



Reimagining Telecom Retail:

**How Interconnected  
Commerce Drives  
Operational Performance  
and Elevates the  
Customer Experience**



## INTRODUCTION

# Innovation, Decades in the Making

The telecom industry has evolved significantly over the past 20 years, but the telecom retail experience has not.

In the early days of Y2K, telecom was ripe with opportunity: there was an explosion in store openings and carriers, authorized retailers, and device manufacturers could easily acquire new subscribers. But the ecosystem has grown more crowded and complex. E-commerce has opened the door to a whole new category of competitors, including carriers who are selling directly to customers. Consumers are becoming increasingly sophisticated, which means they demand seamless and elevated omnichannel services.

More than two-thirds (**68.11%**) of telecom retailers agree that the marketplace has grown more competitive, especially over the last three years, according to [iQmetrix research](#). But overall, all players have struggled to develop business strategies and customer experiences that allow them to differentiate, grow, and drive brand loyalty.

“The theme ultimately is, if you don’t embrace shifting expectations in the customer experience, you’re going to get pushed out — either by the carrier or your consumer,” said Trish Sale, Vice President of Product at [iQmetrix](#). “Subscribers have so much choice and the bundles have gotten so good among these carriers that the competition is intense. Companies have to focus on their operations — it must be picture perfect — so if you’re not creating a great experience in your store, offering the right online experience, and engaging your staff, you’re not going to last.”

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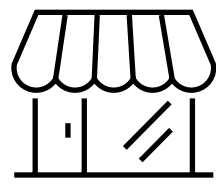
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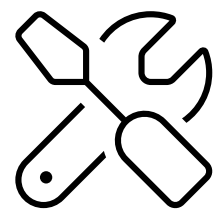
All players have their own distinct challenges preventing them from creating the exceptional experience customers now demand:



**Carriers** have invested in building out their omnichannel ecosystems to include sophisticated mobile apps and fulfillment services, such as buy online, pick up in-store. However, they have not effectively invested in the “human element” of the customer experience, which hinges on empowering associates with tools and data that help them effectively serve customers.



**Authorized and national retailers** have struggled to differentiate their brand experiences, largely because they are forced to apply the requirements of carriers and OEMs. Additionally, they typically don’t have the business size or scale to optimize operations and empower in-store associates to meet consumers’ heightened expectations.



Finally, while **OEMs** tend to have the clout and credibility that come with their trusted (and often beloved) devices, they are beholden to carriers in the later stages of the customer journey, especially the activation process, which is a known pain point in the telecom retail experience.

“Most telecom companies haven’t rethought their retail experiences in a long time,” noted Jason Ellis, Founder and Managing Partner at [3Park](#), an advisory firm that supports retailers in telecom and other categories. “Anytime you’re talking about subscriber activation, the number of units sold, and margin, those are all important to the economics of the business. But if you don’t understand the customer journey, and you’re not holding yourself accountable for making that investment, then the customer sees that. As the market matures, it becomes more difficult to have a longer vision for retail and how it should interact with other omnichannel touchpoints.”

Ellis made one point clear: **“There hasn’t been a player that has said, ‘let’s completely rethink the way the customer is experiencing our retail stores. Let’s do it differently.’”**



Now is the time for the telecom industry to do things differently. With **Interconnected Commerce**, it’s possible.

This E-book outlines how Interconnected Commerce can help telecom players reimagine the customer experience and embrace systems that create visibility, alignment, and superior operations across all channels. —————>

## 4 Realities Challenging the Evolution of Telecom Retail

Consumers' behaviors are evolving at a rapid pace, and they have increasingly high expectations of the retail experience. They want service interactions to be smooth and seamless. They want to make a purchase as quickly as possible through their preferred channels. And every step of the way, they want messaging, offers and recommendations to be tailored to their unique needs and behaviors.

