

Oracle

Bringing the future of retail to life

Oracle provides support to thousands of retailers worldwide, and the company is working to enable retailers around the globe to thrive in an artificial intelligence(AI)-driven future. Deloitte Consulting LLP, Managing Director and Oracle Retail Practice leader Rudy Kulas, Group Vice President, Oracle Consumer Industries Customer Success Jeff Warren, and Paul Woodward, Oracle Global Vice President, Retail Product, Strategy & Innovation recently shared perspectives on the retail sector today and tomorrow.

The journey is important

Retailers want to reduce costs, complexity, and better connect the demand and supply sides of their business to deliver more value to customers and shareholders, observes Warren. "One of the biggest challenges in retail is, 'How do I deliver connected experiences, and connect the consumer to the supply chain while reducing the complexity to the vendors I work with?'" he says.

Unfortunately, the solutions that retailers have historically relied on for key business processes don't offer the agility needed to achieve that goal in today's complicated business environment. But that doesn't mean they're looking for specific technology solutions.

"They're seeking that unified, connected journey," says Woodward. "They're not talking about a point solution or a platform. It's not a technical answer as such."

"They're looking to solve these journeys," says Woodward. "They don't want to know, to some extent, that they're using five products to achieve that. They want the value of the journey, and that's what we're very focused on doing."

Kulas notes that Oracle's support for multi-cloud environments could play a pivotal role in making these unified, connected journeys a reality. "You can't be a single-cloud company. It just isn't possible. You have to be multi-cloud," he says. "Oracle understood that and have made it easier to work with other clouds with the core belief that their clients should not feel "locked-in". An example is the ability to move data with little or no egress costs, substantially reducing the financial barrier and a tangible expression of Oracle's intent to foster long-term relationships.

AI: Emerging strategies, high expectations

The retail industry has long harnessed predictive AI and machine learning in areas such as customer segmentation and markdown optimization, and some retailers have begun to deploy Generative AI in various capacities. Despite this, Warren notes many retailers are still at an early stage in forming a cohesive AI strategy—and they're already eager to move beyond the augmentation capabilities of 'traditional' and Generative AI. "They're looking at how to leverage Agentic AI to automate processes," says Warren. "That's really where we have the opportunity to unlock a lot of the benefits of AI."



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However, as retailers proceed, they're likely to expect fast results. Warren recalls a conversation in which a CIO shared that they would expect a new merchandising or planning system to deliver value within two years. "He has set the timeline for return on investment on AI initiatives at three months," he says.

In response to such high expectations, Oracle's AI approach is centered around retailers being able to realize meaningful value from AI quickly. "We're looking at how we can use science to deliver better outcomes, whether that's improving the effectiveness of forecasts, improving the efficiency of processes and user journey, or improving the user experience," says Woodward.

Oracle intends to have 50 AI-powered features across its retail portfolio in 2026, with many available today. "We will have AI in each one of our products," says Woodward. "We have whole processes being managed using Agentic AI, and we're improving our predictive or 'classic' AI to help ensure that we get better outcomes from our planning and supply chain capabilities."

To get value from AI, you should start with the business

In response to reports that very few AI initiatives ever move past the pilot stage, Woodward offers a pragmatic perspective.

"You should identify the challenges you're trying to generate value for in that process or journey," says Woodward. He believes companies' approach to AI has matured over the past year. "We've gone from trying to work out what AI can do to asking, can AI do this? Can it link from this to this and create a process?" he says.

Kulas concurs. "Deloitte recently held the annual Deloitte AI Forum, where clients talked about how last year was about navigating that AI landscape and learning. Now the focus is on helping to solve problems around AI adoption and value creation, and on creating transformational change," he says.

Warren sees Oracle customers making the greatest strides with AI when the conversation is business-led, rather than technology-led. His advice? "Let's start with the business problem that we're trying to help address and then figure out how to leverage AI—predictive, Generative, or Agentic—to drive efficiency and ultimately automation into that process."

Oracle takes this business-led approach in its own work with retailers. Woodward's team meets quarterly to review the top challenges their user community is facing and looks for ways to use AI to help solve those challenges and deliver the most benefit. Warren notes that Oracle has been rapidly evolving its processes around supporting customers in many industries. "Those things are occurring because of a business need and a business challenge that we're trying to help address and drive greater outcomes for our customers," he says.

Helping retailers navigate trade

Oracle has had a front-row seat as retailers respond to ever-shifting tariffs and trade landscape. "Retailers are looking at adjusting and rerouting their supply chains," says Warren. "They're trying to react as quickly as possible with existing systems and processes," he says. "But it's still too labor-intensive. It's still too reactive."

“Having that agile supply chain and being able to react quickly, not only to customer needs but also to a shifting external environment, is becoming important,” adds Kulas.

Oracle is trying to help by providing retailers with support to understand their supply chains, evaluate scenarios, and make mitigation plans. “One of the easiest ways to do that is to share the load,” says Woodward.

“Getting vendors involved is important,” agrees Kulas, especially in a retail environment, “with the proliferation of SKUs and the amount of data that you have to manage across so many different sources.”

A recent Oracle project is designed to help create more effective collaboration between merchandisers and suppliers, by enabling suppliers to manage their invoices, receipts, payments, and shipments. “The early signs are that we’re reducing the load on merchandisers significantly Woodward says, which gives merchandisers the space to find more efficient ways to work with their supply chains.

The beginning of a new era for retail and the world

Woodward, Warren, and Kulas believe the retail industry and the wider world could be at the cusp of an incredible time of change.

“We’ll think this was the beginning of a new era,” says Woodward. Retailers’ understanding of the consumer, the customer journey, and the shopping experience will all be vastly different, he asserts, and the lines between retail, restaurants, accommodation, and more will continue to blur.

Warren reflects how in the mid-90s, today’s smartphones and other smart devices would have seemed inconceivable. He expects the decade ahead to bring the same level of change. “That’s the exciting thing that fuels us at Oracle,” he says: “How do we help navigate and accelerate that change?”

“With the foundational technical components we have in place today that power innovation,” says Kulas, “what has been seen in 30 years, could be seen in 3 to 5. It’s almost impossible to predict what’s going to happen in the next 30.”



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