

J&J

Whitepaper

CROSSING THE POND

The ScaleUp Events

Introduction

This whitepaper is adapted from J&J Global Fulfilment's 2026 event, The Scale Up: Crossing the Pond. We created the event because we fully understand that localising an eCom business can be daunting, and that it's so much more than fulfilment.

To address this problem, we brought a set of experts into one room to deliver talks that guided our guests through the process. Over the course of an afternoon, our expert line-up laid out the blueprint for what eCom brands need to validate, set up, and succeed in the US market.

In this whitepaper, you'll find:



Why the US, and Why Now?
Leo Eckley, J&J Global Fulfilment



Validating the Opportunity in the US
Emre Cetin, Metheus



Operational, Legal & Tax Foundations
Imran Gulamhuseinwala OBE, Tax Desk



From Forecast to Fulfilment
Simon Dixon, Hatmill



Customer Acquisition & Experience
Martijn Wiktor-Wagemans, The Agency



Shopper Visibility on the Chat LLMs
Emma Jones, Amp'd

Each article in this whitepaper has been adapted by J&J Global Fulfilment from talks delivered at the Crossing the Pond event.



The Scale Up Event at The Dome, Manchester

Why the US, and Why Now?



Leo Eckley,
Head of Strategic Accounts

For many UK brands, the US is most often the next step. We're culturally quite similar (on the surface, at least); we speak the same language, and we value a lot of the same things.

Ultimately though, the US remains one of the largest eCommerce markets in the world, with a customer base and average order value that outclass the UK market quite significantly. For successful UK brands, domestic growth can become harder to find. With an ambition to keep scaling, looking abroad is natural, and the US is often where that search leads first.

Localising today is more important than ever

It's been impossible to ignore in recent years that cross-border eCommerce is getting more expensive across the board. The removal of the De Minimis threshold in the US was the starting point in many ways, and made it clear that paradigms can be reset practically overnight through political and economic motivations outside of our control.

More broadly, changes to EU tariffs, rising carrier costs, and increasing global instability have made cross-border shipping less predictable than it once was (and even in simpler times, many variables were at play).

Brands that localise early, when operational complexity and risk factors are lower, can get an edge. On the other hand, brands that wait until the 'perfect' time carry more exposure to the next regulatory or cost shock, which will ultimately make the transition more difficult.

Localising can benefit both you and your customers

The basic benefits of localising are well known and well trodden. At its core, localising means overseas customers get a shopping experience more in line with what they get at home. But as cross-border selling gets trickier and more expensive, much of what we once considered a 'nice-to-have' benefit is now essential.

Today, the key benefits of keeping your stock closer to your end-customer are:

1. Cheaper, faster delivery for your US customers
2. Consistency at checkout
3. Avoid per-order cross-border costs (tariffs and duties)
4. Resilience against sudden legislative changes
5. Gain more even footing with US competitors
6. Improved inventory efficiency and cash flow

But how do you get there? That's what this whitepaper helps you set out to achieve. Over the course of the next five chapters, we'll cover the key components UK brands need to consider to successfully localise into the US.

You'll learn how to determine whether the opportunity is real, before committing capital and energy. You'll have a better idea of the operational, legal, and tax foundations you'll need to get right before you think about sending stock across the pond. You'll understand why forecasts are always wrong, how to plan the inventory switch, and how to ask yourself (and your business) better questions. And finally, you'll learn how to succeed once you're over there; what it takes to win customer acquisition in a market that looks similar to the UK but really isn't, and how shopper behaviour is already shifting toward AI tools that most brands haven't started optimising for yet.

Client order volume after localising

Primary J&J client data demonstrating US order volume before vs after localising.

UK Alternative Fashion Brand

Joined US in 2023

+95% Growth since localising

YEAR 1 AVERAGE
7,700 orders/month

ALL TIME AVERAGE
15,000 orders/month

UK Cosmetics & Skincare Brand

Joined US in 2023

+138% Growth since localising

YEAR 1 AVERAGE
588 orders/month

ALL TIME AVERAGE
1,400 orders/month

UK Vintage Style Clothing Brand

Joined US in 2023

+125% Growth since localising

YEAR 1 AVERAGE
545 orders/month

ALL TIME AVERAGE
1,225 orders/month



Validating the Opportunity in the US



Emre Cetin,
Founder & Managing Partner, Metheus

Picture this. Two brands enter the US with the same product.

