

A Manhattan Magazine 2024/2025

# COMMERCE TRENDS

WELCOME TO SUPPLY CHAIN COMMERCE



**Revolutionising  
agility in supply  
chain commerce**

**Supply chain  
execution loves  
supply chain  
planning**

**The renaissance  
of the physical  
store**

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# COMMERCE TRENDS

A Manhattan Magazine 2024/2025



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Henri Seroux  
Senior Vice President EMEA  
at Manhattan

### Pause and reflect

As a leading provider of supply chain commerce software, we are constantly looking ahead. Our goal is to identify emerging trends early so that we can deliver solutions precisely when retailers, wholesalers, and brand owners need them. Engaging in continuous dialogue with our customers allows us to understand their aspirations and anticipate future needs.

However, occasionally, it's worthwhile to pause and reflect - to look back at how the world of supply chain commerce has evolved over the years and how Manhattan, as a software provider, has adapted. That's what I've explored in my article on the opening pages of this year's Commerce Trends. This retrospective highlights the significant breakthroughs we have achieved recently with the Manhattan Active® Platform - the market's only cloud-native solution built on microservices architecture, featuring versionless software with automatic updates, eliminating the need for manual upgrades. This platform seamlessly unifies distribution, transportation, labour, and order management into one comprehensive application.

Looking forward, innovation remains at the core of who we are, and we are not slowing down. In this magazine, we're excited to showcase two groundbreaking examples: Manhattan Active® Maven, our generative AI powered omnichannel retail assistant for customer service, and Manhattan Active® Supply Chain Planning, an innovative solution that bridges the long-standing divide between supply chain planning and execution. I hope you find inspiration in this 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the Commerce Trends, with stories about the renaissance of physical stores, the sustainability of supply chains, and the transformative impact our customers are making with our solutions. Just as we are continually inspired by you, our mission remains steadfast: equipping you with the tools to navigate the ever-changing world of supply chain commerce effectively.





# Revolutionising agility in supply chain commerce

Over the years, the complexity of supply chains and commerce has significantly increased, and software vendors have continuously sought to provide solutions to support companies in managing these challenges. However, this landscape has shifted dramatically, observes Henri Seroux. The emergence of cloud-native, versionless, and highly extensible solutions for supply chain commerce now enables companies to make significant strides in adapting their business operations at lightning speed in response to market and supply chain changes.



**T**o truly grasp the impact of an innovation, it is essential to have historical awareness, something Henri Seroux, Senior Vice President EMEA at Manhattan Associates, possesses in abundance. Having joined Manhattan nearly a quarter of a century ago, Seroux has witnessed firsthand how major retailers, wholesalers, and brand manufacturers have evolved. His observations reveal that their operations have grown increasingly complex, with supply chains expanding across larger parts of the globe, both upstream and downstream. Raw materials, components, and finished products are now sourced globally and sold everywhere, often through multiple sales and distribution channels, including owned stores, outlets, web shops, and marketplaces. “And what we consider big today is very different from what it was 25 years ago”, Seroux explains. “Retailers and brand manufacturers have seen explosive growth. Companies that once had turnovers between one and five billion euros are now reaching 20 to 30 billion euros. This is mirrored in the massive growth of their distribution centres and transport networks.”

## Omni commerce

Another factor driving the increasing complexity is the transformation in consumer behaviour. In today's omni commerce era, everything revolves around the ‘blue dot consumer’ - the always-connected shopper who expects to get whatever they want, whenever and wherever they want it (read Ken Hughes' article to learn more). This shift has created sky-high expectations for the speed, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness of service. “Consumers now expect to be served faster and with greater flexibility than ever before, all at minimal cost,” Seroux points out. “We are also seeing this trend extend to B2B customers, who are beginning to emulate the behaviours of B2C shoppers. Retailers, wholesalers, and brand manufacturers alike are grappling with

the challenge of meeting these high customer expectations while still delivering on shareholder demands.”

Simultaneously, companies face increasing pressure to make their operations more sustainable. This pressure is driven not only by market forces but also by regulatory requirements such as the European Union's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD). These directives compel companies to demonstrate accountability in their sustainability efforts and report on their progress. “There is a growing recognition within the business community that carbon footprints must be reduced,” Seroux says. “And the supply chain plays a significant role in that carbon footprint.”

## High cost

Despite the evolving landscape, companies' expectations for the systems that drive their supply chains and meet customer promises have remained largely the same. They need scalable solutions that provide sufficient computing power and memory capacity to handle the growing volumes of data at any time. As a result, there is a constant demand for more servers equipped with the world's most powerful processors, which comes at a steep cost. “It's like building a church for Easter Sunday,” Seroux remarks, highlighting that the extra capacity needed for peak times is not required throughout most of the year.

Furthermore, companies expect their systems to cater specifically to their unique needs. They want solutions that not only reflect their business's distinctiveness but also offer more functionality and flexibility than traditional customised software solutions. “At Manhattan, we have almost always managed to meet these expectations, but it has come at a high cost in terms of expensive software customisations,” Seroux acknowledges. “These customisations also complicate upgrades, making them difficult, time-consuming and costly.”

**“RETAILERS, WHOLESALERS, AND BRAND MANUFACTURERS ALIKE ARE GRAPPLING WITH THE CHALLENGE OF MEETING HIGH CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS.”**



# State of Warehouse Operations 2024

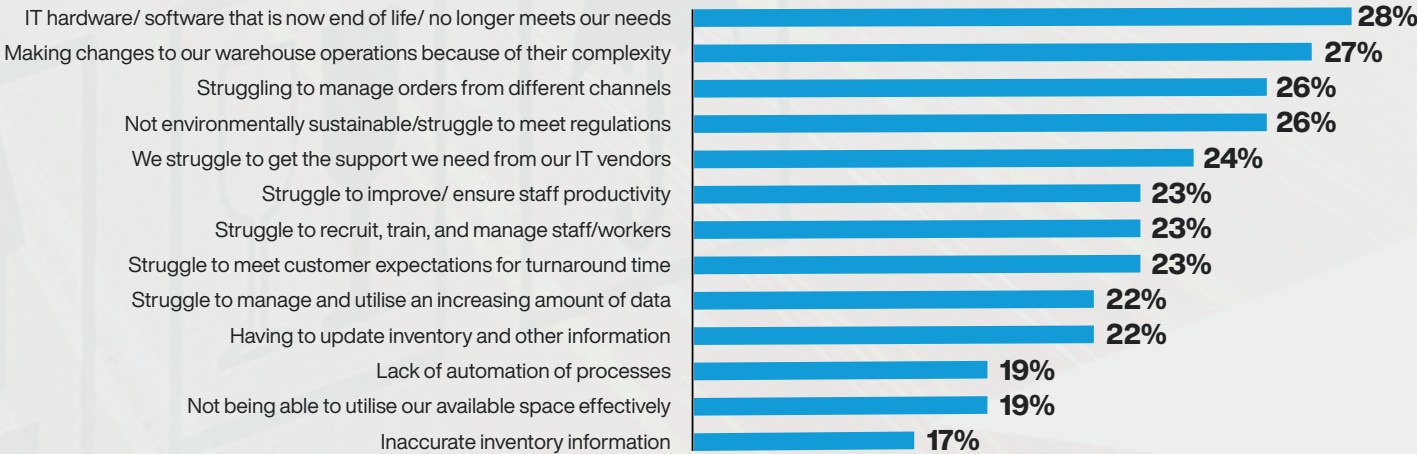
Warehouses are a fundamental piece of modern supply chains - vital to ensuring goods can reach customers efficiently, effectively and on time. Yet, many are in need of innovation, with increased investment and resources required to ensure truly effective operations, and to become a key asset in supporting their organisations' future. To find out more, Manhattan Associates commissioned market research specialist Vanson Bourne to interview 2,000 supply chain professionals across multiple countries and industry sectors.