Historically, carriers, retailers, and OEMs were able to get by with a status-quo experience, simply because consumers didn't expect much. "We only have to go through this experience once every three years right now, so many people look at it as something they can deal with," noted Jason Raymer, SVP of Revenue for iQmetrix. "In their mind, it's similar to how they have to go to the dentist every six months."

However, with the competition growing more intense, even telecom carriers, retailers, and OEMs must adapt. After all, if consumers *don't* have a great experience, they will eagerly look for alternative options:

# 86%

**of respondents to one survey said they would leave a brand they trusted if they did not have a positive experience.**

-[Emplifi](#)



Telecom retail experts indicate that all industry players are struggling to respond to this reality due to:

## #1

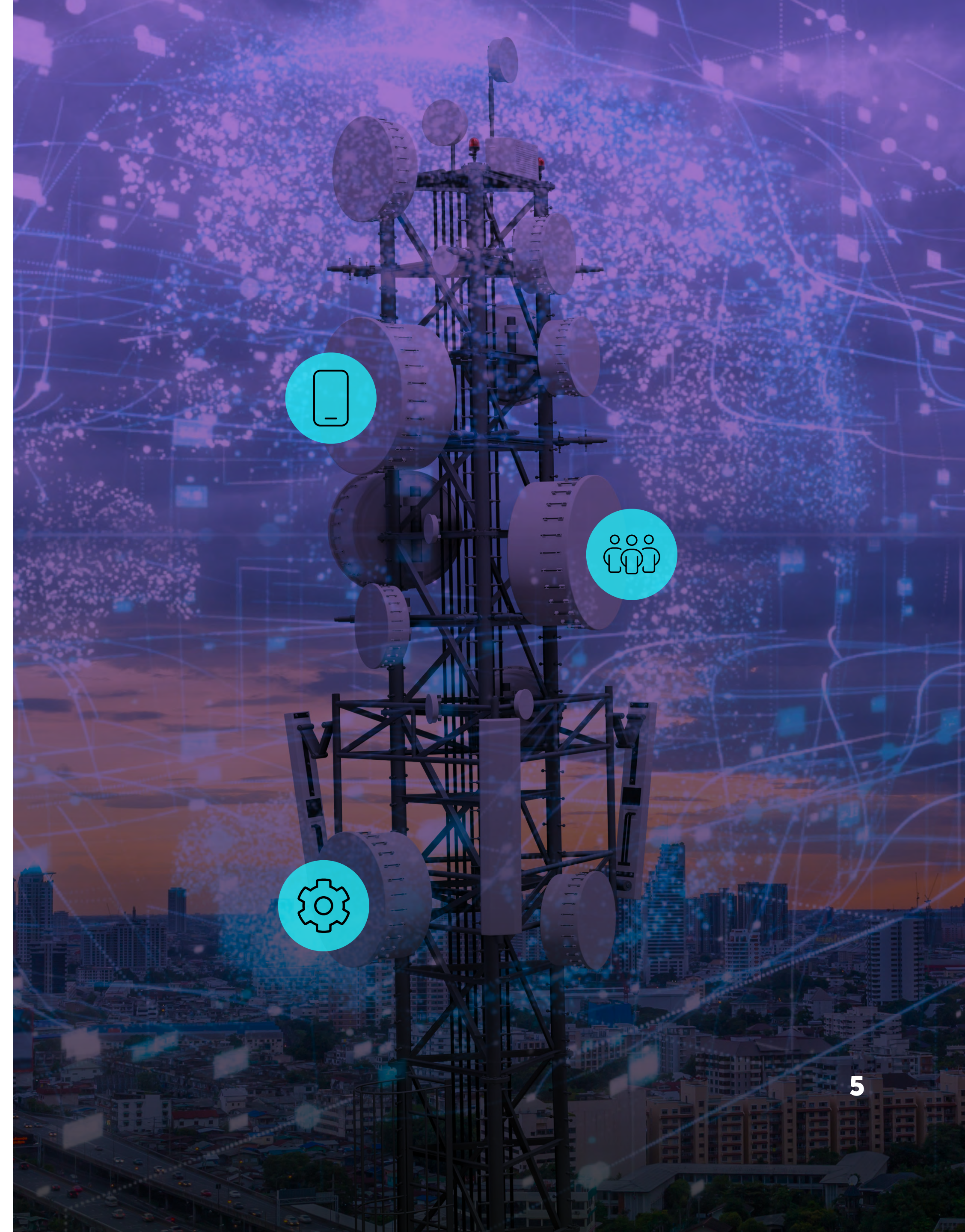
### Complex legacy ecosystems

Telecom's complexity is largely because carriers, authorized retailers, national retailers, and OEMs all manage their own disparate systems and operations. In many cases, these companies also operate on [legacy systems](#) that have been cobbled together over several decades and inherited through mergers and acquisitions. Held back by a spaghetti-bowl tech stack, companies cannot create an integrated view of inventory, customer data, and operational insights — from carrier to OEM. Most importantly, they cannot create the seamless experience customers now expect.

## #2

### Lack of internal alignment and organizational culture

Beyond the core technological systems and capabilities, many telecom companies do not have the organizational culture that inspires creative agility and innovation. Ellis noted that while there may be a desire to