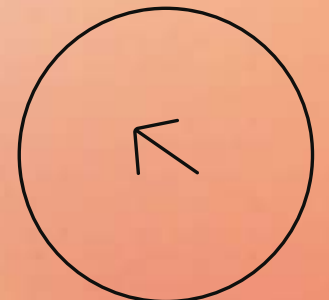


# Retail Integration Report: Insights from the 2025/26 Patchworks Retail Tech Leaders Survey

Uncovering the impact of poor commerce  
connection and what it takes to enable  
Agentic Commerce

[wearepatchworks.com](https://wearepatchworks.com)



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Insights from the 2025  
Patchworks Retail Tech  
Leaders Survey

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## OnePoll®

The findings presented in this report are based on an independent study conducted by OnePoll on behalf of Patchworks. The online survey took place during August 2025 and captured responses from 200 UK Retail Leaders who make decisions relating to technology.

# Executive summary

## Why integration is central to the future of commerce

Today's retail landscape is all about hyper connection. Shoppers expect seamless personalisation, real-time tracking, and just-in-time availability. To deliver truly unified customer experiences tech-complexity has to be invisible. This means integration has become more than an operational necessity. It's now the engine that powers growth, agility, and customer satisfaction.

Yet, our 2025 Retail Tech Leaders Survey reveals that many retailers are still held back by fragmented systems, siloed operations, and legacy processes that drain resources and slow growth. CTO's in particular are locked into repeated 'build' cycles that fail to deliver the scalable connectivity they need to optimise operational performance and accommodate future services.

This report uncovers:

### Where brands stand today:

Just 27% of retailers describe themselves as fully connected and scalable, while nearly a third remain stuck in fragmented or reactive phases.

### Poor integration is costing the UK retail industry billions annually:

60% of UK retailers report losses due to integration with 1 in 10 hemorrhaging more than £1M annually.

### Why legacy approaches are failing:

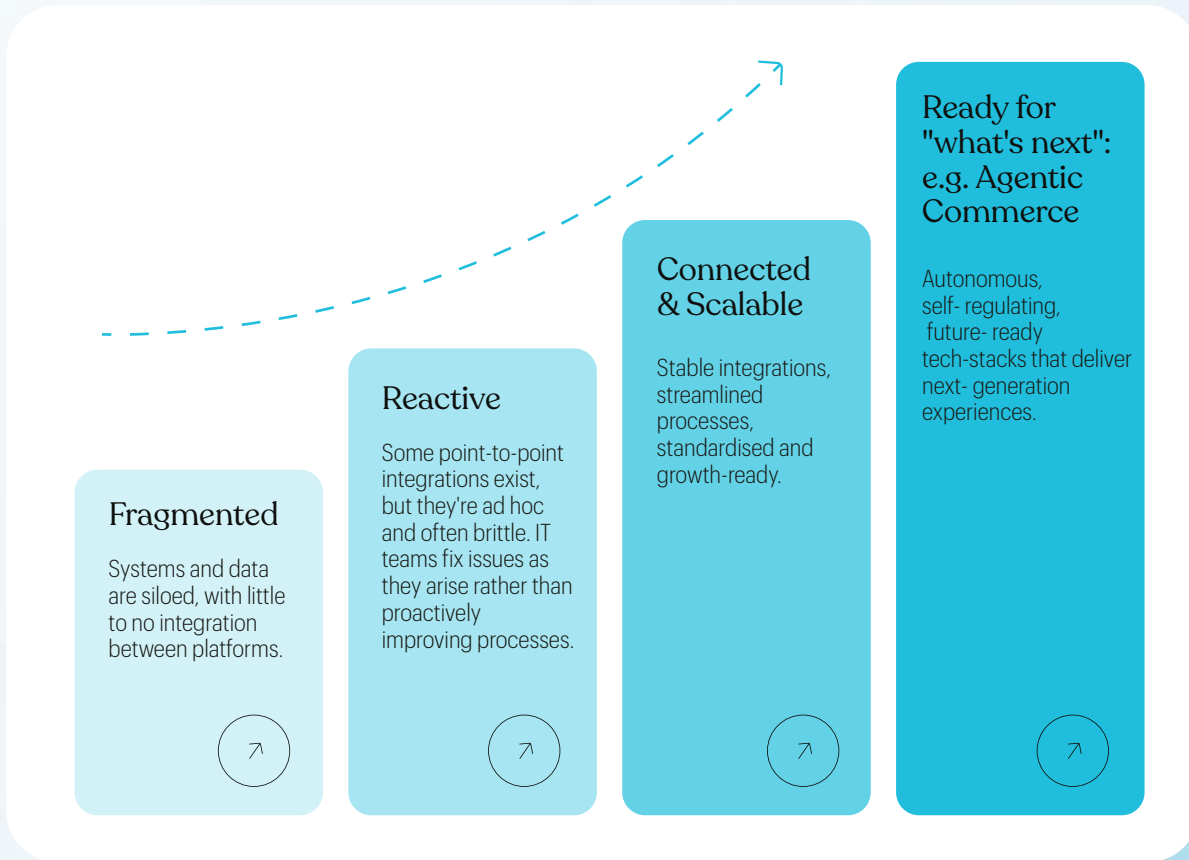
Plug-ins, custom development, and point-to-point connections are slow, rigid, and resource-heavy, leaving teams firefighting instead of focusing on growth, especially at peak trading times.