### Challenges

Warehouse challenges are considerable, with improvements required in several key areas. Almost all organisations (99%) report they are experiencing challenges in their warehouse operations, including out-of-date IT hardware/software (28%), operational complexity (27%) and difficulties managing different channels (e.g. in-store/ecommerce) (26%), influenced by low adoption rates of the more innovative warehouse management solutions. As well as difficulties around productivity (23%), these challenges are leading to lower satisfaction levels within warehouse operations, and high staff turnover rates. Tackling these challenges will be vital to ensure warehouse operations remain sustainable and organisations can retain or develop a competitive advantage.

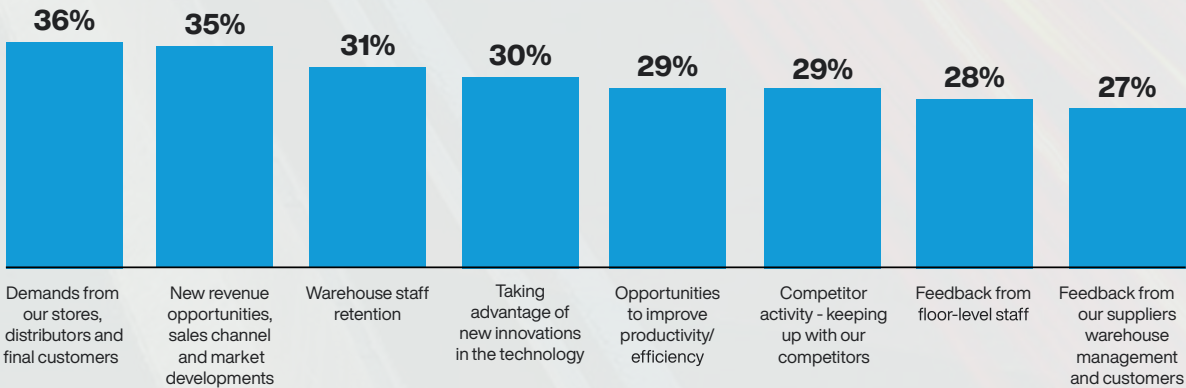
#### CHALLENGES IN WAREHOUSE OPERATIONS



### Looking to the future

Organisations' focus areas for transforming their warehouse operations are influenced by their current challenges, including meeting demands from customers (36%), taking advantage of new revenue or sales opportunities (35%) and warehouse staff retention (31%). Staff are also excited about the possibilities of generative AI (75%) and robotics (72%) to improve their job roles, with GenAI and similar low-code applications facilitating the creation of more sophisticated capabilities and efficient applications. Meeting these priorities will require innovation to ensure the warehouse is fully ready for the future.

#### FOCUS AREAS FOR TRANSFORMATION OF WAREHOUSE OPERATIONS



Scan the QR code and download the research report.

“THE DREAMS REMAIN THE SAME, BUT THE WAY WE MAKE THOSE DREAMS A REALITY HAS FUNDAMENTALLY IMPROVED.”

Companies are also looking for standardised solutions that are easy to implement globally. This demand has driven Manhattan's transformation over the past 20 years, from a software vendor with a small international presence to a global leader in supply chain commerce solutions.

### New technologies

The increasing complexity of supply chains has generated new needs, such as the integration of distribution centres and transportation networks. This need has led to the development of interfaces that link disparate warehouse and transportation management systems. Seroux has seen companies consistently adopt new technologies to stay competitive, including RFID for improving inventory accuracy, voice recognition for optimising order picking, and advanced material handling systems like sorters and shuttles to boost throughput in distribution centres. In recent years, the adoption of robotics has surged, with automated storage and retrieval systems enabling compact storage and efficient picking, and autonomous mobile robots reducing travel distances within warehouses.

Companies expect their warehouse management systems to support these new technologies and processes. To meet this demand, Manhattan has engaged in numerous intensive dialogues and projects with customers, resulting in a new, innovation-packed version of its WMS each year. However, to benefit from these innovations, companies often had to upgrade all their distribution centres to the latest version - a process that could span several years.

### Radical breakthrough

Over the past four years, Seroux has witnessed a radical shift in how businesses are supported, made possible by Manhattan's substantial investments in a common cloud architecture - the Manhattan Active Technology Platform - for its warehouse management, transportation management, and order management systems. These cloud-native solutions provide companies with continuous access to the latest innovations without the need for new version implementations. Because these systems share the same architecture, they work seamlessly, unlocking unprecedented value creation opportunities. “The dreams companies have remain the same, but the way we make those dreams a reality has fundamentally improved,” Seroux asserts.

The transformative impact of these innovations is evident in the growing number of sites benefiting from the new capabilities without needing to upgrade. Seroux shares examples such as a company that deployed a new WMS across 48 distribution centres in two years and a global consumer goods manufacturer that rolled out the system at 15 sites in 10 countries, spanning various divisions with distinct processes and technologies. Another notable case involves an automotive parts company that unified its warehouse and transportation processes with a unique Manhattan supply chain execution solution.

### Effortless scaling

The cloud has eliminated the high costs traditionally associated with scaling systems. With cloud-native solutions, companies gain unlimited access to the computing power and memory they need, automatically scaling up as required without additional costs or effort. “Impatience is no longer a problem for companies,” Seroux notes. “And because our systems operate in the cloud, businesses can be confident that all their sites are always running on the same version. This uniformity provides IT departments with greater transparency and more opportunities to adjust or intervene when necessary.” The benefits of a cloud-native architecture are further demonstrated by Manhattan's recent development of enAI solutions, such as Manhattan Assist, a tool that provides immediate answers to users' questions about the Manhattan Active solutions they are using. “In a few years, the adoption of cloud-native, versionless systems like Manhattan Active will become the industry standard,” Seroux predicts. “But companies that invest in these technologies now will be able to gain a significant head start.”





# Supply chain commerce defined



Ann Sung Ruckstuhl,  
Chief Marketing  
Officer at  
Manhattan

Supply chain commerce refers to the complex orchestration of goods and services flowing from businesses to end consumers. It encompasses the entire lifecycle of a product - from manufacturing and distribution to retail and delivery - bridging the physical and digital worlds. This concept has gained prominence in today's retail environment, where the seamless integration of technology, people, and products is critical to meeting consumer demands.

## COMPANIES ARE INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGIES THAT STREAMLINE OPERATIONS AND REDUCE WASTE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT.

At its core, supply chain commerce involves the unification of various supply chain processes through advanced technology. It connects manufacturers, distributors, and retailers in a way that optimises product delivery to the consumer, whether through direct shipment or via retail networks. The goal is to create a smooth, cost-effective flow of goods across all channels. Key technologies driving supply chain commerce include supply chain management (SCM) software and omnichannel commerce software. SCM focuses on managing the journey from raw materials to the final product, while omnichannel software ensures consistent customer experiences across physical and digital retail platforms. These solutions work together to help businesses deliver products efficiently, adapt to demand, and minimise costs.

