channelengine

10 pillars for marketplace growth in 2026

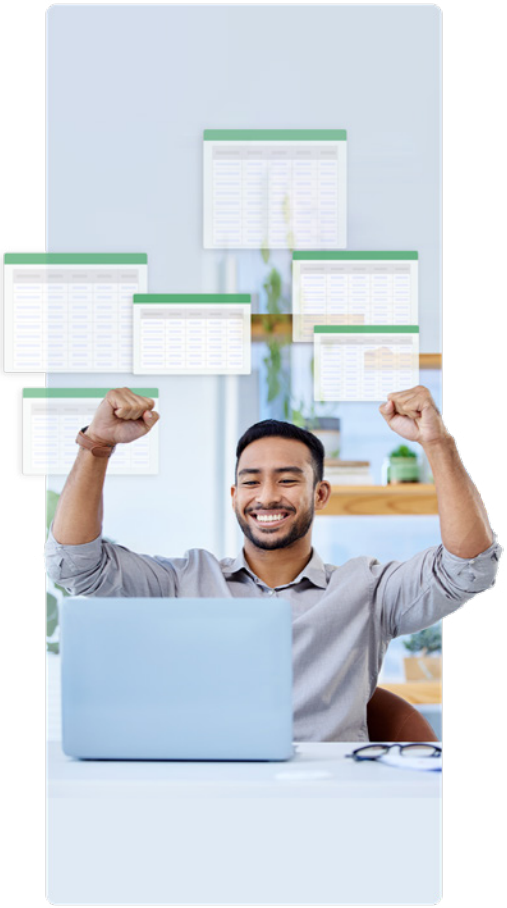
Your final blueprint to optimize and future-proof marketplace operations before 2026

Why you need this blueprint

The life of an ecommerce manager is never easy - but does it have to be that way? As 2026 approaches, marketplace operations are becoming more complex, with more data, channels, and expectations than ever before.

This blueprint serves as your final optimization checklist for the year, helping you streamline workflows, reduce errors, and build the automation and data foundations your business needs to scale.

Instead of working harder, there's a real opportunity to work smarter. By leveraging technology and integration, you can reclaim time, reduce stress, and prepare your team for the AI-powered marketplace era ahead.



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1. Eliminate manual work with automation 2.0

Manual processes are inefficient and error-prone, and limit scalability. In fact, our Marketplace Seller Trends Report 2025 revealed a striking reality: **sellers lose an average of 36% of their working week** to manual marketplace tasks.

Selling on marketplaces today means navigating fast-changing algorithms, unique channel rules, and the pressure to move fast. Most brands have automated the basics, but the ones pulling ahead are scaling automation across every touchpoint, from product listings to pricing, fulfillment, and returns.

Your next steps for smarter operations:

- Use ecommerce automation software for repetitive tasks (listing, inventory, order management)
- Integrate backend systems (ERP, CRM, WMS) for a single source of truth
- Standardize processes with SOPs for consistency
- Sync product content automatically to keep listings fresh and accurate.

RackSolutions, for instance, grew marketplace revenue by 60% after automating manual tasks, expanding from one to three marketplaces, cutting maintenance time in half, and doing it all without increasing team size.

> We needed a better way to manage operations and scale to new marketplaces without overburdening our team. ChannelEngine gave us the automation, structure, and support we needed.

Cody Benson
Senior eCommerce Coordinator, RackSolutions

2. Ensure product listings' accuracy through integration

When selling on multiple marketplaces, listing accuracy is everything. Each platform has unique requirements, and manual edits invite costly mistakes.

The challenge:

Product data needs to be shared and synchronized across marketplaces, retailers, and internal systems. But every platform speaks a different language. One calls it 'Men's Shirts,' another says 'Apparel > Tops.'

Checklist points:

- Centralize product listings in one integrated platform.
- Audit listings regularly for discrepancies.
- Train teams on content accuracy and compliance.
- Automate content generation and updates via AI-powered tools.

ChannelEngine gives you **full control to adapt, organize, and deliver product data** exactly where and how you need it. From smart import rules to flexible feed exports, we help you manage data more efficiently.