### How modern integration transforms business:

iPaaS platforms simplify complexity, accelerate workflows, reduce costs, and unlock scalability, turning integration from a constraint into a competitive advantage.

Along the way, you'll hear compelling arguments for "buy v's build" from retail tech leaders, gain survey-backed insights, and explore strategies to evolve from fragmented systems to fully connected, future-ready operations.

Most importantly, you'll discover what it takes to enable **Agentic Commerce**, the next evolution of retail, where autonomous AI agents handle everything from product discovery to purchase and payment, reshaping the customer experience.



Integration level

## Where brands stand on integration maturity

Brands that understand their integration maturity level gain a clear view of where they're losing efficiency, where they're leaving money on the table, and how they can drive higher ROI faster.

The model to the left maps the journey from fragmented systems to fully connected, scalable systems. The higher the level of integration, the more streamlined your operations, the richer your customer insights, and the greater your potential for long-term growth.

## Our survey reveals a clear divide in integration maturity:

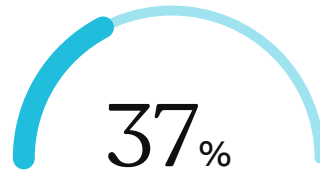
Just **27%** of commerce brands say they are fully connected and scalable.

**29%** remain stuck in a reactive phase, with only limited or partial connectivity.

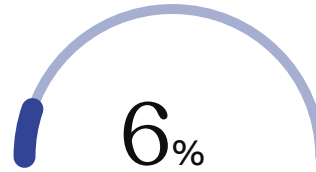
Nearly **1 in 3** are still grappling with fragmented systems, siloed operations, and heavy manual processes.

This means that only **1 in 4** brands are in a position to progress toward advanced models such as AI-driven agentic commerce.

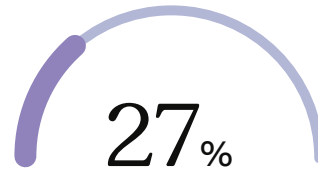
How would you describe the current integration setup in the retail business you work for?



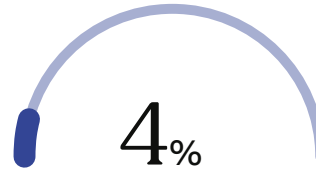
Mostly connected



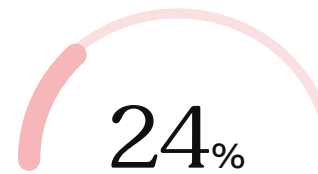
Limited Integration



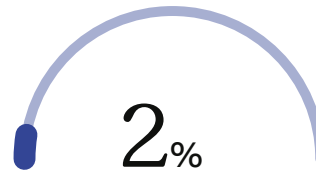
Fully connected and scalable



Oudated



Partially connected



Not sure

Numbers are only part of the story: Here's what tech leaders say...

*"We're still in silos but transitioning to scalable as I train staff on single points of failure... most systems have rule limitations that prevent full automation."*

**Mark Lee, Bentley Gift**

*"I'd say we're fragmented and reactive. There's growing complexity as more systems have been added to our tech stack."*

**Paula Abasolo, Mint Velvet**

*"We're well on the way to being fully connected and scalable... we now have much more ownership of our integrations, which has proven nowhere near as scary as I thought."*

**David Webster - Bollin Group**

This highlights both the frustration of brands stuck in fragmented or reactive phases, and the confidence of those already progressing toward maturity.

