



The UCP Readiness Brief: What Universal Commerce Protocol Means for Your Catalog and Your Stack

What UCP is, what is real today, and the unglamorous work that decides whether AI agents can find and sell your products.

FOR RETAIL AND ECOMMERCE LEADERS

SHOPIFY & SALESFORCE

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01 — THE SHORT VERSION

The Universal Commerce Protocol is a new open standard, co-developed by Google and Shopify, that lets AI shopping agents discover products, build carts, and complete purchases with any store that supports it.

It launched at NRF in January 2026 and is expanding through the year. Salesforce added native UCP support for Agentforce Commerce days later. The headlines call it commerce's next infrastructure shift. The reality is quieter and more useful: the retailers who benefit are the ones whose product data, pricing, and policies are clean, consistent, and machine-readable.

UCP is not a project you buy once. It is a level of readiness you reach and maintain.

02

What UCP actually is

An agent is an AI assistant that can shop and act on a person's behalf — checkout inside Google's AI Mode in Search or the Gemini app, rather than a shopper clicking through your site.

Before UCP, letting agents buy from you meant a separate custom integration for every AI surface. UCP replaces that with one shared language. You declare the capabilities your store supports, agents discover them automatically, and the two negotiate the rest. It is open source and vendor-neutral, and it is built to work alongside the other agent standards rather than replace them: A2A for agent-to-agent communication, AP2 for agent payments, and MCP for how agents pull in live context. You do not need to memorize those acronyms. You need to know UCP is designed to interoperate, not to lock you in.