### Execution and planning

Supply chain execution (SCE) software plays a critical role in managing the logistics of procurement, packaging, and transportation. Solutions such

as warehouse management systems, transportation systems, and automation tools ensure goods are delivered in a timely and efficient manner. SCE software is particularly valuable when integrated with cloud-native platforms that provide real-time data, machine learning capabilities, and scalable solutions to maximise supply chain potential. Supply chain planning (SCP) software focuses on forecasting future demand and aligning inventory accordingly. By predicting supply and demand trends, SCP solutions enable businesses to position inventory optimally, reduce overstock, and enhance profitability. The best SCP systems utilise data-driven insights to turn supply challenges into competitive advantages.

### Omnichannel commerce

Omnichannel commerce has become essential in providing seamless shopping experiences across multiple channels—online, in-store, and mobile. This integration of digital and physical retail allows consumers to shop flexibly, choosing between various fulfilment

options such as in-store pickup or home delivery. Successful omnichannel operations depend on unified platforms that connect store inventory, order management, and customer service, creating a cohesive retail experience.

### Innovation and sustainability

As supply chain commerce evolves, sustainability and innovation are becoming focal points. Companies are investing in technologies that not only streamline operations but also reduce waste and environmental impact. Machine learning and other data sciences are driving more precise operational outcomes, allowing businesses to optimise packaging, minimise returns, and reduce transportation miles.

In conclusion, supply chain commerce is vital, across industries and regardless of the channel. By leveraging technology to unify processes, optimise execution, and enhance the customer experience, businesses can remain competitive while meeting evolving consumer demands.

# Schneider Electric's global transformation

Schneider Electric has chosen Manhattan's Active Warehouse Management and Transportation Management to supercharge its global distribution and transportation network as part of a broader business-wide transformation strategy.

Manhattan Active Supply Chain (the combination of Manhattan Active WM and Manhattan Active TM) will be implemented in over 20 of Schneider Electric's distribution centres and it plans to deploy Manhattan Active TM across a further 200+ operational sites.

Unifying both warehouse and transportation will bring maximum inventory performance, operational efficiency, and workforce agility to the company.

Stuart Michael Whiting, Senior Vice President, GSC Logistics and Planning at Schneider Electric comments: "After twelve successful years with a Manhattan WMS, we decided to update to Manhattan Active Warehouse Management and extend it with Manhattan Active Transportation Management. Adopting these two cloud-native solutions represents a

## "ADOPTING THESE TWO CLOUD-NATIVE SOLUTIONS REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD FOR OUR SUPPLY CHAIN EXECUTION."

Stuart Michael Whiting, Senior VP GSC Logistics & Planning at Schneider Electric

significant step forward for our supply chain execution, as well as another exciting stride forward for the ongoing business-wide transformation journey."

### Visibility and control

Henri Seroux, Senior Vice President EMEA at Manhattan adds: "Over the last decade, Manhattan had proven itself a valuable and capable WMS partner to Schneider Electric. Upgrading to Manhattan's unified supply chain will give Schneider Electric centralised control over its distribution, transportation, labour, and automation, in the process, delivering significant efficiency, productivity, and agility gains."

Schneider Electric drives digital transformation by integrating world-leading process and energy technologies, endpoint to cloud connecting products, controls, software, and services, across the entire lifecycle, enabling integrated company management, for homes, buildings, data centres, infrastructure and industries. Whiting finishes: "Manhattan's unified supply chain solution will help us optimise inbound and outbound planning and execution, giving us unprecedented levels of visibility and control across our entire global network of distribution centres and transport operations."







## Shiny happy store associates for outstanding customer experience



Isabelle Piat,  
Principal Solutions  
Consultant at  
Manhattan

If you work in retail or any kind of services sector, chances are you will be familiar with the popular phrase ‘the customer is always right’. The quote ‘Le client n’a jamais tort’, is attributed to Swiss hotelier César Ritz, famous for the Ritz in Paris and the Carlton in London, and loosely translates to ‘the customer is never wrong’.

**W**hile customer experience is still central to modern retail success, many people today misinterpret the slogan, taking it to mean ‘do whatever the customer asks.’ However, in the increasingly opaque, blended world of physical and digital commerce, the phrase is maybe, more about going the extra mile to understand each customer’s underlying points of friction and providing a unique brand experience at every touchpoint. Knowing that customer service is the ultimate goal, unpicking the strategy to deliver a unique, white-glove service is maybe the more challenging piece of the retail puzzle, as it incorporates everything from sourcing and procurement, warehouse and supply chain strategies all the way through to customer communications, and point-of-sale experience.

### Shiny happy store associates

While a frictionless phygital experience across all retail touchpoints is the modern-day equivalent of the shop windows of the past for brands, a fundamental (and often overlooked) element of delivering top customer experience lies squarely with store associates. The happier and more

engaged your store associates are, the better the customer experience they’ll provide and the happier the customer will ultimately be. So providing store associates with the tools, software and accurate customer (and inventory) data to deliver that ‘wow’ customer experience has never been more vital than in today’s hyper-competitive retail environment.

### Unique experiences

Below are four key areas that retailers can focus on when it comes to creating unique customer experiences through happier, more engaged store associates and unified retail systems.

1. The checkout remains a vital area for retailers. Understanding the changeable demographic and regional preferences of customers by providing choice in both payment and checkout options is certainly important. Offering ultra-fast transactions with optimised checkout flows and rapid scanning with locally cached item and price data allows customers to get on their way quickly once they’re ready to checkout.
2. There’s nothing more frustrating as a store associate than having to navigate a ‘clunky’ point-of-sale application. A modern and refined user interface with intuitive navigation, clear information, and a familiar cart and checkout option is a win every time.
3. Rock solid stability through native offline support is so important in an age when downtime is simply not tolerated by consumers. With this edgeless approach to servers, store associates won’t miss a beat and can continue to serve customers, even if the store network experiences an outage or periods of system ‘choppiness.’
4. When it comes to customer interactions, there’s no such thing as knowing too much. By using powerful customer engagement tools to gain insights into a customer’s cross channel purchase history and preferences, store associates can personalise every in-store interaction and make each customer feel unique, at the same time making their role more satisfying and smoother too.

**THE HAPPIER AND MORE ENGAGED YOUR STORE ASSOCIATES ARE, THE BETTER THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE THEY’LL PROVIDE.**

# Networking event at Nike’s European Logistics Campus

In September 2023, Centiro and Manhattan teamed up with Nike’s European Logistics Campus (ELC) to host a unique networking event at their state-of-the-art facility in Belgium. This event brought together industry professionals for a day filled with engaging activities, knowledge sharing, and valuable networking opportunities. As partners for many years, Centiro and Manhattan were thrilled to gather their mutual customers for the first time at this unique event.