Brand “A”, after conquering the UK market, goes head-first into sending inventory, signing a fulfilment contract, and spending months arranging paperwork before it gets a single real read on demand.

Brand “B” spends four to eight weeks researching price acceptance and testing conversion before committing anything at scale. Both can fail, of course, but only one of them fails cheaply. This alone is the single biggest argument for validating the US opportunity before you commit substantial resources.

> Metheus is a market entry consultancy working across London, Miami, Istanbul, Shenzhen, and Hong Kong, and its session at The Scale Up set out a practical blueprint: how to tell if you’re ready, how to buy evidence instead of guessing, and how to design an entry that fails cheaply if it has to fail at all.

The “big 3” when validating the US

Readiness isn’t a single yes or no. While we’ll explore things deeper later on, there are three fundamental considerations when looking at launching in the US.

1. Product-market fit

Be honest when you ask yourself this question - is your UK demand evidence, or is it momentum? A repeat purchase rate that holds steady across several customer cohorts is a strong signal that your product will be in-demand across markets.

Growth made up entirely of first-time buyers, sustained by paid spend that stops the moment the budget does, is a weak signal, even if revenue numbers suggest massive demand on home soil.

2. Margin

US entry doesn’t just add cost; it compresses margin from both directions simultaneously. Landed cost, channel fees, and US-level customer acquisition all push up from the cost side, while marketplace fees and wholesale terms push down on revenue.

Under most circumstances, your UK margin should be big enough to fund US acquisition, rather than eat away at UK revenue. Entry into a new market can be slow-going at first, so ask yourself how many quarters you can be wrong before it stops being a decision and starts being a problem.

3. UK credibility does not travel

The big one that might be surprising or even uncomfortable to hear is that UK credibility alone does not travel. Press coverage, UK virality and those fantastic awards you’ve stacked up are unlikely to mean much to customers based in Ohio.

That shopper will likely be eyeing other signals, such as review volume, how recent those reviews are, and user-generated content, just to name a few.

Never underestimate how the British tendency toward understatement will affect your brand, too. A brand built on implicit claims and things left unsaid needs to reimagine itself for a market that expects benefits stated plainly and loudly.

The ladder approach for evidence gathering

You can work out much of what’s been outlined above through obtaining genuine evidence, rather than relying on guesswork. Even if you’re confident enough to expand from the outset, the next move isn’t to launch, but to rebuild your customer profile from scratch specifically for the US.

You might be selling the same product, but you have a different buyer, a different purchase trigger, and a different set of competitors. And, importantly, pricing has to be built up from the local market rather than converted at a spot rate from the UK RRP.

Metheus’s evidence ladder ranks three ways of testing, by both cost and confidence. When using the ladder approach, it’s important to have the discipline not to “skip a rung” because it feels more decisive. Take the time to climb the full ladder.

The bottom rung - desk signals (1 week)

US category search demand, organic traffic already arriving from the US, social listening, data mining and analysis on potential customers and competitors.

It’s mere days of work at a near-zero cost, and it tells you whether the category exists and where the gaps are. Crucially, this rung won’t give you much evidence as to whether people will pay for your product. This is where the next rung comes in.

The middle rung - paid social proxies (2-4 weeks)

A contained budget to produce US-targeted creative; ads, landing pages, and/or waitlists, before holding local stock. Your product is already tried, tested, and successful in the UK, so now you’re testing its value proposition in the US.

You’ll also gain a better understanding of cost-per-click and general creative resonance in the US - both being essential intel to use when you make the jump.

Top rung - limited pilot (6-12 weeks)

If the signals are strong, now is the time to run a limited DTC pilot. Don’t overdo it, and only risk what you’re willing to lose. Offer core SKUs and limit complexity by only offering out to a narrow geography. It’s here you can measure accurate purchase intent and price acceptance.