satisfy new customer needs, "determining who sets the vision and the path forward is difficult," he said. "These companies are sometimes so big that they can't move fast enough and they have difficulty getting aligned internally, so they ultimately end up taking the path of least resistance, which is to keep doing what they have always been doing."





### #3

## High employee turnover

A staggering **74%** of consumers say customer service is the top factor that affects their loyalty to a business, according to [Forbes Advisor](#). As a result, investing in this “human element” of telecom is a significant opportunity, according to Jeff Moore, Principal of [Wave7 Research](#), which specializes in assessing telecom retail experiences and reporting findings to the industry.

“During the pandemic, there were some discussions around why we needed stores,” Moore acknowledged. “We could do a lot of stuff online and pick devices up at the curbside. While I agree that digital transformation *is* happening, it is *not* replacing the store, especially for telecom retailers. It is still where most transactions continue to happen.”

However, finding, retaining, and training quality employees is a challenge. In fact, *Retail TouchPoints* found that this was the [top store operations](#) challenge for all retailers in 2023.

“Telecom carriers and authorized retailers in particular are struggling in this area because the labor market has been difficult for retail. Labor is a significant operating expense — as is training and the opportunity cost with turnover,” according to Ellis. “This all ultimately impacts consumer experience. Most retail stores that require a consultative sale have not improved over the last 5 to 10 years. In fact, I would argue it has largely gone in the other direction.”