**T**he day kicked off with a delightful lunch, providing an opportunity to break the ice and set the stage for valuable peer-to-peer connections throughout the day. After lunch, Nike ELC experts shared insights into some of the latest initiatives and strategies in supply chain innovation and technology. In turn, Centiro and Manhattan experts presented their knowledge and expertise in optimising supply chain operations and enhancing customer experiences. Next up was a guided tour of Nike’s ELC, offering a look at the innovative processes and advanced technology driving Nike EMEA’s logistics network. The seamless integration of technology and efficiency and Nike ELC’s commitment to excellence, was nothing less than impressive. The event ended with a networking dinner, during which new ideas, relationships and partnerships were sparked in a joyful atmosphere. In summary, this occasion showcased the

road to leadership and highlighted the power of collaboration in an ever-evolving industry. Overall, an educational, impactful and memorable experience, leaving attendees inspired and equipped to enhance their operations.

Centiro connects delivery and supply chain networks to drive execution, visibility and innovation into insight, action, and tangible business results. Their globally connected cloud solutions extend the Manhattan suite with a rapidly onboarded carrier network. Centiro has created a human-centric and award-winning culture and believes businesses are a key driving force in striving towards a sustainable future. Centiro exists to be part of the solution for better commerce and a better world.

**centiro®**



# Supply chain execution loves supply chain planning

Manhattan introduces Manhattan Active® Supply Chain Planning, a unified business planning platform that enables bi-directional collaboration between supply chain planning and execution systems. The solution allows planners to evaluate all operational factors in real-time and align all systems, inventory, and resources to a common business objective, such as reducing total landed cost or increasing speed to market.



**“UNTIL NOW, UNIFIED BUSINESS PLANNING WAS UNATTAINABLE, LEAVING VAST POTENTIAL UNTAPPED. THE OPPORTUNITY A PLATFORM APPROACH PRESENTS IS IMMENSE.”**  
*Bart De Muynck,  
Supply Chain Consultant*

Most planners in the supply chain focus on strategic issues. They spend a lot of time creating accurate forecasts. Based on these forecasts, they calculate stock levels, how much manufacturing needs to produce, and when suppliers should deliver. People within this domain are highly capable of aligning supply and demand in the long-term, but often less effective at responding to unexpected real-time events. “On the other end of the spectrum is supply chain execution. In this domain, we are very good at processing all incoming orders, but we often forget to forecast and plan to quite the same level. In short, both domains are disconnected,” explains Bart de Muynck, an independent strategic advisor and former VP of Research at Gartner.



### Bi-directional collaboration

Manhattan Active Supply Chain Planning was designed to put an end to this disconnect, facilitating bi-directional collaboration between supply chain planning and supply chain execution. This is now possible thanks to the underlying technology, explains Manhattan’s Brian Kinsella, Senior Vice President, Product Management. “We began redeveloping our applications in 2014, based on a microservices architecture, or, if you prefer, a component-based architecture. The big advantage of this is that each component always has access to all the other components. If planning wants to know what is happening in operations, the API connecting the two components is called. This allows all these components to collaborate as if they were one large application. Previously, planning and execution applications were only integrated at a few points, with data being exchanged once or twice a day at most.” The unification of Manhattan Active Supply Chain Planning with supply chain execution makes it possible to eliminate systematic and operational silos, unlocking enterprise-wide optimisation for the entire inventory assortment and all the resources required to move it through the supply chain. From inventory and labour to distribution and transportation, all elements are synchronised in real-time, seamlessly united under a single plan.

### Fewer kilometres

The unification of supply chain planning and execution is best illustrated through examples. The first example involves a manufacturer of consumer goods which organises the transport from suppliers to the factory. To achieve this, supply chain planning sends purchase orders to the transport department, which then combines orders to create full truckloads. This results in high truckload utilisation but not necessarily the fewest kilometres travelled. “While everyone knows that transport costs depend on the number of kilometres driven, the question is how we can reduce transport costs without affecting stock availability,” adds Kinsella. Manhattan Active Supply Chain Planning makes a different approach possible. Instead of viewing purchase orders as fixed and absolute, the solution



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splits the order into goods the manufacturer needs immediately and those that can wait a few days. “By initially focusing only on the goods needed right away, the transport department can create routes that cover suppliers located near each other. This reduces kilometres travelled but also lowers truckload utilisation. We can then ask the supply chain planning engine the best way to fill the remaining space with the other goods. In this way, we reduce kilometres while still meeting demand,” Kinsella continues.

### Rising labour costs

The second example concerns workforce planning in warehousing and transport. As mentioned earlier, supply chain planning typically focuses on forecasting, but the results are not necessarily shared with the departments responsible for warehousing and transport. Often, these departments do not know exactly how much work

**“BY ALLOWING SOME STOCK TO ARRIVE EARLIER, THE SOLUTION SMOOTHS OUT PEAKS IN THE WORKLOAD.”**  
*Brian Kinsella, Senior Vice President, Product Management.*

is coming their way, which can result in too few operators and drivers being scheduled at one time and too many at another. Given the availability and high cost of labour are increasingly pressing issues in business, this is a topic of great concern. Manhattan Active Supply Chain Planning not only provides the visibility needed in warehousing and transport, it also goes a step further too. Normally, supply chain planning arranges for new stock to arrive as late as possible to minimise inventory costs. However, this often leads to inefficiencies in transport and warehousing. Kinsella continues, “for example, if you do not have enough people to unload a truck, it is parked in a yard, making that stock unavailable. You may incur detention or demurrage charges, and perhaps you’ll end up needing to pay extra for overtime or temporary workers. By allowing some stock to arrive earlier, the solution smooths out peaks in the workload. And while inventory costs may increase, the total costs will go down.”

### Biggest challenge

De Muynck stresses that technology alone is not enough to unite planning and execution. It requires people, processes, and technology working in harmony. “In the past, you could tell people to collaborate and align processes, but the systems were unable to work together. A unified platform for planning and execution changes that. The biggest challenge today, therefore, is the need to reorganise our businesses to introduce these new ways of thinking and working.”





# What customers say

It's not just technology that is moving faster. The nature of relationships between retailers and customers, warehouses, stores and associates, carriers and shippers are all experiencing evolutionary shifts forward too. Manhattan's Active Solutions are allowing enterprises like KeHE, Gregory Distribution and Michaels to optimise their large and complex operations, adapt to market and demand fluctuations, and to innovate at pace.

## KeHE optimises supply chain execution and planning

KeHE Distributors is the largest distributor of natural and organic, specialty and fresh products to more than 31,000 retailers throughout North America. Before adopting Manhattan's transportation management system (TMS), KeHE relied on a legacy system that was ill suited for the complexities of modern supply chain management. Additionally, the previous demand forecasting and inventory optimisation (DFIO) platform did not seamlessly integrate with the legacy TMS, creating inefficiencies and coordination issues between the planning and execution teams. To address these challenges, KeHE implemented Manhattan's TMS, coupled with their existing Manhattan DFIO platform. The integration of TMS with DFIO aimed to streamline operations, enhance visibility, and improve coordination across its supply chain. This resulted in a notable 10% improvement in on-time performance and a reduction of lead times in carrying costs. By optimising truckloads and enhancing routing, KeHE has managed to lower its cost per pound, directly contributing to improved profitability. Kevin Volk, Vice President of Supply Chain at KeHE



comments: "By bringing these systems together, we've optimised our truckloads and improved our overall logistics performance. The connectivity between the platforms allows us to catch potential issues early and resolve them effectively."