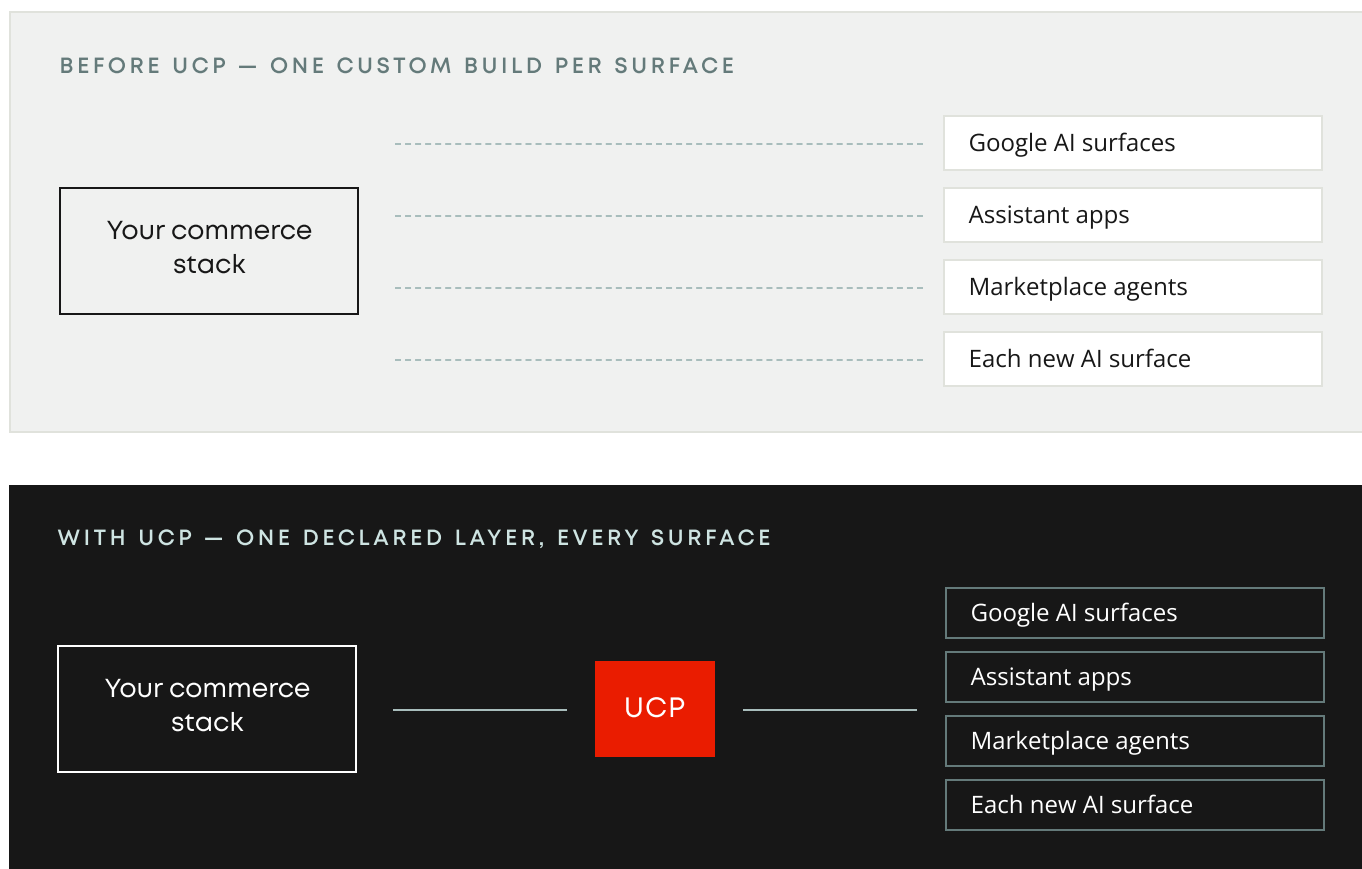


Figure 1. UCP collapses per-surface integration work into one capability declaration that any compliant agent can read.

UCP covers the full journey: discovery and catalog, so agents can read your real products, variants, inventory, and pricing; cart and checkout, so an agent can build an order and complete it; identity and loyalty, so a shopper's login and rewards carry through; and orders and post-purchase, for tracking and returns.

You stay the Merchant of Record on every UCP transaction.

You keep the customer relationship, the data, your fulfillment rules, and your brand. UCP changes where the sale happens, not who owns it.

03

Why it matters now

In classic ecommerce, you optimize to win a click, then convert the visitor on your site. In agentic commerce, the agent does the browsing and often hands you the order directly. That changes two things.

First, discoverability stops being about how your page looks and starts being about how readable your data is. An agent cannot be persuaded by a hero image. It reads structure.

Second, an excellent product at a store an agent cannot transact with gets skipped in favor of a comparable product at a store it can. Being absent from these surfaces is a silent loss. No bounce, no failed checkout, just an order that went somewhere else.

8x

Cyber Week 2025: AI-driven traffic converted at roughly eight times the rate of social media.

119%

Year-over-year growth in AI assistant traffic across the first half of 2025.

Search, click, buy

Ask, converse, buy

The brands whose products AI agents can find, understand, and transact will win the shelf space inside the assistants their customers already use.

04

The reality check: real vs. early

Honest counsel means naming both sides.

WHAT IS REAL

UCP shipped, it is open source, and it is backed by a serious coalition: Shopify, Google, Walmart, Target, Wayfair, Best Buy, The Home Depot, Visa, Mastercard, Stripe and many others.

It already powers checkout inside Google's AI surfaces for eligible US merchants. This is infrastructure, not a demo.

WHAT IS EARLY

Access is phased and US-first, with global rollout continuing through 2026. Not every agent, surface, or region is live, and the spec is still gaining capabilities.

UCP is also not the only standard. OpenAI and Stripe back the Agentic Commerce Protocol, focused on checkout inside ChatGPT. The two are designed to be compatible at the merchant infrastructure layer.

There is a useful lesson from earlier this year. When one high-profile agentic checkout product stumbled, the protocol layer underneath it kept getting built and adopted. The flashy consumer feature moved faster than the market was ready for. The plumbing did not stop. If your AI plan was to wait for one winning checkout button, that is the wrong thing to wait for.

You do not need to rush a risky integration to keep up. You do need to stop treating your product data as marketing and start treating it as infrastructure that any of these standards can use.