Our Smart Mapping feature, including AI category mapping, automatically tailors product details for each marketplace to boost visibility and appeal. Additionally, with Advanced Rules for Product Feeds, you can modify attribute values as your data enters ChannelEngine, set your business logic once, and ensure your product data flows in clean, structured, and tailored to your needs.

3. Use APIs to unify systems and reduce silos

Strong API connections are the backbone of scalable ecommerce. APIs bridge the gap between systems, keeping listings, pricing, and fulfillment synchronized in real time. Simplify your integration model with a single platform that connects your backend (ERP, PIM, WMS) to every marketplace. This reduces IT workload and ensures all systems speak the same language.

Ask yourself:

- Do we have a central integration hub connecting all data sources and marketplaces?
- Are our APIs scalable and high-performance, supporting future growth and IoT data streams?
- Is our integration platform handling marketplace, logistics, and device-level connections automatically?

Our **Custom Feed Builder** gives you the flexibility to shape data for different systems while maintaining consistency. You can **apply smart rules when importing data and build custom feeds** when exporting it, shaping your product information exactly the way you want, once and for all.

4. Plan early and have a clear strategy

Success during peak periods like Black Friday or seasonal campaigns starts long before the first sale. Early, data-led planning helps you forecast demand accurately, align inventory, and ensure every channel is ready to perform under pressure.

Your pre-peak planning checklist:

- Identify and prioritize high-impact SKUs early to secure stock and visibility.
- Analyze market trends and competitor activity to uncover growth opportunities.
- Leverage data-driven forecasting to predict demand and allocate resources efficiently.
- Optimize product listings, pricing, and ad spend ahead of key sales events.
- Design flexible fulfillment options with 3PLs or marketplace logistics to stay agile.
- Track performance and ROI continuously to scale profitably, not just quickly.

With ChannelEngine's Advanced Insights solution, you gain advanced multi-channel insights, performance tracking, and dynamic reporting tools to analyze markets and forecast with connected data.

> With ChannelEngine we're not just getting technical support, we're getting market intelligence. ChannelEngine tells us which marketplace to try, helps us with content strategy, and even connects us directly with the marketplace team.

Cyprien Courivaud
Head of Marketplaces,
Calicosy

5. Prevent overselling with real-time visibility

Overselling can quickly erode customer trust and marketplace performance. When stock levels aren't synchronized across channels, even a small delay in updates can lead to canceled orders, negative reviews, and lost sales opportunities. The key is maintaining real-time inventory visibility through automation and smart fulfillment orchestration.

Automated inventory management ensures that every sale, return, or restock is reflected instantly across all your channels. Combined with strong forecasting and flexible fulfillment, it keeps your operations resilient, especially during high-demand periods.

Prevention tactics:

- Are our inventory levels synced in real time across every marketplace and channel?
- Have we set reorder thresholds and buffer stock to prevent sudden sellouts?
- Do we monitor demand trends and forecast proactively using connected analytics?
- Can our system reroute orders automatically between warehouses or fulfillment partners to avoid interruptions?

With Multi-warehouse Management, you can efficiently route orders and manage inventory across multiple stock locations. For instance, our platform automatically switches between marketplace fulfillment centers and your own to maintain continuous stock availability, preventing any sales interruptions.

6. Know your margins

In a fast-moving marketplace environment, even small pricing missteps can eat into profits. Managing margins effectively means combining dynamic pricing, intelligent bundling, and proactive return prevention, all powered by accurate data.

Checklist points:

- Use dynamic pricing with minimum profit protection to stay competitive without undercutting margins.
- Track profitability by SKU, marketplace, and order to uncover hidden costs or low-margin products.
- Create virtual bundles to increase average order value (AOV) and move inventory more efficiently.
- Reduce returns by maintaining accurate listings, transparent policies, and responsive customer care.

Our Price Management Solution automates your pricing strategy to stay competitive while protecting margins. Set price boundaries, automatically calculate minimum prices that cover all costs and marketplace fees, and get detailed profitability reporting by product and order.

Boost your AOV further with our AI-driven product bundling, and combine complementary products as a single offer across marketplaces effortlessly.