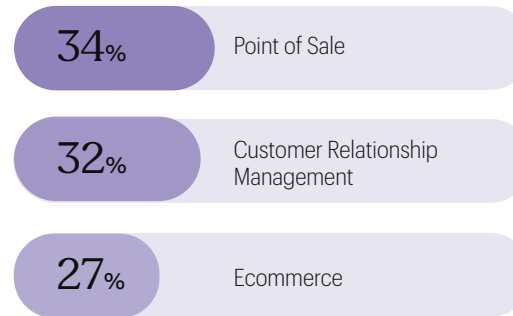
# Commerce complexity and red flag signals

Sales, stock, supply, inventory, channels, and transactions often run on separate systems and if they don't talk to each other, the impact can impact the whole business.

Survey findings confirm that what starts as an IT issue can quickly become a business problem: bottlenecks, errors, frustrated customers, and stalled growth. For modern retailers this means seamless integration is no longer optional, it's the foundation of retail efficiency, great user experiences, and scalable revenue growth.

## Which systems are the biggest challenge for tech teams?

System complexity makes disconnects more problematic. According to our survey, the top three most operationally challenging systems when not integrated effectively are:



These are closely followed by Order Management Systems (25%), Warehouse Management Systems (24%) and Enterprise Resource Planning (21%).

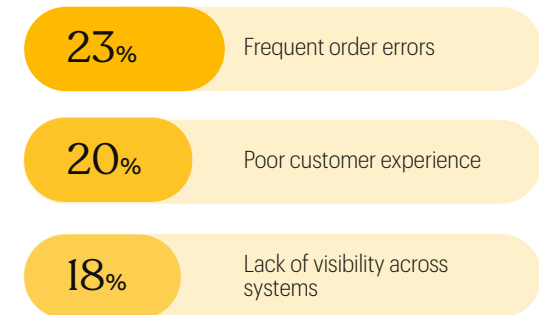
### Takeaway

Integration of front-end and customer-related systems are proving a bigger challenge than back-office functions. This could be due to the wider diversity of systems and greater number of partners involved as well as the need to accommodate continuous change.

## What red flags are associated with poor integration?

Frequent order errors (23%) and poor customer experience (20%) were the top two signals flagged by respondents.

But many other crucial areas including lack of visibility, slow fulfilment, inaccurate inventory and poor productivity, are also considered as operational signs that systems are not connecting as they should.



### Takeaway

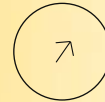
Front line warning signs are when shoppers start to suffer – whether through experience, order errors or transaction visibility. The result? Lost orders, revenue and loyalty.

According to some retail leaders, the very tech stacks intended to enable growth can create additional operational challenges. **These include:**

## Effective integration is now a strategic imperative for a healthy retail business.

### Even successful businesses face roadblocks

Businesses that break down system silos and better connect front and back-end systems gain operational efficiency, reduce errors, and deliver a seamless customer experience, positioning themselves for sustainable growth.



### Time and resources

*"We are a small team and though we know what we want to achieve, we have to keep putting integrations down when something more urgent comes along."*

**David Webster, Bollin Group**



### Managing third parties

*"It's rarely a case of purely putting APIs together. Invariably there are change requests, deployments, updates, and other companies' roadmaps to deal with."*

**Castore**



### Multiple systems for multiple platforms

*"We don't have a single software system to handle all eCommerce platforms for listings, inventory control, and shipping. We have to run three systems to support four platforms."*

**Mark Lee, Bentley Gift**

# Breakthrough or breaking point? How are retailers integrating and is it working?



## What approaches are merchants taking to connect their systems?

**Custom integrations:** 31% of businesses rely on bespoke solutions that consume significant in-house or over-costly third-party development time.

**Plug-ins:** 20% are locked into pre-packaged tools that often don't work seamlessly across more than one system.

**Manual coding:** 18% expend resources on hand-coded workarounds.

**Integration Platform as a Service (iPaaS):** 13% of retailers are using iPaaS to scale faster, lower costs and achieve operational efficiency.

**No strategy:** Worryingly 11% operate without an integration plan, leaving systems fragmented and teams regularly fighting fires.

## Takeaway

As businesses grow, traditional integration methods (plug-ins, custom development, and point-to-point connections) are hitting a ceiling. Slow, resource-heavy, and rigid, these approaches can make scaling across channels and markets a constant challenge.