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## #4

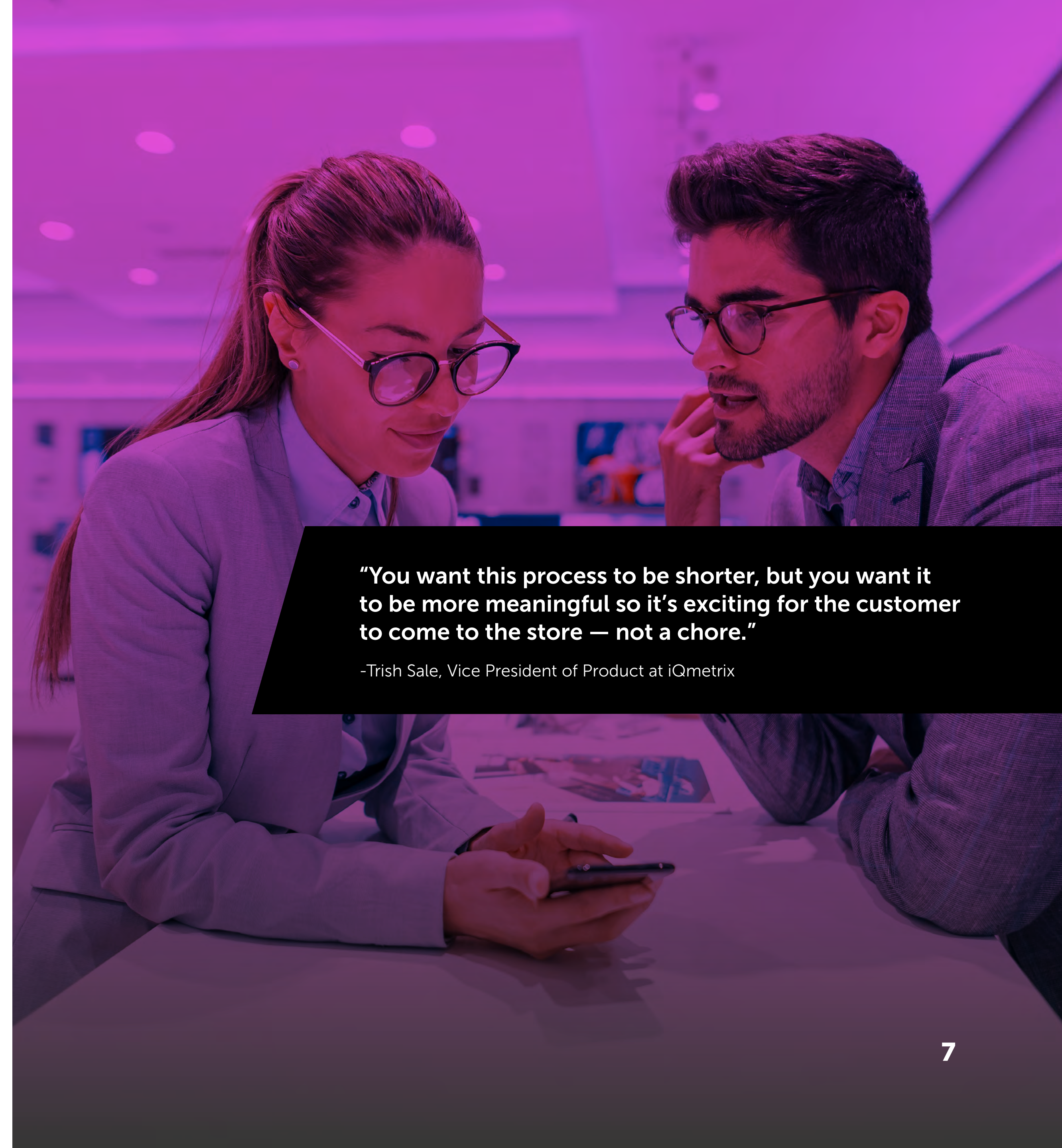
### A disjointed and unenjoyable customer experience

Up to **41%** of U.S. consumers say they prefer to shop online — and will only visit stores that provide great experiences, according to [EY research](#). This does not fare well for telecom retailers and carriers that haven't fully invested in associate- and customer-facing technologies designed to make the entire experience — from browsing to activation — easier and more enjoyable.

"Nobody wakes up in the morning and wants to go to a telecom store," Ellis mused. "For a device that we spend six to eight hours a day on, surprisingly, we're not enthusiastic about the experience we have while purchasing it."

One aspect of the experience that is distinctly unique to telecom is device activation. Because there is a lack of integration between carrier and retailer systems, this process can be cumbersome, taking up to an hour to complete.

"The act of an associate physically going behind a computer and activating a device should take less than 10 minutes," Sale said. "Retailers and carriers may want to spend 45 minutes really getting to know the customer, understanding how they use their devices and what their lifestyle is, so they can sell them a phone as well as other devices and services. But they can't serve customers correctly because they're spending 45 minutes behind a computer screen. You want this process to be shorter, but you want it to be more meaningful so it's exciting for the customer to come to the store — not a chore."