05 / 06

Where you stand depends on your platform

If you are on Shopify

HEAD START, CONDITIONAL ON DATA

Shopify co-built UCP with Google. For eligible US merchants, agentic storefront capabilities are becoming available and managed from the Shopify Admin you already use, so products can be surfaced and purchased inside Google's AI experiences without a separate build per channel.

The catch is data. Agents look for structured attributes: size, material, use case, shipping constraints, subscription terms. Thin or inconsistent catalog data is now a conversion problem, not just an SEO problem.

If you are on Salesforce

NATIVE SUPPORT, SEQUENCING RISK

Salesforce Commerce Cloud announced native UCP support for Agentforce Commerce in January 2026. Merchants can enable native checkout on Google's AI surfaces without large custom development, keeping control over merchandising, fulfillment, and post-purchase journeys.

Salesforce also supports ACP for ChatGPT and MCP for broader interoperability. That is the opportunity and the trap in one sentence: several channels to sequence, and the right order depends on your catalog, your customers, and where your competitors already are. Strategy question before engineering question.

07

What actually determines your readiness

Most of the work is not glamorous, and that is the point. Before an agent can sell your products well, five plain things have to be true.

1

Your catalog is clean and consistent

Titles, variants, inventory, and pricing match across your store, your feed, and your systems. A human shopper forgives a price mismatch. An agent does not — it fails, or it picks a competitor.

2

Your attributes are structured and complete

Size, material, use case, shipping constraints, and subscription terms are present and machine-readable, not implied in a product photo.

3

Your policies are explicit

Shipping, returns, and availability are stated in ways a system can read, not buried in a PDF.

4

Your platform can expose the right capabilities

On Shopify this is closer to native. On Salesforce and custom stacks it is an integration question — exactly the kind of complexity that decides who shows up first.

5

You can measure agentic visibility

How often are you shown, how often are you selected, how often does that convert. Traffic alone will not tell you, because the agent sends orders, not always visits.

08

What to do now: no-regrets moves

None of these require betting on a specific protocol or vendor.

01 Audit your product data for consistency across store, feed, and back-end systems. Fix the mismatches first.

02 Enrich your catalog with the structured attributes agents rely on.

03 Make your policies machine-readable. Structured shipping, returns, and availability.

04 Map your capability gaps. Know what your current platform can and cannot expose to an agent, and what closing the gap would take.

05 Decide your posture and sequence. Early access now, fast-follow, or watchful wait. Any of these is defensible. Drifting without a decision is not.

06 Instrument for agentic visibility. So you can measure exposure and selection, not just clicks.

09

How Red Van helps, and where to start

The hype around agentic commerce is loud. Our advice is calm. UCP is real and worth preparing for, but the retailers who win will not be the ones who spent the most on AI. They will be the ones whose data, catalog, and integrations were ready when the agents came looking.

That readiness work is what we do. We have built 400+ commerce sites across Shopify and Salesforce, and we help brands get agent-ready across four areas.

Agentic readiness assessments

We evaluate your catalog, platform configuration, and integration architecture against UCP requirements.

Product data enrichment

We structure your catalog so agents can find, understand, and recommend your products.

UCP & agentic storefront configuration

We connect your store to AI channels on both Shopify and Salesforce.

Platform strategy

We tell you honestly whether your current platform positions you well for where commerce is going.

We will give you a straight read on where you stand and what is actually worth doing, including the parts that are not worth doing yet.

WHERE TO START

Want to know where your brand stands?

Book an agentic readiness assessment. We will look at your catalog, your platform, and your integrations, and tell you what is worth doing next.

Book an agentic readiness working session

[Prefer to read first? See our agentic commerce reality check for retailers.](#)

READ NEXT

Universal Commerce Protocol Overview

Our AI approach

Shopify services / Salesforce services

Real Client Case Studies

Contact us

SOURCES

Google Developers Blog and Google blog on the UCP launch (January 11, 2026);

Shopify (shopify.com/ucp, shopify.engineering/UCP); ucp.dev and github.com/universal-commerce-protocol