The four-dimension framework

Sitting alongside that ladder is a framework that you can use to score the information you've gathered while climbing the aforementioned ladder. Each of the following is scored 'High', 'Medium' or 'Low', and you'll use the results of the framework to design your entry into the US.

Demand & Growth

- Addressable demand
- Category structure
- Growth trajectory
- Whitespace

Brand Influence

- Existing awareness
- Audience signals
- Organic traction in-market

Business Feasibility

- Regulation
- Trade conditions
- Cost of entry
- Operational complexity

Market Gaps

- Who is there
- How entrenched they are
- Where the product gap sits

Scoring method

Market Potential

Is there enough demand, and is it moving toward you?

High	Large addressable segment at your price, growing via new entrants, untested whitespace
Medium	Meaningful demand, flat-to-modest growth, whitespace contested by legacy players
Low	Broad category, negligible addressable slice, oversaturation
Red Flags	• Total category value used as the business case. • Growth data that predates a major market shift. • Whitespace identified by absence of competitors rather than presence of demand.

Brand Engagement

High	Measurable branded search, engaged in-market audience, direct inbound, friction-defying buyers
Medium	Some audience presence, low engagement, occasional enquiries
Low	No branded demand and negligible audience; starting from complete awareness silence
The Cost Multiplier	A low score does not disqualify you. Treat it as a cost and time multiplier

Business Environment

What does it cost to operate in the US, and can you survive the gap before revenue?

High	Low category regulation, predictable trade terms, contained setup cost, straightforward operations
Medium	Manageable compliance, meaningful but budgeted setup cost, some operational rebuild
Low	Heavy regulation, volatile trade conditions, high fixed cost, operating model needs rebuilding

Competitive Dynamics

Who's already there, and how entrenched are they? Where is the gap you can credibly serve?

High	Fragmented field, no dominant player, complacent or aging competitors, serviceable gaps
Medium	Clear leaders with exploitable weaknesses; entry viable via a niche channel or sub-segment
Low	Consolidated, well-funded, aggressively defended, with no gap you can credibly claim



Designing the entry

Once you've climbed the ladder and scored yourself against the framework, you're not ready to launch. You're ready to pick a beachhead.

In this context, a beachhead usually means one region or a handful of micro regions. It means your core SKU range, rather than the full catalogue. One primary acquisition channel, with a secondary at most.

It's tempting to go national straight out of the gate, especially once the early signals look good, but a national D2C launch spreads your media spend so thin that any potential to succeed evaporates pretty quickly.

A beachhead does the opposite. It concentrates spend into something you can clearly attribute, with a defined win condition and a date attached, not just a "start small and see how it goes" type of situation.

Pricing your product for the US

A common mistake Metheus sees is brands converting their UK RRP at the spot rate and calling that their US price.

This couldn't be further from the truth. Your UK price was built for a UK cost base, and that cost base doesn't exist on the other side of the Atlantic.

Another consideration is duty and how it is baked into your pricing strategy. Duty isn't a single number you can bake in once and forget about. It's layered, and needs modelling as a range rather than a constant, given how often rates and thresholds have shifted recently.

On top of that sits US customer acquisition cost, which comes in higher than your UK D2C benchmarks from day one. You are unlikely to have an organic base or brand recognition to lean on while you're acquiring new customers, so budget accordingly.

Once you know your real cost base, you need to choose your positioning deliberately. Your pricing strategy will usually fall into one of the below categories:

- **Premium** absorbs duty and acquisition cost best, but only works if you've got a genuinely defensible reason to cost more.
- **Value** carries the thinnest margin, and the least room to absorb testing failures. Probably one to avoid - at least in the beginning.
- **Competitive** sits in the middle, and needs a sharper proposition, since product parity alone won't win against US-based D2C brands who already own the category.

Where brands trip

To wrap things up, let's identify the most common reasons for failure when entering the US market. Most are not judgement errors, but sequencing errors:

- **Launching nationally instead of regionally**
- **Making assumptions from UK data**
- **Underestimating landed cost**
- **Under-investing in localisation**
- **Underestimating the time it takes to set up tax and legal**



About Metheus

Metheus is a market entry consultancy working with UK eCcommerce brands expanding into the US, with offices spanning London, Miami, Istanbul, Shenzhen, and Hong Kong.

