

Empowering manufacturers to act more like retailers

By [Greg Gatherer](#) 31 Mar 2021

The past year has been challenging for manufacturers. Not only did the initial lockdowns in South Africa and around the world cause local output to [drop by nearly 50%](#), they also faced a squeeze from retailers looking to provide the best possible value to their customers.



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Under the current circumstances especially, standing out on price and product is incredibly difficult for manufacturers. The best option, therefore, is to compete on customer experience.

That may seem foreign to many manufacturers, who are used to operating on a traditional B2B model, but operating more like retailers, they can reap serious benefits.

Outside of more streamlined operations and logistics, the overall experience can be improved to levels akin to the best ones that customers get as consumers. And that's something undoubtedly worth investing in.

In fact, research has shown that customers are [willing to pay more](#) for a great customer experience. And in a world where almost everyone carries at least one connected device all the time, that experience is predominantly digital.

That makes a digital experience platform (DXP) particularly important.

What is a DXP?

In order to understand why a DXP can be so useful to manufacturers, it's worth taking a closer look at what it is and what it's supposed to do.

Put simply, a DXP is a digital integration platform, designed to simplify the digital transformation process for organisations and improve the overall customer experience. Ultimately, the goal of a DXP is to help companies provide the best possible digital experience to their customers, employees, partners and other stakeholders.

Here are four ways digital experience platforms can empower manufacturers to become retailers.

1. Incentivise the shift to online

South Africa's e-commerce space, long lagging behind more developed markets in Europe and America, [experienced massive growth](#) in 2020, as people did their best to do all their shopping from home. But a shopper will very quickly abandon their cart if they find the online experience frustrating, especially in comparison to the in-store experience.

Perhaps anticipating these difficulties, many manufacturers have relied on third-party e-commerce sites to sell their goods. But the royalties and other fees taken by these sites can take a serious bite out of a manufacturer's revenue.

Fortunately, there are an array of low-code options that allow manufacturers to easily integrate an e-commerce offering into their existing site. By combining a good e-commerce tool with a DXP, retailers can ensure that they provide a consistently good experience to their customers by gathering insights to address any pain points and build on what's currently working.



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2. Enhance onsite operations

But e-commerce isn't the only way that DXPs allow manufacturers to act more like retailers. Even as more and more people make the move to online buying, there are still customers who will come directly to the manufacturer for the goods they want.

Utilised properly, a DXP can help manufacturers improve that experience. It can, for example, help equip workers with mobile portals that allow them to see the purchase history and interests of customers they are helping, allow online purchases to be immediately available in person and give customers info via smartphones on the items they see.

3. Encourage customer loyalty

Today's customers are more likely than ever to abandon brands for competitors after only a few poor experiences. While the process may be slower for a manufacturer, especially in the B2B space, organisations are just as willing to change suppliers if they feel their needs aren't being met. As such, loyalty is difficult to achieve but can occur by providing consistent, helpful experiences that reward customers for continued purchases and make them feel known by a company.

Omnichannel support and numerous out-of-the-box features on a good DXP for social, collaboration and business process automation can help to increase operational efficiency and deliver the right solutions to end customer.

The data and insights accessible via a DXP can be vital to encouraging that loyalty by helping provide the kind of hyper-personal experiences that customers have come to expect.

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4. Streamline operations

Manufacturers are under growing pressure to decrease the cost of running businesses to meet shifts in profits, and many see closing sites and cutting jobs as the way. But that's not necessarily the case. Manufacturers must also look at day-to-day operations, such as how headquarters-to-store communication and inventory management.

Digitising more processes, something which a DXP greatly simplifies, can eliminate waste, redundancy or lost time, which will save money in both the short and long term. Many retailers have already led the way on this front. By following their lead, manufacturers can accrue almost all the same benefits.

Changing scenarios

The manufacturing scenario in South Africa and around the world is changing rapidly. Manufacturers need to adapt to those changes and provide their customers with great experiences both digitally and in the physical world if they're to survive in the long term. Doing so means bringing digital efficiencies to every aspect of their operations and a DXP can be essential to that.

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