7. Stay aligned with marketplace regulations – the easy way

Each marketplace has its own rules for listings, performance, and fulfillment, and even small lapses in compliance can result in penalties, delisting, or account suspension. Staying aligned requires both vigilance and the right automation to handle evolving marketplace requirements at scale.

How to stay compliant:

- Review seller policies and KPIs regularly to stay ahead of updates and rule changes.
- Automate compliance monitoring through your integration platform to flag issues before they impact performance.
- Build internal SOPs to maintain consistency and accountability across marketplaces.
- Track account health and performance metrics centrally to ensure you meet every marketplace's standards.

With ChannelEngine as your integration partner, compliance becomes proactive, not reactive. Built-in marketplace policy awareness, automated error detection, and Settlement Reconciliation tools give you a clear view of your account health and KPIs, helping you stay compliant, accurate, and audit-ready at all times.

> With ChannelEngine's support, we turned challenges into opportunities. Their platform enabled us to reach new marketplaces and achieve our Seller ambitions despite uncertain times.

Mart van der Zanden
E-commerce Manager, Brabantia

8. Plan for possible disruptions

From supply chain breakdowns to technical outages, disruptions happen. A contingency plan helps your team stay agile and responsive.

Checklist points:

- Use multiple warehouses and shipping methods
- Keep customer communication templates ready for delays
- Use hybrid selling (1P + 3P) for flexibility in demand management

Our shipping and returns management solution integrates with numerous marketplace fulfillment services, including Amazon MCF, FBA, WFS, LVB, FbAY, 1F, and FBC. Our platform automatically switches between fulfillment centers to prevent sales interruptions.

With Multi-warehouse Management, you can efficiently route orders across multiple stock locations with smart routing and dispatch rules to cut down on fulfillment costs and speed up delivery times.

9. Adopt a flexible selling model

Hybrid selling, combining 1P (first-party) and 3P (third-party) models, gives you the agility to stay competitive while retaining control over pricing, branding, and customer experience. The key is knowing when and how to switch between models based on data, demand, and operational capacity.

Ask yourself:

- Are we using performance and demand data to decide when to sell as 1P versus 3P?
- Do we maintain consistent product content and branding across both models?
- Are we strategically leveraging marketplace fulfillment services while keeping control over customer experience?
- Can our order processing system manage both 1P and 3P operations seamlessly from one place?

Our **automated order processing** utilizes a rule-based system to streamline your order fulfillment process. Manage orders, shipments, and returns from a single dashboard across both 1P and 3P models, staying updated with timely notifications and alerts.

Our platform also **integrates with marketplace fulfillment services**, allowing you to leverage these strategically while maintaining control.

10. Build decisions on clean, connected data

Data-driven decisions separate reactive sellers from proactive market leaders. When your data is unified and reliable, you can identify trends faster, optimize performance, and make confident decisions across every channel. Clean, connected data transforms insights into action, and ensures your growth is sustainable, not accidental.

Your data optimization checklist:

- Conduct regular performance analyses to understand what's working and what's not across marketplaces.
- Set clear KPIs and monitor them centrally to stay aligned with business goals.
- Use predictive analytics to forecast demand, pricing shifts, and inventory needs.
- Visualize data effectively to uncover insights quickly and support fast, informed decisions.

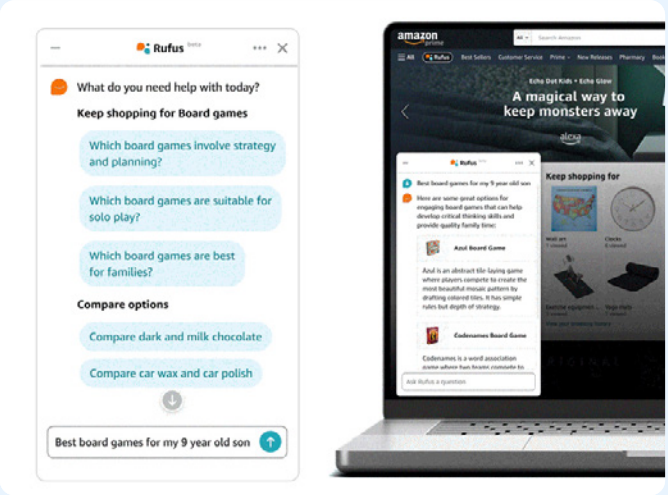
With ChannelEngine's Reporting and Analytics, you gain **advanced, multi-channel visibility** across sales, operations, and financials. Built-in settlement reconciliation ensures accuracy, while marketplace KPI tracking helps you maintain strong account health.