Rather than acting as a retained agency, it embeds with a brand's own team to produce market entry decisions defensible to a board, built around a four-dimension framework covering market potential, brand engagement, business environment, and competitive dynamics. Its work spans market validation and prioritisation, go-to-market strategy, and commercial and pricing modelling, including landed cost, unit economics, and price floors across channels.

www.metheus.co

Operational, Legal & Tax Foundations



Imran Gulamhuseinwala OBE,
CEO, Tax Desk

The opportunity: the US B2C market

The United States is one of the largest and most digitally mature consumer economies in the world. For international B2C brands it remains a defining growth opportunity and one of the most operationally demanding markets to enter well.

The prize is significant. American consumers spend heavily online, adopt new brands quickly and reward businesses that can deliver fast shipping, easy returns and a trusted local experience. For a brand that has proven demand in its home market, the US can multiply addressable revenue several times over.

Yet the same scale that makes the market attractive also makes it complex. Sustainable success rarely comes down to marketing or customer acquisition alone. It depends on getting the operational, legal and financial foundations right before volume arrives - because the cost of unwinding poor early decisions grows quickly as a business scales.

Many brands underestimate this. The result is avoidable cost, compliance exposure, operational friction or margin erosion that becomes difficult to reverse. The most successful entrants treat their infrastructure as a strategic advantage rather than an administrative afterthought.

This guide sets out the practical realities across three disciplines - Operations, Legal and Finance - with a checklist for leadership teams to prepare before starting their scale up.

50 states

Each with its own tax and legal rules

12,000+

Sales tax jurisdictions nationally

0%

Federal sales tax - obligations arise state by state

How the US is different

Unlike the UK's single, centralised system, the US operates across federal, state and local levels at the same time - creating fragmented and overlapping obligations that vary materially by jurisdiction.

No single national framework

There is no federal sales tax and no unified indirect tax regime comparable to VAT. Instead, corporate, employment, contract, IP, liability and tax rules are set largely at state level. What is exempt in one state may be fully taxable in another, and a structure that works in one location can create unexpected outcomes in another.

Prices shown before tax

US pricing is typically displayed net of sales tax, with tax added at checkout - the opposite of tax-inclusive VAT pricing. A customer in one state may see a very different final price from a customer in another, which has direct implications for pricing strategy, promotions and margin.

A more litigious environment

Consumer-facing businesses face broader product liability exposure and a more discovery-intensive litigation culture than in the UK. Insurance, contract terms and governing-law clauses need to reflect this from the outset.

The key differences at a glance:

Fragmented, not centralised - rules differ by state and locality

Nexus-driven tax - obligations triggered by physical or economic presence

Net-of-tax pricing - tax added at checkout, not built into the shelf price

US GAAP, not IFRS - group reporting must reconcile standards

Litigation risk - wider product liability and higher legal cost

Separate IP protection - UK/EU trade marks do not extend to the US



Section one: Operations

Getting the operating model, presence and supply chain right so the business can scale without accumulating avoidable cost and complexity.

Success in the US depends on choosing the right level of presence for your stage of growth - and building payments, systems and supply chain resilience that can scale with demand.

Presence and operating structure

Early-stage brands can often test demand through cross-border eCommerce and third-party fulfilment, keeping upfront investment low. As volume grows, customer expectations around shipping, returns and local service - and the requirements of retail partners - typically push businesses toward a formal US presence such as an LLC, a corporation or a US subsidiary of the overseas parent.

People, banking and imports

Hiring US employees or contractors triggers federal and state payroll and employment obligations; a PEO is a common entry route. Opening a US bank account generally requires an EIN and a US address or registered agent. Goods shipped from the UK are subject to US customs duties - tariff classification and valuation should be reviewed before the first shipment.

Systems and resilience

Fragmented tools work at low volume but strain quickly. Integrating payments, inventory and finance from the outset gives visibility across revenue, tax, refunds and multi-channel performance. Supply chain interruption, warehousing and cargo risk should be planned for as volumes rise.