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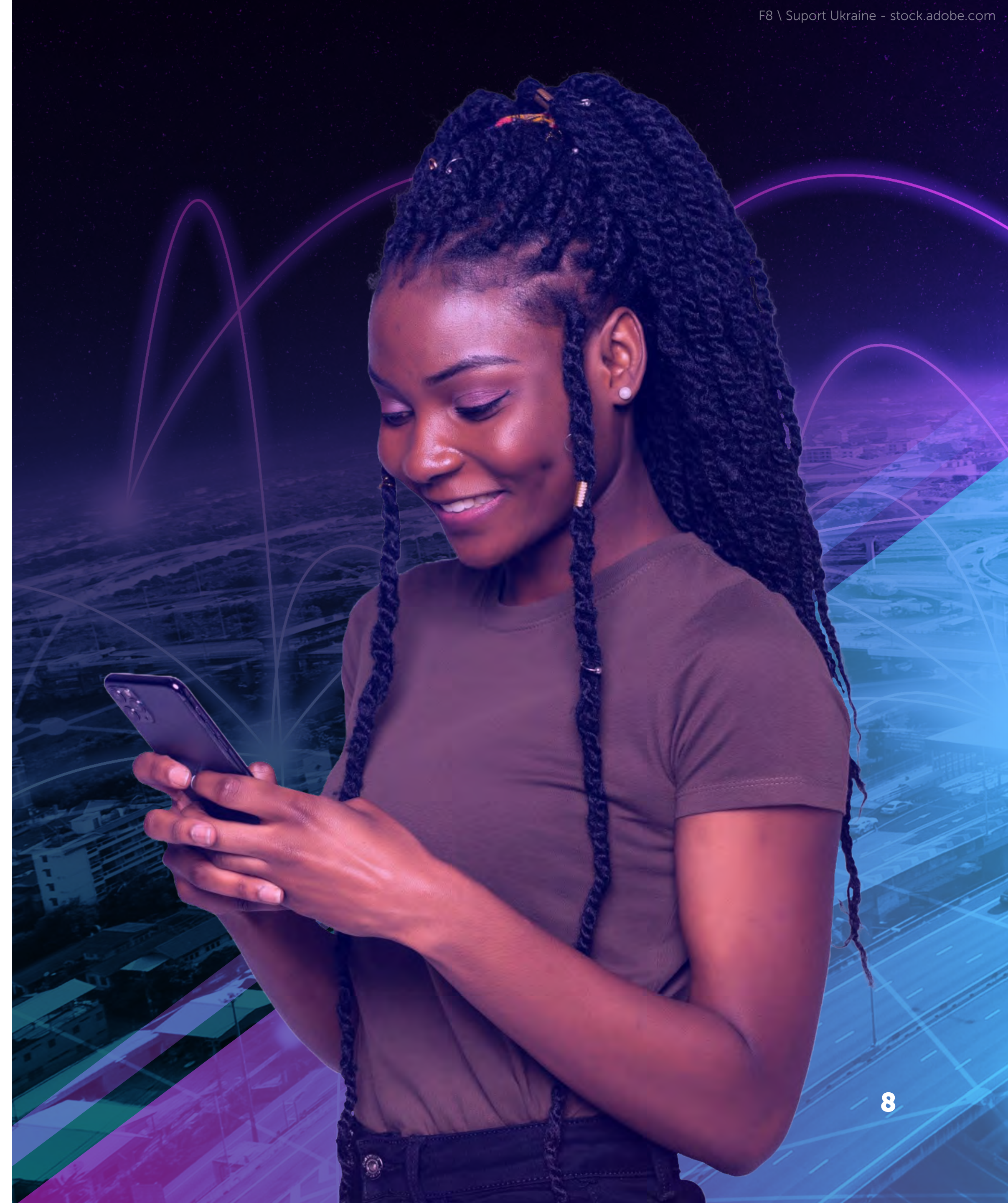
## Interconnected Commerce: Challenging the Telecom Retail Status Quo

A superior telecom experience relies on a highly interconnected ecosystem. But the very foundation of telecom, and telecom retail, is driven by a robust assortment of different solutions.

