

Rethinking retail: the 3 trends you need to know

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The past 12 months have seen unprecedented changes to the retail scene. Marie McCarthy, regional sales director at Centric Software, outlines three key trends that will define 2021.



It's time to rethink retail. Many industry insiders – myself included – view the current marketplace disruptions as an opportunity for savvy fashion brands and retailers to implement exciting new digital transformation strategies and not just survive, but thrive as the retail landscape evolves.

Here are my thoughts on the three key tech strategies for retail success in 2021 and how brands such as Superdry, Gymshark and Helly Hansen are countering challenges with next-gen digital tools.

1. Mobility and connectivity

Workforces, as well as consumers, are becoming digitally native. However, despite the next generation of tech-savvy millennial leaders heading up fashion and retail businesses, many teams still struggle to work efficiently and remotely, relying on outdated systems such as Excel spreadsheets, PowerPoint presentations and countless emails.

At a time of uncertainty, it's clear that digital collaboration solutions have become enablers for business continuity and hold the key to success.

Take contemporary retailer Superdry, which has [saved its design team four weeks a year](#) with the simple press of a button.

By integrating the right cloud-based technology, teams can stay on task, stay productive, collaborate and share data from anywhere at any time.

2. Adapting to radically different buying behaviours

To say assortments have changed in the past 12 months would be an understatement. Yet, despite many businesses struggling to keep up with shifts in customer buying habits, rapidly growing UK-based sportswear brand [Gymshark](#) is seeing huge benefits in its materials process, with an estimated 30% increase in productivity thanks to new digital tools that enable it to be more agile and reactive to market trends.

To respond to the move from offline to online purchasing, businesses need to get creative with online tools such as virtual, 360° lookbooks, as well as made-to-order and custom-made services using advanced software systems that connect design and merchandising teams with manufacturing facilities.



3. Sustainability and compliance

In 2021, consumers are more aware than ever of the environmental and ethical implications of the products they buy.

As many designers have decided to slow down their show schedule and produce fewer collections annually, more customers are realising that 'newness' is no longer cool and are demanding products that are as environmentally friendly as possible.

However, while people want to make responsible purchases, they don't always know how – or lack the right data to make an informed choice.

This is an opportunity for brands to make it simple for consumers to make environmentally sound purchases by increasing transparency and educating customers about their sustainable business practices.

Digital transformation tools allow brands to reduce time, cost and waste.

For example, 3D rendering technology allows outdoor retailer Helly Hansen to create a [digital 3D prototype](#) in a matter of hours, instead of waiting weeks for a physical sample.

The Power of PLM

Product lifecycle management (PLM) is the backbone technology that drives all product-related activities from concept to retail, increasing connectivity, reactivity and sustainability.

Unifying data within one user-intuitive solution, which acts as a single source of truth, allows teams to collaborate globally, with fewer errors, resulting in more time saved, reduced time to market and improved margins.

As the retail sector reaches a fork in the road, it is imperative for businesses to equip themselves with the most effective digital tools available in order to future-proof their business and not only survive, but thrive in challenging times.

To discover more about how and why roles in the retail industry are changing, [download the full report](#).

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McCarthy has 25 years' experience in enterprise software solutions, working with a range of large FTSE and IT startups with a specific focus on emerging markets. During her 12 years' working in retail PLM, she has been supporting leading brands and retailers to embark on their digital transformation journey with Centric PLM. She can be contacted at mmccarthy@centricsoftware.com

Centric Software

Centric Software provides a digital transformation platform for the most prestigious names in fashion, retail, footwear, luxury, outdoor and consumer goods including cosmetics, beauty, food and beverage. Centric's flagship product lifecycle management (PLM) platform, Centric 8, delivers enterprise-class merchandise planning, product development, sourcing, quality and collection management functionality tailored for fast-moving consumer industries.

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