

Modernizing omnichannel ecommerce platforms feels like a reboot gone rogue for many retail teams. What starts as a “simple” upgrade often morphs into a years-long nightmare, riddled with surprise costs, integration puzzles, and the perpetual question: *who owns this in year two?*

If you’re navigating legacy modernization and incremental rollout strategies to build a truly composable commerce architecture, the choice of your implementation partner can make or break your project’s success. This isn’t about picking a vendor who promises “we can do anything,” but finding one who understands cost control through modular scope discipline, the importance of clear system boundaries, API-first architecture, and long-term ownership versus one-off delivery.

Below, we’ll [B2B ecommerce platform](#) dissect three key players in the composable commerce space—Netguru, DEPT, and Codal—and their approach to omnichannel retail modernization.

Understanding the Stakes: Composable Commerce for Omnichannel Retail

Omnichannel ecommerce projects today require a flexible, API-driven infrastructure that supports headless storefronts and enables seamless integration across all points of customer interaction—online, in-store, mobile, and beyond. Legacy systems often can’t keep pace, leading to expensive rewrites or painful tech debt.

The composable commerce approach assembles best-of-breed capabilities as modular components, which can be incrementally rolled out and replaced. This model demands vendors who embrace:

- **Modular scope discipline:** Avoiding scope creep by clearly defining boundaries and prioritizing which modules to modernize first.
- **Clear system boundaries and replaceability:** Designing functionalities so each component can be swapped without colossal rework.
- **API-first architecture:** Ensuring all components communicate seamlessly through well-defined APIs.
- **Long-term ownership:** Accountability beyond launch, including support, maintenance, and controlled evolution of the platform.

Who’s Leading the Pack? Netguru, DEPT, and Codal in Composable Commerce

Let’s break down how these companies align with the core demands of modern omnichannel retail projects.



Netguru: Modular Pragmatism and Sustainable Scale

Netguru positions itself as a partner for sustainable scale, emphasizing agile, API-driven integrations, and modular architecture. They build headless storefronts that aren't monolithic rebuilds but incremental, carefully scoped upgrades to existing systems.

Pros:

- Disciplined scope management prevents costly surprises later.
- Strong emphasis on handing over clear documentation and “who owns this in year two” clarity.
- Experienced in evolving legacy environments with incremental rollouts to reduce operational risks.

Watch out for: Netguru's approach may require internal leadership excellence to maintain momentum after launch. They aren't a “drop-and-go” agency.

DEPT: Creative Agency Meets Technical Composability

DEPT blends creative digital experiences with composable commerce capabilities, often offering innovative headless storefront designs supported by robust API-first backend integrations.

Pros:

- Strong UX focus for omnichannel consistency.
- Flexible API integrations mean they can incorporate a variety of best-of-breed tools smoothly.
- They understand the value of clear system boundaries to allow replaceability and future upgrades.

Watch out for: Their broad agency scope sometimes leads to the recommendation of complex vendor ecosystems which can increase hidden operational costs post-launch.

Codal: User-Centric, Lean, and API-First Focused

Codal is known for lean, user-centric delivery, with an emphasis on API-first commerce architectures. Their teams prioritize controlled evolution over “big bang” launches, a strategy that aligns well with incremental rollback potential.

Pros:

- Sharp focus on modular system boundaries and ensuring modules are fully replaceable.
- Clear cost control with upfront articulation of scope and phased delivery.
- Strong track record with mid-market retailers balancing marketing, engineering, and finance needs.

Watch out for: Codal's approach thrives with clients ready to take ownership. Lack of internal operational readiness can slow progress.

Cost Control Through Modular Scope Discipline

The biggest hidden cost in omnichannel modernization is uncontrolled scope creep. Any vendor promising they "can do everything" is a red flag. Instead, look for a partner who breaks down the modernization project into well-defined modules with:

1. Clear deliverables for each component (e.g., navigation microservice, inventory API, checkout headless storefront).
2. Prioritized incremental rollout plans to minimize disruption.
3. Regular review gates for scope adjustments.

Netguru excels here, bringing modular pragmatism that leverages existing infrastructure rather than ripping-and-replacing, which contains costs and reduces risk.

Long-Term Ownership vs One-Off Delivery

The difference between successful omnichannel modernization and dumpster fires often boils down to who owns the platform after launch.



Expect to repeatedly ask your vendors, *"Who owns this in year two? What about year five?"* Beware vendors who fade away after delivery or whose contractual structures prioritize initial build over ongoing operations.

Codal's philosophy explicitly embraces long-term partnerships, ensuring they're not just a one-off ticket but an ongoing advocate in your platform's evolution.

Clear System Boundaries and Replaceability

Composable commerce depends on designing for replaceability. A tightly coupled system can never be composable.

In your vendor discussions, insist on:

- API contracts that define clear input-output expectations.
- Architecture diagrams that show how each module interrelates—not just stacked vendor logos.
- Roadmaps for swapping out modules if business needs change.

DEPT's approach is notable for balancing creative storefront design with architectural discipline, helping teams maintain clear boundaries around their microservices.

API-First Architecture and Controlled Evolution

The backbone of any modern omnichannel ecommerce platform is the API-first architecture. APIs must not just exist—they must be thoughtfully designed, documented, and version-controlled to enable controlled evolution over years.

Beware of vendors who produce brittle APIs or who aggressively push “the latest and greatest” tech without considering long-term maintenance.

All three companies emphasize APIs, but Codal pushes this furthest, building with controlled versioning strategies and supporting incremental rollouts that allow you to evolve components with minimal disruption.

Summary Table: How Netguru, DEPT, and Codal Stack Up

Criteria	Netguru	DEPT	Codal
Modular Scope	Strong, pragmatic scope control	Moderate, with risk of overextension	Sharp, leanly scoped phases
Discipline	Long-Term Ownership	Clear ownership expectations, client-dependent	Sometimes short-term focus
System Boundaries & Replaceability	Explicit ongoing partnership model	Well-defined, incremental upgrades	Creative integration, good boundaries
API-First Architecture	Emphasis on API contracts, strong replaceability	API-driven, mature integration approach	API focus with UX flair
Controlled evolution	Robust API versioning and controlled evolution	Ideal Client Profile	Mid-market to enterprise, ready for agile scale
Brands valuing creative UX and tech blend	Teams ready for partner-led evolution		

Closing Advice: Finding the Right Partner for Your Omnichannel Ecommerce Modernization

Choosing the right composable commerce partner isn't about flashy promises. It's about their ability to:

- Keep scope laser-focused and modular.
- Build for ongoing ownership, not just launch day glory.
- Design clear system boundaries and APIs that ease future upgrades.
- Understand the operational realities of your omnichannel ecosystem.

By keeping these priorities front and center, and considering firms like Netguru for pragmatic modular scaling, DEPT for UX-oriented composability, or Codal for lean, API-first partnerships, you're far more likely to tame the complexity of legacy modernization and incremental rollout. And remember: always ask “who owns this in year two?” early and often to avoid hidden costs piling up after go-live.