## Which of the following best describes your business's current approach to integrating systems and platforms??

Custom integrations

31%

Plug-ins

20%

Manual Processes

18%

iPaaS

13%

N/A

11%

Not sure

4%

None of these

# Does poor integration impact revenue?



Disconnected systems, **short-term fixes and complex self-build integrations** don't just slow down launches and inflate operational costs, they drain revenue. Our survey shows the financial impact is substantial:

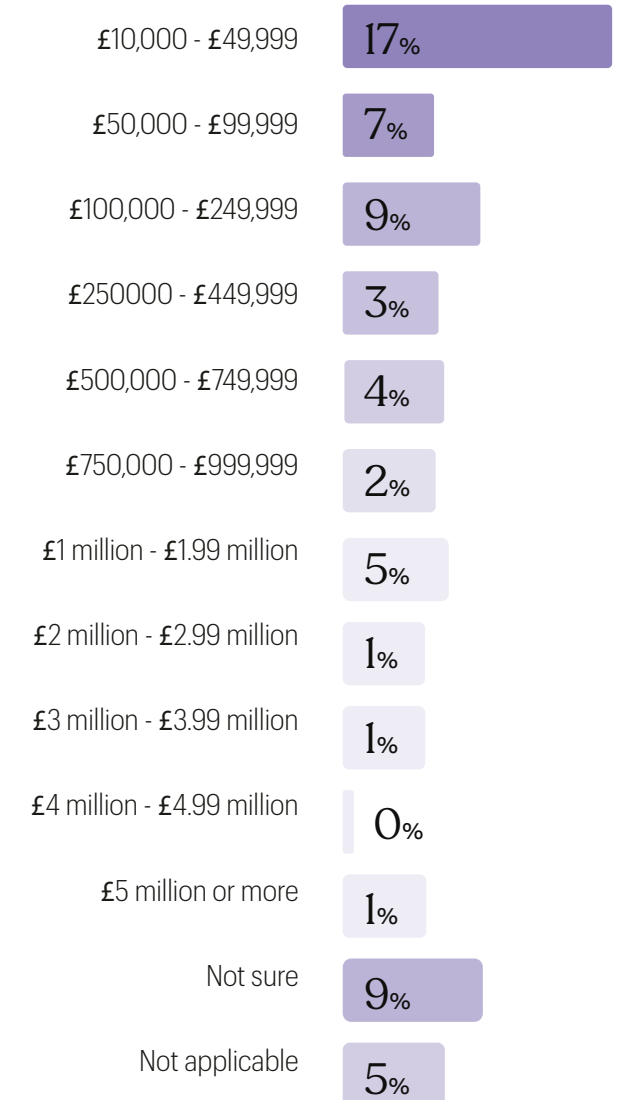
**48%** of respondents lose more than £50,000 annually due to poor integration.

**14%** report losses exceeding £500,000 each year.

## Takeaway

Fixing integration isn't just about efficiency; it's a direct path to protecting revenue and unlocking more profitable growth.

Roughly how much revenue, if any, do you estimate your **business has lost** in the past 12 months due to disconnected or poorly integrated systems?



# What are the most important factors when choosing a solution?



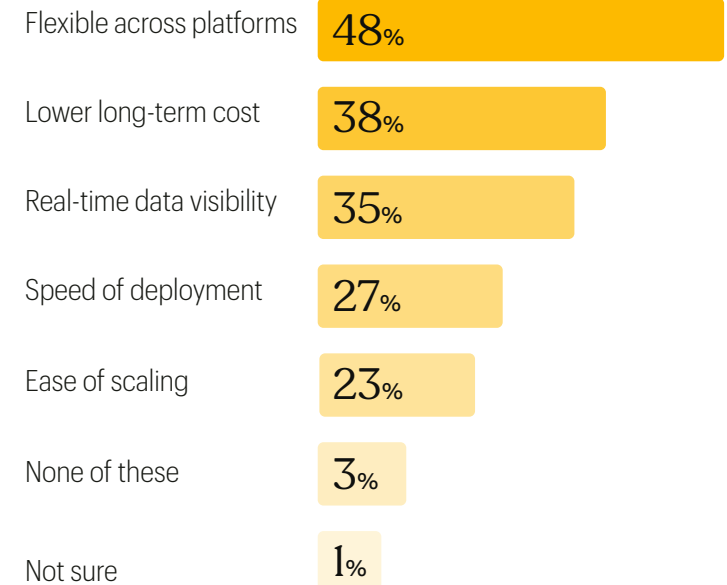
Nearly half (48%) of respondents ranked **flexibility** as their leading driver when choosing an integration approach, ahead of **long-term cost reduction** (38%).