**"OUR COLLABORATION WITH MANHATTAN HAS TRANSFORMED KEHE'S APPROACH TO LOGISTICS."**

*Kevin Volk, Vice President of Supply Chain at KeHE*

## Gregory Distribution responds to customer demand, fast

Founded in 1919, Gregory Distribution is one of the largest privately owned transport companies in the UK with 45 locations across the country. Due to rapid growth, it faced the pressing need to efficiently manage increasing demands on its supply chain while upholding its commitment to customer satisfaction. To achieve this, Gregory Distribution leveraged Manhattan SCALE for its configurability and integration capabilities. This warehouse management system (WMS) allowed Gregory Distribution to be highly responsive to customer demands and evolving trends and requirements, while maintaining the support of Manhattan's expertise.

Liam Jordan-Martin, Head of Technology at Gregory Group says: "Manhattan SCALE is a solution that is configurable and flexible. It is a solution where we can put those controls in the hands of our team so we can be really responsive for



our customers. We've opened new facilities in very short spaces of time thanks to the new system we have in place, the expertise we have in the business and the support of Manhattan."

**"WE WANT TO WORK WITH PARTNERS WHERE WE CAN HAVE A LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP AND A STRATEGIC APPROACH, AS PART OF OUR PORTFOLIO OF SOLUTIONS."**

*Liam Jordan-Martin, Head of Technology at Gregory Group*



## Michaels and Manhattan: crafting operational excellence

As the leading creative destination in North America, Michaels operates over 1,300 stores in 49 US states, in Canada and online at Michaels.com and Michaels.ca. For a long time, Michaels relied on a third-party order management platform that struggled to keep pace with the company's growth and the increasing complexity of today's omnichannel retail ecosystem. To address these challenges, Michaels partnered with Manhattan to implement Manhattan Active Omni's Order Management solution, optimising ordering from search to fulfilment. The transition to Manhattan Active Omni focused on minimising disruption to operations while ensuring a seamless integration with existing systems. Post-implementation, Manhattan Active Omni provided the robust infrastructure needed to handle peak periods and increase order volumes without compromising performance. By transitioning to Manhattan Active Omni, Michaels has experienced significant improvements in areas including scalability, efficiency and real-time visibility, with the partnership between Michaels and Manhattan extending well beyond the initial implementation.



**"WE CAN NOW HANDLE HIGHER VOLUMES WITH EASE, AND OUR FULFILMENT TIMES HAVE IMPROVED DRAMATICALLY."**

*Uma Bhemisetty, CIO at Michaels*





When keynoting the Exchange 2023 event in Cannes, I used the blue dot consumer metaphor to explain the importance of putting the customer at the centre of supply chain conversations. This metaphor is a powerful tool for understanding the modern consumer's values and the need for all businesses to maximise supply as a strategic advantage.

# The blue dot consumer

**B**efore digital maps, people navigated using large, cumbersome paper maps. These maps required significant effort to use; you had to figure out your exact location and destination, then plot the route yourself. The world was vast, and you were shown to be a small part of it, responsible for making your own way. Enter Google Maps, where you are the blue dot, always shown at the centre. The world now revolves around you, the frame of reference adjusting as you journey. This shift symbolises a fundamental change in business, where the consumer expects the world, and by extension, brands, to adapt to them.



Ken Hughes, known as the King of Customer Experience, is an internationally renowned thought leader and keynote speaker on the values of the modern consumer and retail disruption on the International Conference Circuit. His 'Blue Dot Consumer' blog remains one of the most widely read collections of marketing and consumer inspiration articles. Subscribe at [kenhughes.com](http://kenhughes.com).

**THE BLUE DOT APPROACH PRIORITISES CONVENIENCE, GIVING CONSUMERS FULL CONTROL OVER THEIR JOURNEY.**

**Convenience and relevance**

Effortlessness is a key element of the blue dot metaphor. For example, a taxi rank required people to wait and queue while now Uber and Lyft bring the car to you. Similarly, food delivery services like GrubHub or DoorDash bring the restaurant to your door, and streaming services like Disney+ bring the cinema in to your home. The blue dot is about removing effort from the modern customer experience. Businesses need to eliminate any order, returns or delivery friction for their customers. The blue dot approach prioritises convenience, giving consumers full control over their journey. We need to leverage AI in all aspects of the supply chain today to give customers absolute control and flexibility, true of B2C and B2B customers. Relevance is another critical aspect. In modern marketing, it's crucial to engage our customers when they are in an active state of consideration. This is why Google Maps shows you a restaurant on the street you are standing, not 10 kilometres away. It is about communicating with your customer within their immediate context.

**Personalisation is equally important**

Just as you wouldn't follow someone else's blue dot on Google Maps, consumers expect personalised experiences tailored to their specific needs. In physical retail, this has been challenging, but advancements in Augmented Reality (AR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) will change all that. Already a shopper buying shampoo can use an AR overlay to highlight products specifically designed for their hair type, making their shopping experience more efficient and personalised. Think about how we can deliver every aspect of an order to a shopper in a way that is unique to them. The blue dot consumer also expects instant gratification. Just as Google Maps updates in real time, businesses must keep customers informed and deliver instantly. The lagging of a blue dot on a map due to poor signal is frustrating and reflects the impatience of the modern consumer who expect brands to be responsive, even proactively so. At its core, the blue dot metaphor is about shifting from a product-centred approach to a customer-centred one. Old paper maps are a metaphor for outdated business practices that put the product,

process or their own supply chain approach first, forcing customers to do most of the work. Modern businesses must pivot to view the customer as the fulcrum around which everything revolves.

**Brand experience**

At Exchange, we debated how the blue dot metaphor challenges businesses to view every interaction, product, and service from the customer's perspective. It's easy to say a business or supply methodology is 'customer-centric', but it's harder to truly embody that philosophy at every level of the organisation. Supply chains have moved from being seen as a 'function' to something of strategic importance as all of these expectations of the blue dot consumer bear down on the brand experience. Failing to deliver on these aspects (instant, timely) result in immediate customer dissatisfaction. While the supply chain and logistics functions were previously seen as 'warehousing and trucks' (or those people in the 'high viz vests'), today there is a recognition that it is often core to the very brand proposition. How a product will be delivered and how returns work can

often be the deciding factor for a shopper. The high-viz vests are gone, replaced by a tuxedo, supply chain taking its seat at the board room table. Ultimately, applying the blue dot lens to your business means constantly asking whether your brand and adopted technology and providers are truly customer-led. Is your supply chain strategy personal, contextual, timely, and relevant? Does it provide instant, effortless experiences? By adopting this mindset, businesses can ensure that customer lifetime value, loyalty, and sales success naturally follow.

Embrace the blue dot perspective to stay relevant and connected to your customers.





# The renaissance of the physical store

With ecommerce forecasted to capture 41% of global retail sales by 2027<sup>1</sup>, it is a wonder why retailers would open or invest in new physical stores. However, there are retailers out there who are opening stores around exciting new concepts to support modern shoppers and provide competitive differentiation. So, is ecommerce delivering a renaissance for the traditional physical store?

**T**oday, ecommerce and physical stores interconnect to provide modern shoppers with a rich, seamless shopping journey wherever that journey takes them. As a result, the traditional store has evolved into a dynamic hub where digital and physical experiences converge. European consumers expect retail experiences that offer convenience, personalisation, and immediacy. To meet these expectations, stores have become an integral component of omnichannel strategies, blending online and offline shopping seamlessly.