Operations checklist:

- Decide the right level of presence for your growth stage (logistics-only vs. entity)
- Select entity type - LLC, corporation or US subsidiary - aligned to tax and funding plans
- Choose incorporation vs. operating states and appoint a registered agent
- Obtain an EIN and open a US business bank account
- Plan hiring route (direct, contractor or PEO) and payroll setup
- Confirm business licences and sector permits required
- Review customs classification, valuation and import procedures pre-shipment
- Integrate payments, inventory and finance systems for end-to-end visibility
- Assess supply chain, warehousing and cargo resilience

Section two: Legal

Protecting the brand, contracts and people across a fragmented state-level system that differs materially from English law.

The US has no centralised legal framework. Corporate, employment, contract, IP and liability law all operate at state level, creating fragmented obligations that differ materially from the UK's unified system.

Governance and contracts

US entities require articles of incorporation, bylaws or operating agreements and ongoing annual filings, with requirements varying by state. US contract law differs materially from English law, so standard UK terms and conditions should be reviewed and adapted for a US audience rather than reused unchanged.

Brand, data and people

UK and EU trademark registrations do not extend to the US, so separate USPTO applications should be filed early to protect brand and product IP. Employment is governed by overlapping federal and state law, with at-will principles applying in most states. State privacy laws - California, Virginia, Colorado and others - can have extraterritorial reach that applies to your operations.

Liability and disputes

Product liability exposure is significantly broader than in the UK, and litigation is costly and discovery-intensive. Governing-law and jurisdiction clauses should feature in all US contracts, and insurance coverage reviewed accordingly. Regulated sectors such as financial services, healthcare and food and beverage may need federal or state licences before trading.

Legal checklist:

- Put in place articles, bylaws or operating agreements and diarise state filings
- Review and adapt UK terms and conditions for US contract law
- File USPTO trade mark applications early to protect brand and product IP
- Map federal and state employment obligations, including at-will principles
- Assess state privacy law exposure (CCPA/CPRA, Virginia, Colorado and others)
- Review product liability exposure and supporting documentation - include governing-law and jurisdiction clauses in all US contracts
- Confirm any sector licences or permits required before trading

Section three: Finance

Managing sales tax, reporting standards, currency exposure and treasury so growth translates into sustainable margin.

The US has no federal sales tax and operates across thousands of jurisdictions. It follows US GAAP rather than IFRS and requires transfer pricing documentation satisfying both HMRC and IRS requirements.

Sales tax and nexus

Obligations arise state by state across more than 12,000 taxing jurisdictions and are triggered by physical or economic nexus. Following South Dakota v. Wayfair, economic nexus applies broadly - a business can create obligations simply by exceeding a state's sales thresholds, even without physical presence. Taxability varies by product and state, and marketplace facilitator rules may cover platform sales but not direct sales.

Reporting, payroll and structure

US GAAP differs from UK GAAP and IFRS, so consolidated group reporting must reconcile across standards. Payroll involves federal withholding, Social Security, Medicare (FICA) and state taxes, with employer contributions adding materially to cost. Entity choice affects federal and state income tax treatment; the UK-US double tax treaty should be reviewed to minimise withholding and avoid double taxation.

Currency and treasury

Earning in USD while reporting in GBP introduces FX risk. A USD account, a clear view of when to convert revenue and, where appropriate, a hedging policy help protect margin. Repatriating profits may trigger withholding, so dividend policy and intercompany structures should be planned in advance. Intercompany transactions must be on arm's length terms and documented for both HMRC and the IRS.

Finance checklist:

- Assess where physical and economic nexus is created across states
- Register and file sales tax where obligations arise
- Review product-by-product, state-by-state taxability
- Confirm marketplace facilitator coverage vs. direct-sale responsibility
- Plan pricing to reflect variable state and local tax rates at checkout
- Reconcile US GAAP with group reporting standards
- Model payroll taxes and employer contribution costs
- Review entity choice and the UK-US double tax treaty
- Document transfer pricing for HMRC and IRS
- Set FX policy - USD account, conversion timing and hedging
- Plan profit repatriation, withholding and dividend strategy



About Tax Desk

Tax Desk provides registration, submission, payment and audit support for indirect tax - giving cross-border sellers a single, technology-enabled partner for their US and international compliance obligations.