The rise of AI commerce

A new era of ecommerce is emerging: agentic commerce, where artificial intelligence doesn't just assist the shopping experience; it drives it. Generative tools, conversational shopping assistants, and algorithmic marketplaces are redefining how consumers discover and buy products.

1 From in-platform AI to Agentic commerce

Platforms like Amazon Rufus, Google Shopping Graph, and TikTok Shop have already laid the groundwork, using machine learning to personalize recommendations and optimize search discovery. But this was only the first step. The next evolution moves beyond platform-bound algorithms into AI-native environments, where buying begins and ends within the AI layer itself.



2 The rise of AI-native experiences

Consumers are now interacting directly with AI agents through chat, voice, and other conversational surfaces. With tools like ChatGPT's Instant Checkout (currently available in the US), shopping happens entirely within the AI interface - discovery, comparison, and transaction all completed without ever visiting a traditional storefront.

For brands, this marks a paradigm shift: you're no longer just optimizing for marketplaces or search engines; you're optimizing for AI systems that make purchase decisions on behalf of consumers.

The rise of AI commerce

3 Why data foundations matter more than ever

In agentic commerce, data quality becomes your competitive advantage. AI agents need to trust the information they're working with. They recommend products they can interpret, verify, and confidently present to shoppers. Vague descriptions, missing attributes, or outdated inventory won't make it past AI evaluation.

Clean data and real-time synchronization are prerequisites for discoverability and conversion in this new environment.

Why brands must act now

AI-first discovery: AI agents are no longer just assisting; they're searching, evaluating, selecting, and transacting. Your content must be legible and quotable by AI-powered platforms before it reaches human audiences.

Bypass potential: With transactions happening inside AI interfaces, you may never meet the end consumer directly. Your data and integrations represent your brand.

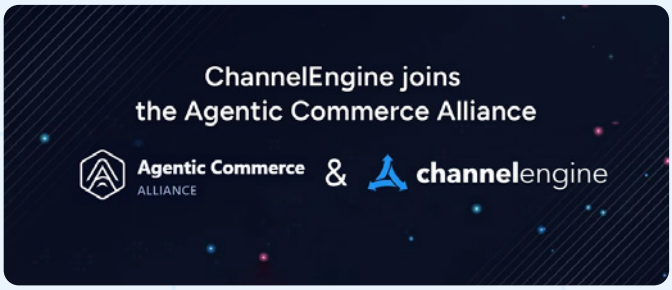
Data trust becomes conversion: Agents filter products by confidence in your data - reviews, specs, and stock accuracy become conversion levers.