“It will never only be one player creating the experience for the customer,” Sale said. “There can be a point-of-sale system, but that system isn’t going to be the end-all, be-all for creating the activation, doing peripheral transactions, selling fringe products and managing the dropship experience. There’s always going to be an ecosystem of players that serve the industry, and that ecosystem will continue to grow.”

**Interconnected Commerce** offers a much better alternative; an antidote for the complexities that are innate to telecom retail operations. Through a complete set of software and technologies that are modular, flexible, and offer wireless-specific capabilities, Interconnected Commerce ensures that all constituent parts are linked.

The end result is a streamlined and integrated tech stack that makes every stage of the device lifecycle unified, efficient, and effortless for HQ employees, store associates, and customers alike.





## TRANSACTION

**Before Interconnected Commerce:** The typical device purchase experience is complex. Carrier and retailer systems aren't connected, which means retail associates are toggling between various tools to support trade-ins, warranties, and payments. This disconnect is also present for customers who may want to trade in or purchase a device online. Telecom retailers need to give both associates and consumers the power to go through the transaction process quickly and seamlessly.

**After Interconnected Commerce:** Interconnected Commerce reduces transaction times by automating back-end processes and improving the overall experience for reps and customers alike. Not only are these systems easy to use, but they also provide robust, data-driven capabilities (such as endless aisle) that eliminate business silos and create a more unified browsing and buying experience. Add-on services such as trade-ins, device warranties, accessory purchases, and much more, are all integrated into a single point of sale for a seamless customer journey. And for companies looking to create a seamless yet high-touch experience, mobile point-of-sale solutions remove the shackles from sales associates who are traditionally tied to fixed workstations. By enabling these side-by-side conversations from anywhere in a store, associates feel empowered to provide personalized and quality customer service.

## Bringing Interconnected Commerce to Life



## ACTIVATE

**Before Interconnected Commerce:** Device activation is the biggest headache in telecom retail experiences. The process can take up to an hour, with associates swiveling between their computers and various systems, and customers' patience wearing thin.

### After Interconnected Commerce:

With Interconnected Commerce plugged into a powerful activation portal such as Carrier Connect, telecom retailers can reduce activation times to 10 minutes, integrating the process seamlessly into their purchase experience. Customer data, inventory, and rate plans are updated in real time and always available, so associates can access the information they need to meet heightened consumer demands. Plus, with associates spending less time completing this process, they can spend more time meaningfully connecting with customers and recommending fringe retail products, such as chargers and cases. With more empowered and efficient associates come smoother operations and happier customers.

## FULFILL

**Before Interconnected Commerce:** Customers want to purchase and receive products whenever and however they want — whether that means visiting a store or having a device delivered to their doorstep. The heart of this stellar “last mile” experience is ensuring that the right device models (and the right number of those models) are in the right stores and warehouses. However, with a disparate view of inventory and overall purchase behaviors, merchandise planning and inventory allocation is a guessing game for retailers of all sizes.

**After Interconnected Commerce:** With inventory data synced across all channels, HQ can get a comprehensive view of consumer demand and how purchase patterns vary by location, region, and store. This will ensure that retailers allocate the right amount of product in the right stores and distribution centers. Plus, at the store level, associates can acquire a complete view of inventory levels by location, so they can help customers get the device they want, when they want it — even if it means ordering the item online and having it shipped directly to their doorstep.

## Bringing Interconnected Commerce to Life



## OPERATE

**Before Interconnected Commerce:** To truly deliver an exemplary customer experience, telecom retailers need access to data that helps them understand how people and products are performing. However, lack of integration between systems across the entire telecom ecosystem means lack of clarity into what’s working for the business, and what’s not.