Our platform gives you direct access to expert guidance, streamlined interactions and enhanced tax capabilities. We partner closely with clients to bring greater efficiency and clarity to every submission and return, backed by a dedicated team and country specialists.

For businesses scaling into the US, we manage US Sales Tax registration and filing where nexus arises, alongside VAT, IOSS, OSS, GST, EPR, CESOP and country-specific reporting for wider international growth - all indirect tax, all in one place.

- Dedicated experts - a specialist team supporting every registration and return
- Leading technology - a compliance portal giving visibility and control
- Global reach - indirect tax coverage across 60+ countries
- Responsive support - a partner at every step of your expansion

For more information, contact Anna Hutton-North, Sales & Marketing Director: +44 7426 498303, anna.hutton-north@taxdesk.com, www.taxdesk.com.

The information contained herein is of a general nature and is not intended to address the circumstances of any particular individual or entity. No one should act on such information without appropriate professional advice after a thorough examination of the particular situation.

From Forecast to Fulfilment



Simon Dixon,
Founder, Hatmill

Forecasting is the bread and butter of every eCom brand. Everybody in our industry knows the importance of a forecast. But how many brands use those forecasts to make meaningful decisions? And how many brands know how to pivot once reality inevitably diverges from their forecast?

The answer to both of these questions is 'very few.' The truth is that most organisations are sitting on excess inventory and stock shortages at the same time. In different parts of the same business, forecasts are built and siloed within different departments, so nobody is working off the same numbers.

Accuracy is rarely the problem because forecasts are always wrong to some degree. The problem is when decisions aren't made early enough for your supply chain to react once the forecast is proven to be wrong.

Why forecasting gets harder as you grow

These problems are exacerbated when you're expanding into a new region like the US. Growth compounds the problem rather than solving it. Several forces are stacking on top of each other at once:

- More SKUs, more promotions, more channels, all adding volatility on top of volatility
- Rising customer expectations around availability and speed
- Extended, less visible supply chains, especially once a UK brand is managing stock thousands of miles away.

Left unmanaged, poor forecasting stops being a planning problem and becomes a logistics one:

1. Unplanned air freight instead of budgeted sea freight
2. Cost per unit creeping up
3. Excess storage on stock that isn't moving
4. Poor availability of the stock that is
5. Customers who stop coming back once they've been let down once too often

Tips for better forecasting

Inventory can often be seen as a pain point that brands know they need to manage better, but don't. Inventory management isn't the most glamorous part of running a business, but it's one of the biggest drivers of logistics efficiency there is.

Start treating your inventory like a strategic asset rather than a burden. When you make that mental switch, you'll start to notice the difference. Better forecasting leads to better inventory decisions, and better inventory decisions build supply chains that are simpler, cheaper, and more resilient.

Asking better questions

Much of this comes down to how honest a business is willing to be with itself. Going beneath the surface level to get to the root cause of what you need answered to make solid business decisions, and plan for any inevitability, is key to making better decisions.

- Not "what will demand be", but what range of demand could realistically happen
- Not "do you think we'll sell all that", but what's our plan for out-of-stocks or excess stock
- Not "how much will that cost", but what's the end-to-end profitability of that decision

Using AI responsibly

In our industry (and most others), AI is both a true blessing and a curse. AI can fast-track you toward better decisions and remove much of the tedium many of us associate with forecasting and planning.

And at the other end of the spectrum, outsourcing all our thinking and common sense to artificial intelligence is a recipe for disaster.