## Empowered associates

One of the critical elements driving the success of the modern store is the role of empowered associates. The traditional function of store employees has expanded beyond merely assisting with purchases. Today, they act as brand ambassadors, product experts, and service specialists who manage complex omnichannel operations. To succeed in this multifaceted role, store associates need access to the right technology, tools, and data. Empowered associates can offer personalised interactions by leveraging unified platforms that integrate customer data, inventory management, and sales processes. This not only enhances customer satisfaction but also improves employee retention and job performance, with 55% of retail workers in Europe reporting improved job satisfaction due to technology<sup>2</sup>. Strategies for empowering store associates include unifying customer-facing and omnichannel functions, mobilising associate capabilities through mobile tools, and simplifying access to insights. For instance, mobile solutions enable associates to assist customers anywhere on the store floor, making them more efficient. Streamlining their workloads with task management systems also boosts productivity, enabling them to focus on delivering excellent customer service. The outcomes of empowering associates include increased customer satisfaction, higher productivity, and enhanced brand perception.

**THE OUTCOMES OF EMPOWERING ASSOCIATES INCLUDE INCREASED CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY AND ENHANCED BRAND PERCEPTION.**



## Seamless selling

In today's European retail environment, seamless selling is no longer a luxury but a necessity. Consumers expect a connected and consistent shopping experience across channels—whether browsing in-store, buying online, or picking up orders at a physical location. Seamless selling integrates these channels, enabling customers to move fluidly between online and offline experiences. This results in improved sales and customer loyalty, with 64% of European consumers more likely to shop with retailers that offer seamless omnichannel experiences.<sup>3</sup>

Techniques for implementing seamless selling include equipping store associates with mobile point-of-sale (POS) devices that allow them to complete sales transactions anywhere on the store floor, reducing customer wait times and enhancing their experience. Additionally, integrating endless aisle capabilities ensures customers can purchase products even if they are not physically available in-store. Streamlining the omnichannel checkout process and offering flexible payment options are also essential to reducing friction at the point of sale. Retailers who implement seamless selling strategies enjoy increased sales, customer loyalty, and reduced operational costs.

## Personal retailing

Personalised in-store experiences are becoming increasingly important as the retail landscape grows more digital. Physical stores offer something that online shopping cannot—human interaction and personalised service. Personal retailing enables retailers to build lasting relationships with customers by offering tailored experiences that cater to their individual preferences.

Techniques for personalising retail experiences include using omnichannel customer profiles to inform interactions and turning store associates into product advisors. With access to comprehensive customer data, store associates can engage more meaningfully with customers by offering personalised recommendations. Advanced engagement tools, such as appointment scheduling and digital lookbooks, allow retailers to extend the personalised experience beyond the physical store, fostering deeper customer relationships. Effective personal retailing enhances customer loyalty, improves sales conversions, and differentiates retailers in a competitive market.

## Store fulfilment

Optimised store fulfilment is another critical component of the modern retail experience. Consumers expect fast and reliable fulfilment options, whether through in-store pickup, curbside delivery, or shipping. A store that consistently meets fulfilment promises enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty. In Europe, where 60% of consumers use click-and-collect services, optimising fulfilment processes is vital.<sup>4</sup>

Best practices for optimised store fulfilment include training and equipping associates for fulfilment tasks, utilising RFID technology for inventory accuracy, and scaling fulfilment capacity to meet demand during peak periods. Additionally, offering seamless and hassle-free pickup experiences can serve as a competitive differentiator for retailers. The benefits of optimised fulfilment include increased customer satisfaction, higher store productivity, and enhanced competitive positioning.

## Performance insights

Data-driven decision-making is essential for continuous improvement in the modern retail environment. Performance insights allow retailers to refine operations, enhance customer experiences, and drive strategic initiatives. By analysing sales data, operational metrics, and competitive benchmarks, retailers can identify areas for improvement and implement changes that positively impact their bottom line. Using performance insights effectively involves empowering store teams with real-time data and simplifying data visualisation. Comparative insights also enable retailers to benchmark their performance against industry peers and adjust strategies accordingly. The outcomes of leveraging performance insights include enhanced employee engagement, increased sales, and improved customer experiences.

## Conclusion

The future of the modern store in Europe hinges on its ability to adapt to change, embrace technology, and prioritise the customer experience at every touchpoint. By empowering associates, implementing seamless selling techniques, personalising retail experiences, optimising fulfilment processes, and leveraging performance insights, retailers can ensure their stores remain competitive and relevant. In doing so, modern stores will continue to be essential hubs of engagement, loyalty, and brand identity for European brands and their customers.

<sup>1</sup> Boston Consulting Group - "Winning Formulas for E-Commerce Growth" (2023)

<sup>2</sup> European Retail Digest - "The Role of Technology in Retail Employee Satisfaction" (2023)

<sup>3</sup> Retail Gazette - "The Future of Omnichannel Retailing in Europe" (2023)

<sup>4</sup> European Payments Council - "The Rise of Contactless Payments in Europe" (2022)



# Unified Commerce Benchmark for Specialty Retail

Unified commerce in today's diverse retail landscape is more important than ever before. Recently, Manhattan published the findings of the industry's first real-world analysis of Unified Commerce in Specialty Retail in Europe, in partnership with Google Cloud and Zebra Technologies. This benchmark, conducted by Incisiv via actual shopping transactions, assessed three retail verticals i.e. apparel and footwear, home and DIY, and luxury, in five countries.

Based on data from actual purchases, returns and customer journeys across digital and physical channels, the benchmarking reveals common attributes of successful retailers and opportunities for retailers to improve customer value and operations. Fifty retailers were assessed, analysing more than 290 capabilities in four categories. Below are some of the key findings:

**1. Unified basket:** Leaders in cart and checkout understand that a unified cart or basket is a foundational capability when it comes to that all-important connection across channels; 40% of leaders show

personalised promotions and offers on product description pages and cart, compared to 6% of non-leaders.

**2. Guided inspiration:** Leaders in search and discovery help shoppers discover meaningful products, making shoppers feel good about their purchase decisions, with 100% of leaders publishing detailed content on sustainability practices. They offer capabilities such as product recommendations, back-in-stock notifications, and product sourcing information, while 40% of leaders offered real-time inventory visibility on product detail pages and personalised recommendations on home pages.

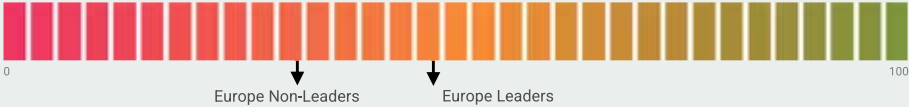
**3. Flawless fulfilment:** Leaders in promising and fulfilment make sure shoppers' product pick-up or delivery experience is as good as their shopping journey. Not only do leaders meet or beat their delivery promises consistently, they do also so while being more environmentally friendly too. Offering shoppers greater post-order flexibility, including complete or partial cancellations, and greater delivery/pick-up options are all areas leaders excel in. 60% of leaders offer shoppers the ability to cancel orders post-purchase compared to 28% of non-leaders.

**4. 360-Degree service:** Leaders in the service and support segment offer shoppers a wide variety of service options; from in-store assistance to call centres, social media support to live agents on their website and mobile app. Importantly though, they offer seamless continuity, consistent quality and always-on availability across channels and services. They empower shoppers to self-serve most of their service needs with 92% of Leaders supporting in order modifications, returns and exchanges via chat/call and 75% offering their customers the ability to return purchases to drop-off locations.