Real-time visibility was the next most important factor for 35% of brands, reflecting the need for speed and adaptability in fast-moving consumer markets.

## Takeaway

When it comes to integration, flexibility across platforms is the top priority for retailers, outweighing even cost savings.

Which, if any, of the following are/would be most important to you when choosing one integration method over another?



# How well do current approaches perform at scale – especially during peak trading?

Periods like holiday season and Black Friday/Cyber Monday (BFCM) should be a golden opportunity. Yet for 42% of retail tech leaders they're a source of sleepless nights. Almost half of brands are still patching their way through sales spikes

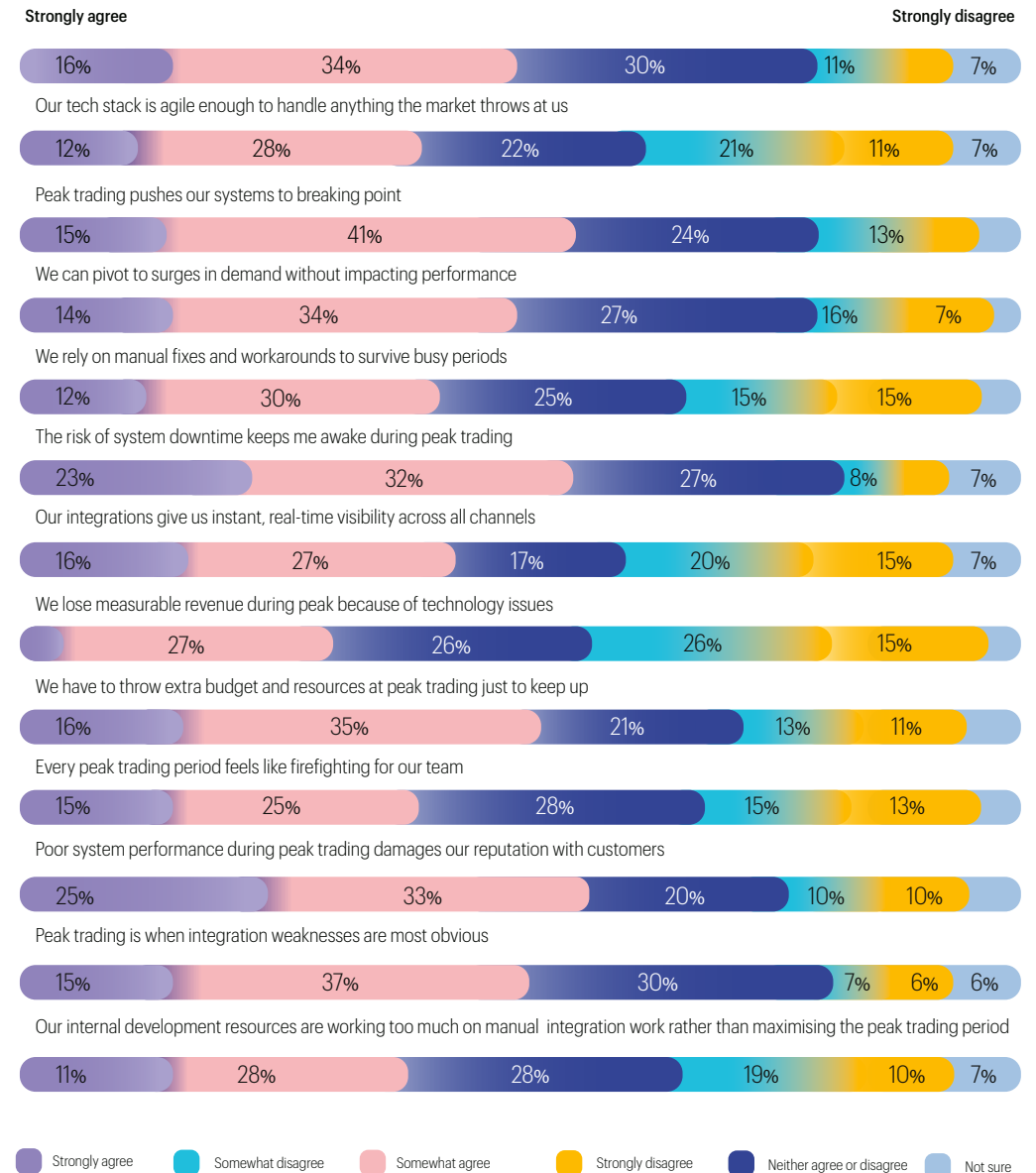
## Takeaway

As businesses grow, traditional integration methods (plug-ins, custom development, and point-to-point connections) are hitting a ceiling. Slow, resource-heavy, and rigid, these approaches can make scaling across channels and markets a constant challenge.