**After Interconnected Commerce:** Interconnected Commerce empowers telecom retailers to improve operational efficiency and decision-making. It empowers employees in stores and at HQ to access the tools and insights they need to be successful, from workforce management and training tools to financial reporting and robust analytics, so they can drive tangible business results.

## UNIFY

**Before Interconnected Commerce:** Consumers don't care whether they're buying from an authorized retailer, a corporate-run carrier store, a device manufacturer's store via an e-commerce storefront, or anywhere else. They just want to get their new device as quickly as possible using their preferred retail channel — and often, a combination of retail channels. But behind the scenes, if all disparate systems powering these channels aren't integrated, the customer won't get the seamless hybrid shopping journey they want and expect. What's more, many carriers and retailers do not have complete control over the customer experience due to branding, product, and operational requirements. As a result, customers have clunky and inconsistent experiences as they browse, buy, activate, and sometimes return their devices.

**After Interconnected Commerce:** Carriers, retailers, and OEMs can connect disparate systems to create a frictionless Unified Commerce experience, so the customer can start and end their physical retail, online, or hybrid buying journey in any channel without missing a beat. With increased visibility into products, plans, and data, all players have the control and information they need to improve operations and elevated the customer experience.

## Bringing Interconnected Commerce to Life



## CONNECT

**Before Interconnected Commerce:** Carriers, retailers, and OEMs operate using disparate and legacy systems that cannot meet the omnichannel needs and behaviors of today's consumers. These systems require one-to-one integration, which leaves companies with cumbersome, spaghetti-bowl tech stacks that require a lot of time, effort, and capital to maintain.

**After Interconnected Commerce:** Telecom companies can leverage a single technology platform that integrates all systems taking a one-to-many and/or many-to-many approach. They can streamline their tech stack by ensuring communication and collaboration between system integrations, data integrations, and platform services to create a cohesive ecosystem of integrated vendors.

## CONCLUSION

# Embracing Retail's Revolution

Consumer choice is driving disruption in telecom. They are leading with their hearts and wallets, showing their loyalty to whichever telecom player provides the best experience.

"Consumers are declaring what brand they're most loyal to within telecom — sometimes that's the provider, whether that be T-Mobile, Verizon or AT&T — or it is the actual handset in their hand, such as Samsung or Apple," Raymer explained. By harnessing the power of Interconnected Commerce, carriers, retailers, and OEMs can win and keep this loyalty because they can "connect any channel of distribution all the way back to the network. That way, we can enable consumer choice and how they want to interact with that network."

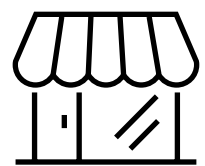
iQmetrix Interconnected Commerce provides a flexible ecosystem of solutions that supports one-to-one and many-to-many approaches, integrating all entities within an environment that serves HQ, stores, and customers equally. By trading a heavy stack of legacy systems for an integrated suite of end-to-end solutions that also have modular options, companies can reimagine the entire telecom retail experience:



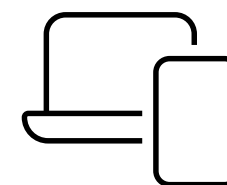
**Carriers** can create consistency and visibility across any commerce channel, including a network of branded and reseller stores.



