience they create for customers. According to a recent Salesforce Research study, "80% of customers now consider the experience that a company provides to be as important as its products or services". By unifying data from customer touch point

s, retailers can better understand and design experiences that encourage larger spends and stronger repeat business. For example, providing a sales associate with a customer's purchase history and interest levels in previously emailed sale promotions can help that associate make tailored suggestions to the customer when they visit a physical store.

Advanced data management capabilities provide retailers with more powerful tools to craft unique experiences based on data insights. Equally important, these features allow retailers to meet stricter regulatory requirements governing consumer privacy and data protection, such as the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) and the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The right platform includes tools to identify on a granular level where sensitive data is located across systems, centralizing the approach to effectively protecting it, and using advanced automation and AI to ensure compliance with established standards.

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The competitive advantage of Commvault's Intelligent Data Services and Microsoft Azure

Commvault's Intelligent Data Services provides comprehensive capabilities that simplify the complexity of protecting enterprise data across systems and hybrid and multi-cloud data landscapes. Accessed through a single, unified control plane, it spans on-premises, cloud-native, and software-as-a-service (SaaS) workloads across multiple locations and endpoints. These capabilities natively integrate with Microsoft Azure infrastructure to provide a seamless, scalable platform for data movement, protection, and detailed, granular insight.

Metallic®, Commvault's SaaS offering for data management, leverages the layered security of Commvault and Azure to provide additional mechanisms to mitigate cyberattacks, protect SaaS applications, and simplify data protection and recovery. In addition to Metallic, Commvault's portfolio of services can be delivered as on-premises software, bundled into an integrated appliance, or delivered as a managed service through Commvault's partner network.

For retailers, this means that regardless of where they are on their cloud journey, Commvault and Microsoft can accelerate their ability to harness the power of their data.

With Commvault and Azure, retailers can:

☞ **Leverage a single, unified platform** for management and protection of data in hybrid, multi-cloud, and SaaS data environments

☞ **Increase business resiliency and data agility** to respond to market demands and recover faster from data loss

☞ **Protect against ransomware attacks and other cyberthreats** with air-gapped, immutable backups, advanced anomaly detection, and rapid recovery capabilities

☞ **Enable secure, self-service access to data** to empower business users

☞ **Gain insight and control over compute and cloud storage costs** while reducing dependency on on-premises infrastructure

☞ **Speed digital transformation** to support the development of differentiated customer experiences and drive operational excellence

When data is managed and protected intelligently, it becomes a competitive differentiator. It connects people, processes, and the extended ecosystem in which it operates, to support higher productivity and innovation while reducing risk. It is an investment that will define retailers' growth and performance in the future.

Together, Commvault and Microsoft provide the vision and capabilities to make data more accessible and easier to manage while protecting its integrity across retailers' data landscape.

Learn how Commvault and Microsoft can help your organization transform.

☞ Visit **microsoft.com/commvault** and reach out via email to
☞ **microsoft@commvault.com**

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