The main system challenges faced by tech teams include:

-  **58%** fear poor system performance could damage their reputation .
-  **40%** worry platforms will be pushed to breaking point.
-  **43%** believe a single surge could halt business altogether.
-  **48%** rely on temporary workarounds to survive peaks.
-  **39%** of teams spend more time firefighting integrations than optimising seasonal highs.
-  **31%** acknowledge direct revenue losses during busy trading periods due to poor integration.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your tech stack and how it performs during busy periods?



# The right integration layer changes everything

Integration Platform as a Service (iPaaS) is gaining ground as a solution of choice for forward thinking retailers and as a more flexible cost efficient alternative for smart CTOs moving away from internal custom builds.

Failure to consider it within retail modernisation, upgrade or enhancement strategies, could mean your operations get left behind and a vital competitive edge is overlooked.

**13%** of retailers in our survey have already made the switch to iPaaS

They are using solutions like Patchworks' MACH Alliance Certified, enterprise-grade iPaaS platform. For these early adopters, the benefits are tangible: faster integrations, leaner resource use, and measurable cost savings.

## Takeaway

Switching to an iPaaS solution offering pre-built low/code reusable and pre-built connectors can solve many of the challenges facing modern retailers. Able to deliver fully connected, and reliable integration at scale, it can help smash operational silos and save businesses time and money.

## Leaders share their iPaaS experience

### Scaling seamlessly through spikes

*"iPaaS has enabled us to cope with sudden spikes and to accommodate growth in volume that we otherwise wouldn't have been able to handle. It's added structure, made the team more efficient and improved customer experience. Our biggest change has been migrating to Patchworks' Core - which will be complete before BFCM '25. It's driven efficiency, enabling our business to do more with less."*

### From "black box" to total control

*"As we removed silo systems and enhanced integration, orchestration of processes has helped reduce friction and errors. We now have more control over BAU, less maintenance costs, ease of continuous integrations. Our previous integration layer was like a 'black box' to us-everything had to be handled by the vendor with no visibility. With iPaaS, its dashboard and direct access to a team, time to market on change requests and cost has greatly improved."*

### Building reliable, future-ready operations

*"We are seeing more reliability in the fulfilment integration. This means ops and CS teams can work with complete information, and customers get swifter responses as a result. We're not 100% there yet but knowing our integrations are robust and capable ahead of scaling was always a foundational issue. iPaaS has saved us time and money and given us more control over our own destiny."*

# What next? Are retailers ready for Agentic Commerce?

AI is reshaping commerce at speed. The future isn't just connected, we're entering a new era of Agentic Commerce where integration and automation converge to create operations that adapt in real time, effectively "thinking for themselves."



## What Is Agentic Commerce?

Agentic Commerce is an evolution of online shopping where AI-powered agentic agents, rather than humans, perform the actions of discovering, comparing, and purchasing goods and services on behalf of the consumer. Proactive decision makers, these agents are a paradigm shift from current chat bots or AI assistants.

At its core, Agentic Commerce involves intelligent, self-regulating AI systems built on:

**Composable, agile operations modular** stacks that can flex as the business evolves.

**Strategic control:** automation handles the execution, while humans keep oversight.

Integration as a foundation **seamless data** flow across systems ensures speed and reliability at every stage.

It's a future-facing model, where retailers stop firefighting system issues and start running adaptive, orchestrated operations that scale with customer and market demands.

## The shift is already underway

We're not talking about a distant horizon. Signs of Agentic Commerce are here now. Autonomous AI agents are beginning to manage product discovery, price comparisons, purchasing, and even payments on behalf of consumers.

Platforms like **Mirakl** already report significant moves towards this transformation.

**Deloitte** projects that 25% of enterprises using GenAI will deploy autonomous AI agents in 2025, rising to 50% by 2027.

**Gartner** predicts that by 2029, agentic AI will autonomously resolve 80% of common customer service issues without human intervention, leading to a 30% reduction in operational costs.