## Search & Discovery



## Cart & Checkout



## Promising & Fulfilment



## Service & Support



**Leaders vs non-leaders** Unified commerce adoption remains relatively low, even among retail leaders, with differentiating experiences adoption at only 40%. To achieve success in the future, retailers must reevaluate their strategy and maintain a strong focus on execution.



Scan the QR-code above to view the 2024 Unified Commerce Benchmark for Specialty Retail in Europe.

# GenAI enriches the capabilities of supply chain professionals



Nitin Dsouza,  
Vice President  
Digital Engineering  
& Supply Chain at  
Capgemini

For almost two years now, the business world has been under the spell of genAI. As groundbreaking and exciting as the prospect of this new, disruptive technology might be, there are just as many questions about what it might mean in the longer-term for industries, especially supply chains. Nitin Dsouza from Capgemini provides some answers to these myriad questions.

With the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), especially generative AI (genAI), we are at the dawn of a new era. We are already seeing that we can unlock more value in supply chains with genAI than with traditional AI. The deployment of large-scale AI models with more than 100 billion parameters, fed by high-quality training data, is the prelude to the next disruption. The seed for disruption of the companies that represent the digital age has now been planted.

## Strengthening competences

The supply chain has always been a big user of machine learning (ML) and more recently AI. For decades, we have been using traditional forms of ML and AI (tradAI) for prediction, optimisation and orchestration. That has enabled companies to create more value with their supply chain. With genAI, we are adding to that. GenAI enables the generation of text, images, sound and code. We can translate data to text, as well as use text to analyse data and visualise the insights. GenAI will strengthen the competencies of supply chain professionals. Once they discover the value of genAI, they don't want to live without it. Capgemini has developed applications where a buyer deploys genAI to analyse and compare supplier quotes, leading to faster and better decisions. Another example concerns a demand planner who uses genAI to generate python code to analyse a given dataset and then deploys genAI again to visualise the resulting insights. And all without having years of coding experience.



## THE SEED FOR THE NEXT WAVE OF DIGITAL DISRUPTION HAS BEEN PLANTED.

### Challenges and tips

On the road to large-scale deployment of genAI, we encounter the necessary challenges. The first concerns trust in this new technology. Everyone knows by now that genAI can present new content with great alacrity, which then turns out to be wrong. Cost is another concern. Using genAI requires a relatively large amount of computing power and energy and therefore money. The last challenge concerns the skills needed. There is a huge shortage of AI talent. Moreover, there is such a thing as the automation paradox: the more we automate, the more competences people need to be able to work with that automation.



For companies looking to stand out in genAI, Capgemini has three tips: first, set an agenda including objectives, frameworks, and guidelines; next, give your employees a toolkit that allows them to experiment freely and safely. And finally, build prototypes, deploy them and learn from the experiences. Any company working on genAI knows there are use cases that produce amazing results, but also use cases that have less impact than expected beforehand. The trick is to learn lessons from them.



Manhattan and Capgemini shared their ideas about genAI in a recent webinar. Scan the QR-code to view the recording.



# Generative AI revolutionises customer interaction

Manhattan Active® Maven for Customer Service is revolutionising retail chatbot capabilities with fast, personalised, and highly capable assistance that delights customers and boosts productivity. It harnesses the power of genAI technology to elevate customer experience while simultaneously reducing operational costs.

**M**anhattan Active Maven offers a genAI-powered chatbot for consumers, and a collection of GenAI features aimed at enhancing the efficiency and service standards of customer service representatives. It is a smart customer service chatbot with native access to orders, payments, store locations, and product availability. Manhattan has leveraged advancements in large language models (LLMs) to reimagine the chatbot experience for pre- and post-purchase experiences. Manhattan Active Maven crafts personalised responses that are dynamic and contextual, akin to those delivered by human agents. It is also easy to implement. No rules, scripts or integrations are required. Retailers simply embed it on their website, and the solution goes to work.

## Variety of questions

The big difference with a traditional chatbot is the wide variety of questions Manhattan Active Maven can answer. Brian Kinsella, Senior Vice President of Product Management at Manhattan says, “Customers can ask not only when their order will arrive, but also what colour the shirt they bought last year was. It is also possible to change an order. For

example, those who have indicated that they want to collect the order from the shop and suddenly realise that they won’t be in the area can have that changed to home delivery via the chatbot.”

Manhattan Active Maven can do even more than that. Traditional chatbots for retail are impersonal, inflexible, and incapable of resolving complex issues, leading to customer dissatisfaction. Manhattan Active Maven is different in how it converses with customers. It can empathise with customers, understanding both their questions and emotions to provide personalised answers with a human touch. This human-to-machine interaction creates a more engaging experience that meets customers’ expectations.

## Boosting productivity

Manhattan Active Maven also enhances customer service performance and productivity by allowing agents to focus on more complex issues. This benefit means agents can spend more time solving critical problems and less time dealing with common issues. Manhattan Active Maven automates and streamlines manual customer service tasks, such as conversation summarisation and post-interaction notes, reducing agents’ administrative burden and improving customer service efficiency. It does so by providing the following capabilities:

**1. Contextual warm transfers:** When a customer needs additional assistance that requires human judgment, Manhattan’s Maven automatically warm transfers the conversation to the best agent for further investigation. The human agent receives

a conversation brief prepared by the chatbot, including relevant details. This contextual warm transfer means agents spend less time researching and reviewing the current case and more time providing solutions, enhancing efficiency and customer satisfaction.

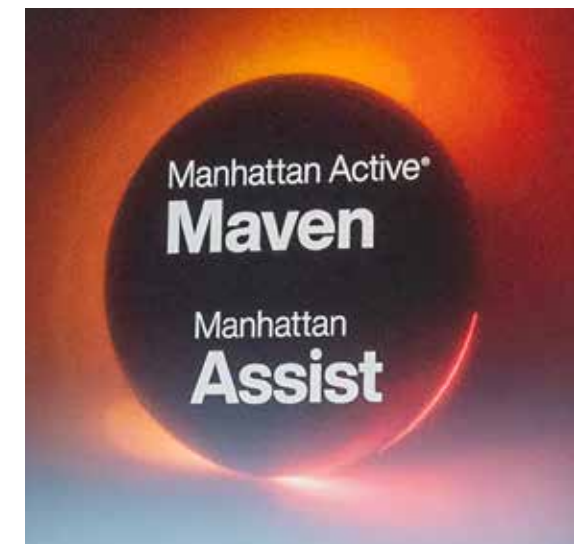
**2. Historical conversation summaries:** It also improves agent productivity and performance by summarising historical customer conversations and cases. With quick access to all the customer’s prior interactions, the agent can spend less time sifting through and reviewing customer interaction history and address the customer’s issue faster, reducing customer interaction handling time.

**3. Automated post-interaction notes:** When a customer conversation concludes, Manhattan’s Maven generates and manages post-interaction notes. It automatically compiles all relevant conversation details, including resolution, into a concise summary. It saves agents from the time and effort of manual notes by automatically generating relevant, consistent interaction notes, freeing agents to spend more time assisting customers.

“GenAI is one of the most exciting technologies we’ve seen in years, and it promises to redefine customer service experiences”, says Ellie Crawford, Director of Product Management for Manhattan Associates. “Manhattan Active Maven represents an exciting application of this technology in supply chain and commerce, delivering new levels of personalisation, productivity, and cost-savings.”