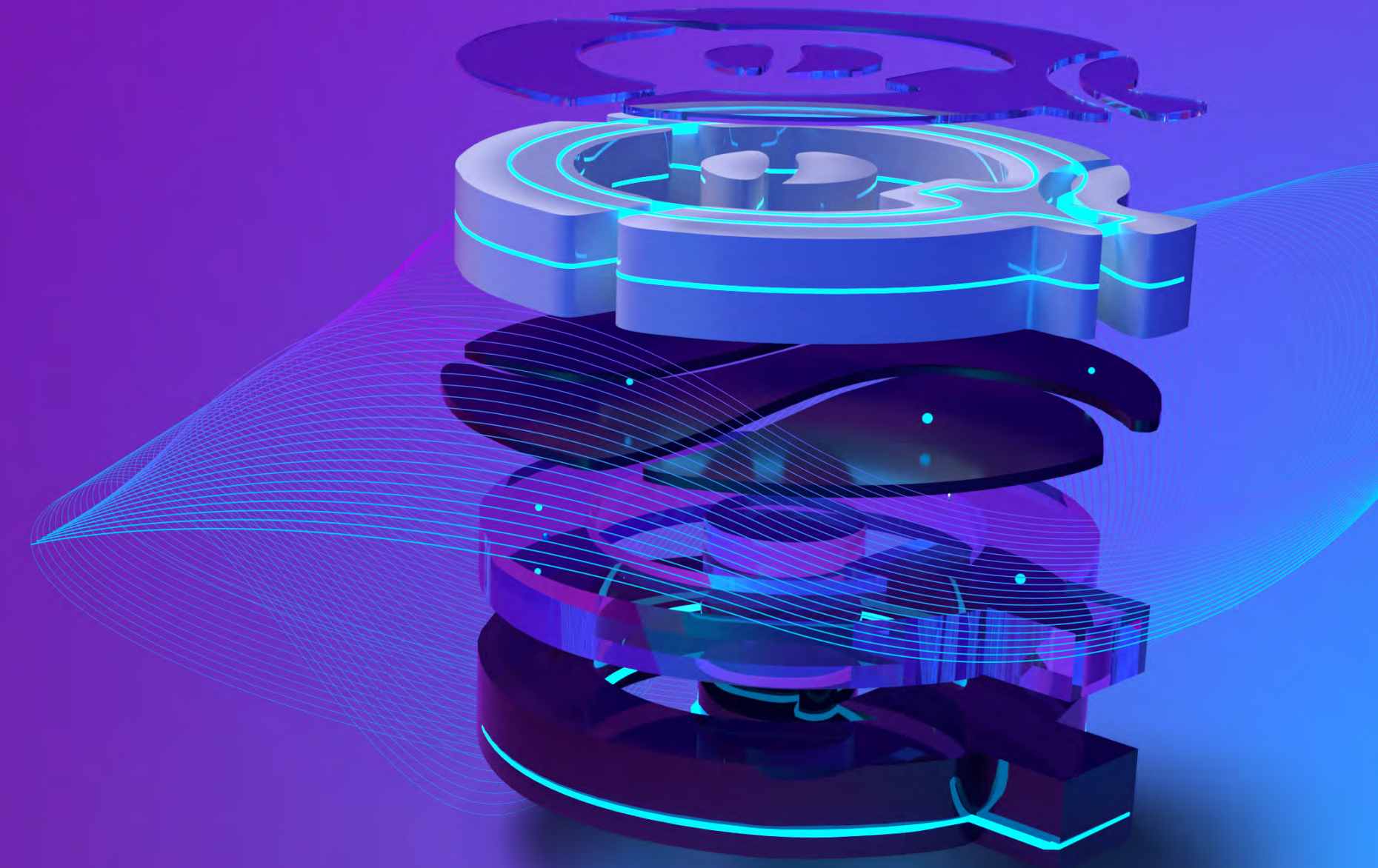
**National retailers** can integrate their wireless retail channel into other business systems and support a truly unified customer experience.



**Authorized retailers** have a single source of truth for all rate plan options, bundles, financing options, add-ons, warranties, accessory purchases, and more, so associates can better serve customers.



**OEMs** can support a robust and seamless brand experience, from purchase to activation online, in-store, and anywhere else, while ensuring customer and product data is securely collected, shared, and stored.



Integrate and collaborate with your telecom partners to create an experience your customers deserve.

To learn more about iQmetrix Interconnected Commerce solutions, visit [www.iqmetrix.com](http://www.iqmetrix.com)