## How future-ready are retailers?

Our survey shows retailers are already leaning into AI:

**40%** are actively using AI to improve or automate operations.

**21%** aren't using AI yet, but believe their stacks are ready.

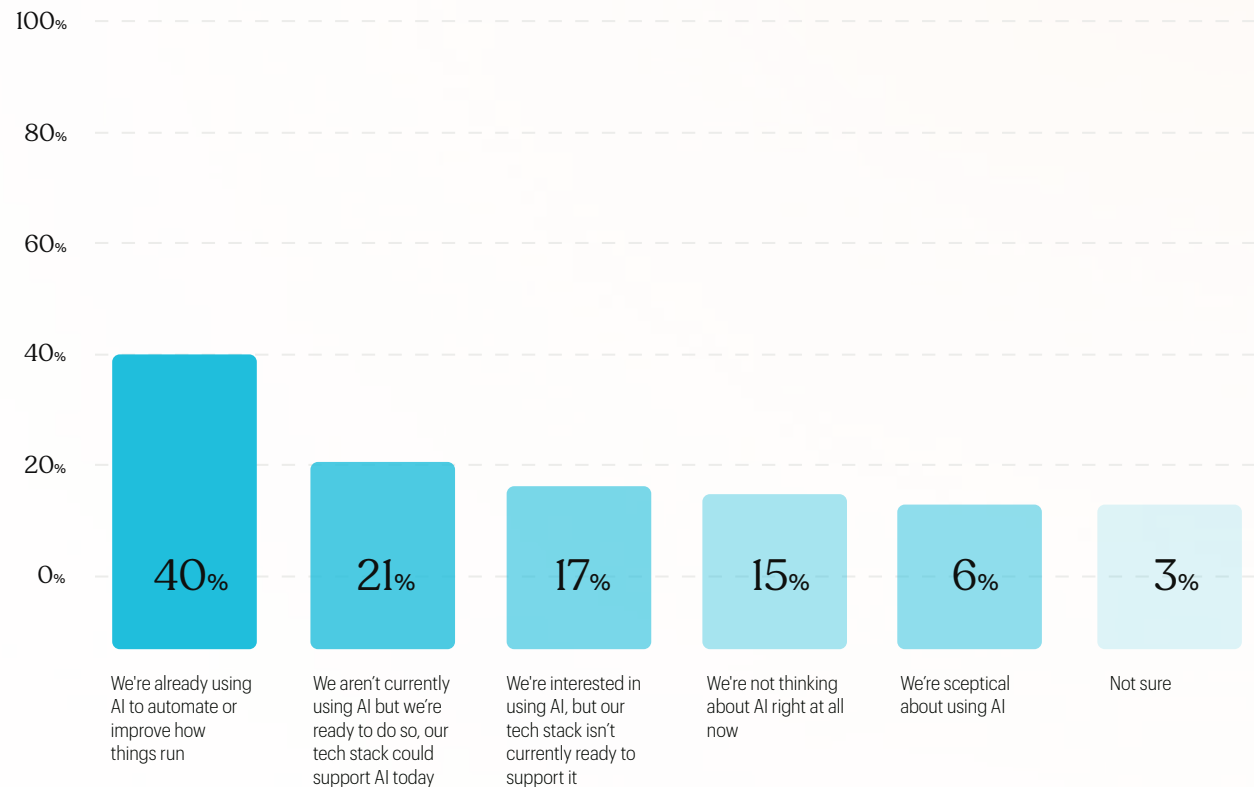
**17%** are interested but say their current stack wouldn't support it.

**15%** aren't thinking about AI—yet.

### Takeaway

Integration of front-end and customer-related systems are proving a bigger challenge than back-office functions. This could be due to the wider diversity of systems and greater number of partners involved as well as the need to accommodate continuous change.

Which of the following best describes your company's readiness to adopt AI in commerce operations?



# What does future-ready mean to retail tech leaders?

iPaaS is more than an alternative to custom builds and patches, it's an important step in retailers' evolution to Agentic Commerce

*"For a retail business this looks different from brand to brand. The opportunity lies in orchestration and architecture. AI will play a vital role, but equally important will be the humans behind it, supported by an ethical approach and soul."*

**Paula Abasolo, Mint Velvet**

*"Tech stacks must be scalable, and app based as you don't know what functionality you'll need in five years. That's why working with partners who keep pace with reducing complexity and cost is crucial. We already use AI extensively in our team, freeing up time and resource for where we can add the most value. AI's impact is now being felt in how we all interact with sites and content, and as a team we need to keep pace with this important development too."*

**David Webster, Bollin Group**

## A clear call to action

Agentic Commerce is more than a vision, it will soon be a competitive reality. In increasingly real-time AI-driven retail environments, short-term integration fixes simply won't deliver the resilience and speed retail businesses need.