**“CUSTOMERS CAN ASK NOT ONLY WHEN THEIR ORDER WILL ARRIVE, BUT ALSO WHAT COLOUR THE SHIRT THEY BOUGHT LAST YEAR WAS.”**

*Brian Kinsella, Senior Vice President of Product Management at Manhattan*



## Even more genAI

Another innovation is Manhattan Assist, a genAI-powered assistant for Manhattan Active users that provides contextual responses to any questions regarding product functionality, API structures, and more. Manhattan Assist will also provide a natural language summary of how Manhattan Active applications are currently configured. This new feature provides platform-level assistance across multiple personas, roles, and functions. It is included with all Manhattan Active Solution subscriptions.

According to Kinsella, this new technology enables users to make even better use of the power of Manhattan’s solutions. “Normally they ask for help from the superusers who know exactly how the system is configured and what all the buttons are for. “Now they can ask that help question in normal language to the system itself and get answers in understandable language. For example, when asked what algorithms are available for warehousing.”

Users can also consult Manhattan Assist to ask what the configuration of the system looks like and whether it is wise to modify it. “In addition, we want to show how the configuration has been changed in the past. Sometimes someone has changed the configuration without thinking carefully about its implications for other users. Then it is nice to be able to quickly identify how the configuration has been changed,” Kinsella adds.





# New distribution centre provides room for growth

The Belgian technical wholesaler Cebeo has created space for future growth with a groundbreaking distribution centre in Blandain. To manage the complex operation, which includes a high-level of automation, the company relies on Manhattan Active Warehouse Management.

Cebeo is part of Sonepar, the global business-to-business distributor of electrical products. To facilitate future growth within the Belgian market, the company decided to build a brand-new distribution centre in Blandain, Belgium. On a site covering 11.5 hectares, a building of 42,000 square metres at a height of 55 feet has been

built. Next to the warehouse, there is a cable park covering an additional 10,000 square metres. “We carry a very diverse range of more than 50,000 stock-keeping units. The distribution centre is entirely designed to suit our assortment,” says Danny Gotink, VP Supply Chain at Cebeo. This is reflected in the layout of the distribution centre, where a highly automated goods-to-person system for small goods and cables is combined with a more manual operation for long goods and pallet goods. “What makes this building so innovative is, on one hand, a smart logistics concept with the right combination of automation and manual operations and, on the other hand, the focus on sustainability and care for our employees,” explains Gotink. “This is demonstrated, by the reusable plastic containers we use to deliver small goods to our customers. By introducing these containers, we save a million cardboard boxes every year.”



Roy Vergeldt, Corné Baardemans (Manhattan) and Danny Gotink (Cebeo)

**“WE HAVE A SMART LOGISTICS CONCEPT WITH THE RIGHT COMBINATION OF AUTOMATION AND MANUAL OPERATIONS.”**

Danny Gotink, VP Supply Chain at Cebeo



## Future-proof solution

The distribution centre processes around 10,000 orders daily, which are delivered directly to customers or distributed via one of 53 branches in Belgium. An in-house transportation network with five transport hubs ensures efficient and fast operations. Orders placed before 7pm are ready for transportation overnight. Manhattan Active Warehouse Management has been implemented to manage the entire operation. Roy Vergeldt, Engagement Director at Manhattan comments: “Cebeo wanted a future-proof solution that would enable it to realise the projected growth for the coming decades. The new warehouse management system needed to support the end-to-end processes in the distribution centre, including automation. This requires a system rich in standard functionality, flexibly deployable, that can be managed by Cebeo. We took it a step further and developed special functionality for cable cutting at the customer’s request, which we added to our standard WMS. The system implemented here serves as a blueprint for all other Sonepar Group locations. Cebeo has set a new standard within the parent company.”



Pieter is EMEA Leader, Supply Chain Commerce Strategies. Over the past 16 years he led the Manhattan team in the Benelux, Denmark and Germany. He was co-founder of the EMEA Commerce Trends 9 years ago.



Pieter and his wife Evelien

# Spotlight on Pieter Van den Broecke

## What did you dream of becoming when you were growing up?

With a nurse for a mother and a highly skilled engineer for a father, our family gravitated towards careers in medicine or engineering. I was no different - torn between becoming a plastic surgeon one day and a bridge builder the next. Ultimately, I pursued engineering, choosing mechanics over civil engineering. Yet, my mother’s influence shaped me profoundly; her emotional intelligence and focus on others are qualities I share. They’ve helped me grow into a professional who supports others while maintaining a strong commitment to quality and analytical precision as an engineer. But if you ask me today what I truly would have loved to be, it’s something entirely different: a music performer, a rockstar (editor: think Bruce

Springsteen!) captivating an audience of 60,000 with a two-hour show.

## What is your favourite leisure activity?

I don’t have a major passion, but I enjoy riding my gravel bike alone, listening to music through my earphones, and cycling through nature. I also enjoy spending time with other people, such as a nice meal with my wife, my daughter or my father.

## Who is your leader by example?.

I was very impressed by Nelson Mandela. It is incredible how he dedicated his life to equality and freedom. Everyone would have understood if he had been resentful after his years of imprisonment. But instead, he took a conciliatory stance which initiated a peaceful transformation in South Africa. I found his attitude

towards life fantastic and inspiring. If we could occasionally apply it in the smaller world in which we operate, we could truly make a difference.

## How would you describe yourself as a leader?

My leadership style is generally relationship-oriented and coaching-focused. I find great joy in watching my team members grow and do everything I can to support their development. However, there are times when I take a more directive approach, especially when addressing situations where quality expectations are not being met.

## If you could recruit one person to work for Manhattan, who would that be and why?

I don’t have to think long about this, it would undoubtedly be my former colleague and friend Miguel Milano. About twenty years ago, he worked one level below me but I saw his potential and sponsored him to perform at a level above me, with me as his right hand. Together we were very successful. Soon after, he was headhunted and his career soared to the C-suite of a global software vendor. I sponsored him not just because of his intelligence but, above all, his tremendous, infectious energy. Miguel had the unique ability to sell himself, his team and his company, energising everyone around him. He once told me that I would be the first person he would hire if he ever started his own company, but that day never came.



**CREDITS**  
CommerceTrends is a joint publication from Manhattan and RetailTrends Media.

**Chief editors:** Marcel te Lindert, Martine Toussaint  
**Contributors:** James Canham-Ash, Bart De Muynck, Nitin Dsouza, Ken Hughes, Brian Kinsella, Marcel te Lindert, Isabelle Piat, Ann Ruckstuhl, Henri Seroux, Ben Sillitoe, Martine Toussaint, Pieter Van den Broecke  
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**Manhattan Associates**  
Vliegend Hertlaan 15-97,  
3526 KT Utrecht  
Netherlands  
T +31 (0)30 2143000  
E ce@manh.com  
manh.com/en-gb

✉ @ManhAssocNews  
in Manhattan Associates

**Page concept and publishing:**  
RetailTrends Media  
Postbus 78  
6720 AB Bennekom  
Lindelaan 8, Bennekom Netherlands  
Editor:  
T +31 (0)318 431557  
Management administration:  
T +31 (0)318 431553  
E info@retailtrends.nl  
retailtrends.nl  
✉ @RetailTrends\_NL

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