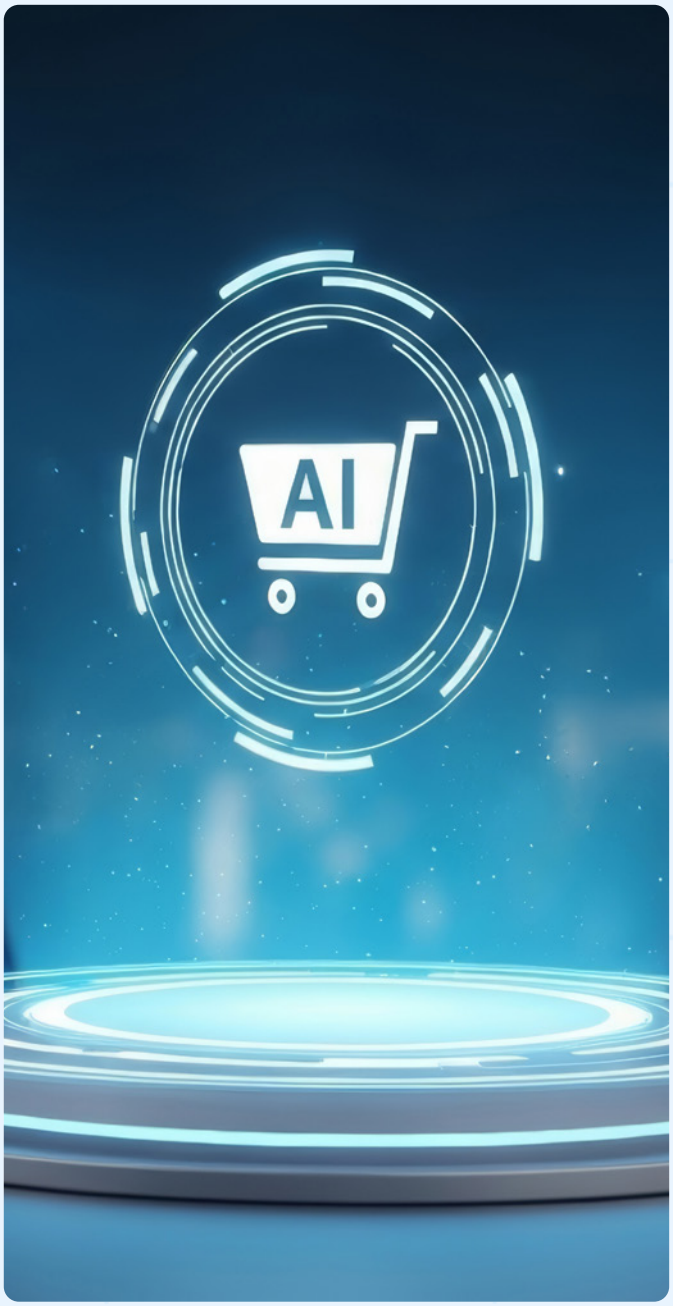
Checkout integration matters: Agents expect tokenized payments, instant order acknowledgment, and fulfillment visibility. If your stack cannot integrate, you'll drop out of the flow.

The rise of AI commerce

4 How to future-proof in 2026

As a founding member of the **Agentic Commerce Alliance**, ChannelEngine is helping shape the standards that will define this next era. The merchants who adapt early will own the advantage.





The shift requires:

- Product data structured for AI interpretation across conversational platforms
- Enriched content layers: reviews, detailed attributes, Q&A, policies, specifications
- Real-time inventory, pricing, and availability synchronization
- Checkout systems ready to integrate with conversational interfaces

Key questions to ask yourself:

- Can AI agents instantly interpret your catalog - or does your data require human context to make sense?
- Are your product identifiers, variants, and taxonomies structured for cross-platform recognition and autonomous comparison?
- Do your product feeds communicate credibility signals - verified specs, current reviews, transparent policies - that AI agents can trust and rank?
- Is your operational data ecosystem unified enough to deliver real-time accuracy across every touchpoint an AI agent interacts with?
- If an autonomous agent were your only customer, would it choose your products over a competitor's, and why?

If you can't answer yes to these questions, you risk becoming invisible when shoppers start buying through AI-driven discovery.