Tech leaders have a pivotal role, shaping truly connected systems that are not only efficient today, but capable of supporting the autonomous, adaptive commerce of tomorrow.

**Fragmented Legacy Systems**



**Connected Commerce**



**iPaaS-Enabled Integration**



**Agentic Commerce (Future-Ready)**

Disconnected tools, manual processes, frequent errors Costly inefficiency + poor customer experience

Systems linked, partial automation + Gains in efficiency customer satisfaction Scaling is still resource-heavy

Flexible, reusable, orchestrated integrations Faster time to market, lower costs, fewer errors Teams focus on growth instead of firefighting

AI-powered, adaptive, self-optimising insights + automated operations. Competitive advantage through real-time, intelligent commerce.

# Conclusion: Integration as the catalyst for scalable, future-ready commerce

This report makes one thing clear: integration is no longer a back-office IT challenge, it is the foundation of competitive retail.

Brands that invest in seamless connectivity don't just operate more efficiently. They gain the speed, flexibility, and intelligence required to thrive in a landscape defined by constant change and rising customer expectations.

## The stakes are high

Our survey shows millions are lost each year to poor integration, peak-season under performance, and manual inefficiencies. In contrast, retailers with connected, scalable architectures are already enjoying lower costs, greater agility, and stronger customer experiences. With AI-driven autonomy on the rise, the gap between the connected and the disconnected will only widen.

## Tech leaders hold the key to transformation

The decisions made in 2025 - whether to workaround, replace, or modernise - will define a business's readiness for tomorrow's customer expectations and AI-powered commerce.

Connected commerce is no longer an operational issue. It is a strategic engine with the ability to power scalability, drive ROI, and create a bridge to the agentic future.

## The opportunity is now. Retailers cannot afford to wait

By tackling integration challenges today, leaders can build stacks that solve current pain points while unlocking future growth.

### It's time to:

- 🔧 Break down silos to streamline operations and reduce costly errors.
- 🔧 Move away from "build" only approaches to take advantage of more flexible, cost efficient, and scalable alternatives (e.g. iPaaS)
- 🔧 Adopt iPaaS to simplify complexity, accelerate workflows, and lay a future-ready foundation.
- 🔧 Prepare for Agentic Commerce by ensuring systems can support AI-driven orchestration and adaptive operations.

## Discover the smarter way to fully connect and scale your systems

The path is clear: retailers need resilient, flexible systems built for today's complexity and tomorrow's possibilities. A MACH-Alliance certified iPaaS solution, like Patchworks, offers that foundation, smashing silos, orchestrating data flows, and enabling seamless, responsive customer experiences.

Already, 13% of retailers have embraced iPaaS and are proving the benefits: faster, lighter, and more cost-effective integration. Their progress signals not just a shift in tools, but a transformation in how commerce will scale and succeed.

## Learn more about iPaaS and its role in future proofing commerce

Contact Patchworks for a consultation or demo

Visit our website:

[www.wearepatchworks.com](http://www.wearepatchworks.com)



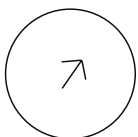
# About Patchworks

Patchworks is the leading integration platform built for retailers and partners. It connects your systems so they work seamlessly together — whether that's your online store, warehouse, ERP, CRM, POS or marketplaces. By automating data flows, Patchworks helps retailers stay accurate, efficient and ready to grow.

Used by high-growth brands and leading global enterprise retailers, Patchworks enables quick launches, smooth operations and better customer experiences. Its low-code/no-code makes it flexible and adaptable, to meet complex needs, with pre-built customisable connectors, and an auto-scaling infrastructure for the busiest periods in retail.

With real-time error alerts, dashboards and full visibility across systems, you stay in control. Patchworks is ISO 27001 and SOC2 certified and built to scale with you.

Headquartered in the UK, Patchworks powers some of the fastest-growing names in global retail.



## Survey methodology:

The findings presented in this report are based on an independent study conducted by OnePoll on behalf of Patchworks. The online survey took place during August 2025 and captured responses from 200 UK Retail managers who make decisions relating to technology. Respondents represented a diverse mix of business sizes and sectors, including grocery and food, fashion, beauty, home, consumer electronics, and multi-category retail.

## References:

Unless indicated all statistics are from the Patchworks 2025 UK retail leaders survey conducted by OnePoll\*