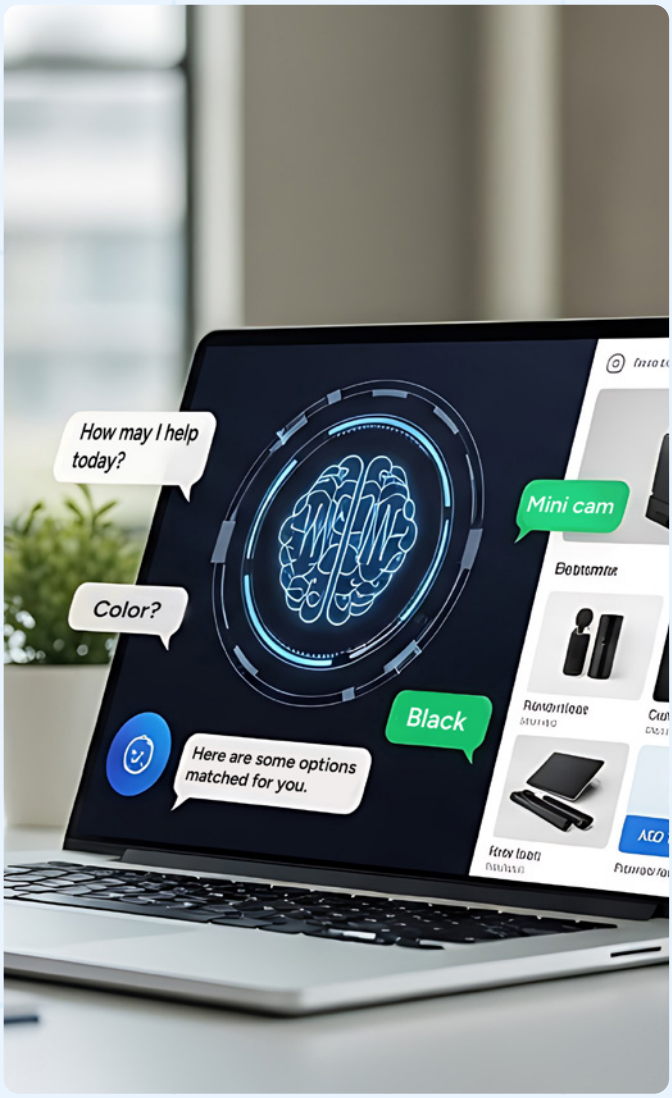
The rise of AI commerce

5 How this blueprint prepares you

By implementing the 10 optimization strategies in this guide, your organization moves beyond operational efficiency - ***it builds AI readiness***. Every checklist item strengthens the foundation required for agentic commerce, where clean, structured, and real-time data is no longer optional but essential.

This blueprint equips your business to:

- **Transition from automation to interpretation**: Your systems won't just sync data; they'll generate context LLMs (Large Language Models) can understand.
- **Transform data into trust signals**: Each product attribute, review, and policy becomes a verified marker that AI agents can evaluate and promote.
- **Operate in real time**: Unified APIs, connected inventory, and automated processes ensure instant responsiveness to both consumers and AI agents.
- **Integrate with AI-native environments**: With tokenized payments, fulfillment visibility, and conversational commerce readiness, your stack is prepared for agentic transactions.



The result is more **future alignment**. The stronger your automation, accuracy, and integration today, the more discoverable, trustworthy, and scalable your business will be in tomorrow's AI-led marketplaces.

Agentic commerce isn't the future; it is already here.

ChannelEngine helps brands bridge marketplaces, social commerce, and AI-native environments through **one unified platform.**

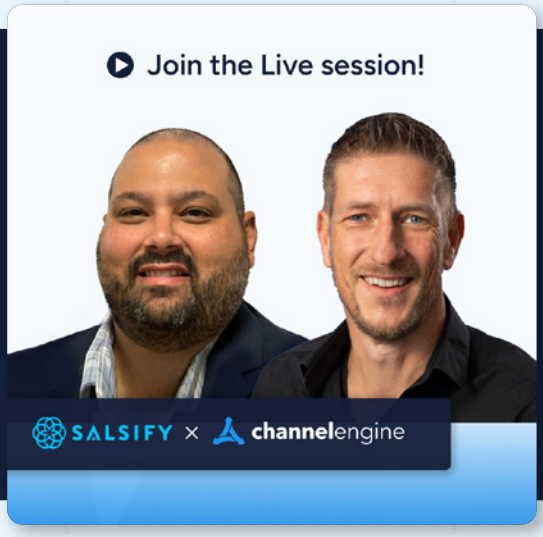
Explore selling on AI channels

Looking ahead

As 2026 begins, your marketplace performance will depend on how efficiently you operate and how ready you are for the AI-driven shift already underway.

This blueprint equips your team to eliminate manual work, strengthen data integrity, and build automation that extends beyond efficiency into intelligence. By creating systems that are accurate, connected, and interpretable by LLMs, you set the stage for sustained growth in AI-driven marketplaces.

With these foundations in place, you'll enter 2026 well-prepared and positioned to lead in the era of agentic commerce.



Marketplace strategies for 2026: Trends, Tactics & Takeaways

This live session brings together voices from ChannelEngine and Salsify, to reflect on what shaped 2025 and help you future-proof your 2026 marketplace strategy.

Save your spot now

Consult our marketplace experts