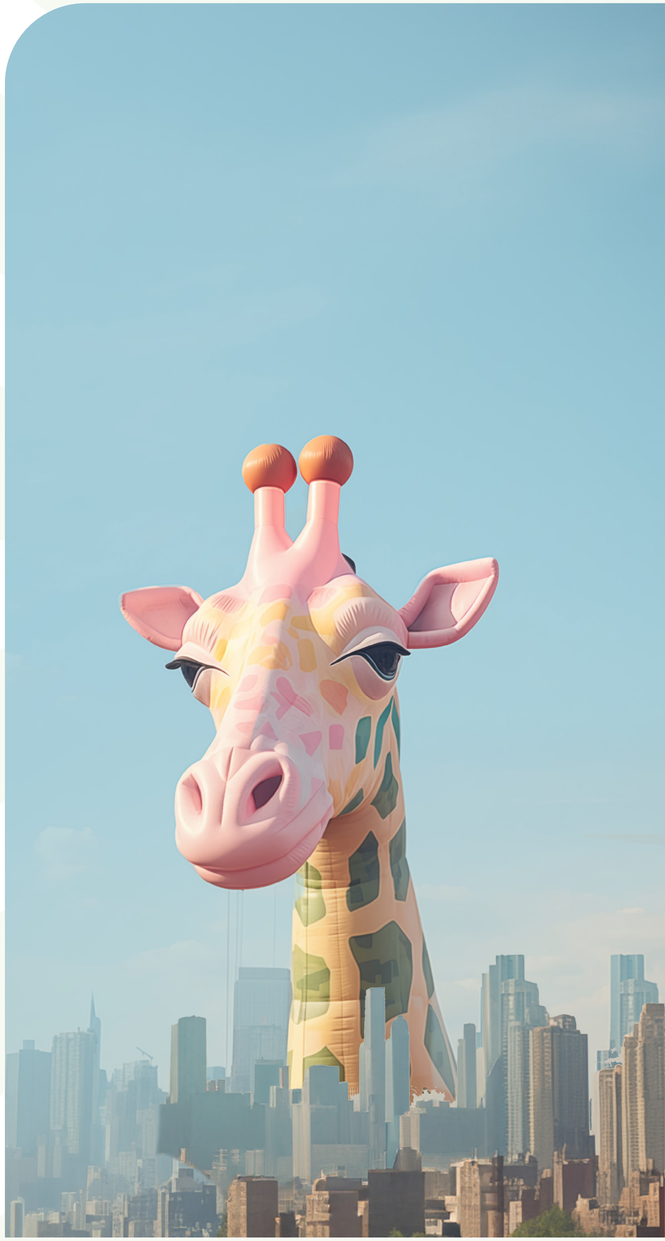
In summary, AI is excellent at:

- Recognising patterns
- Cleansing messy data
- Identifying anomalies
- Speeding up analysis that used to take days

On the other hand, it cannot fix:

- Poor governance
- Bad assumptions
- Organisational politics

The right way to think about AI is that it doesn't replace judgement. AI gives people more time to use their judgement by clearing away the manual work that used to eat it up.



Creating your fulfilment strategy

Every new customer, every new product, every new state, and every promotion multiplies supply chain complexity. A brand that has just expanded into three US states, bought on board a new range of SKUs and is just about to start its Black Friday promotions isn't managing three separate problems, but an interaction between all three. It's enough to test even the most finely tuned fulfilment strategies.

The businesses that grow successfully aren't the ones that avoid that complexity; they're the ones that simplify wherever they can, so the complexity they do carry is complexity worth carrying.

Adapting for the US

You're likely reading this whitepaper because you are researching how to make localising in the US a reality. Of course, you can still fulfil US orders from here in the UK, or adopt a hybrid model (which sometimes works well for scaling brands), but we're guessing that you are most interested in a purely localised fulfilment operation.

Once you've made the decision to hold stock and fulfil within the US, one of the most important next steps is to decide how much of a network you'll want to build while you're there, and how you'll build it.

The most common approaches are:

- A single distribution centre: the simplest network to run, and the cheapest to set up, but it puts distance between at least some of your customers and your stock, which shows up directly in delivery speed
- Multiple distribution centres: brings stock closer to more customers and shortens lead times, but each additional site adds real inventory complexity, and roughly 1.4x the inventory needed to hold the same availability, since the same service level now has to be maintained in more than one place at once
- 3PL vs owned warehousing: a 3PL gets you operational faster and scales up or down more easily; your own facility gives you more control, but only pays off once volume justifies the fixed cost

None of these is a one-off decision. As a brand grows, the right network shape changes with it, so it's worth revisiting every six to twelve months rather than deciding once and leaving it.

Key considerations for localising

1. Validate demand before you scale your US footprint (see Chapter 1)
2. Plan a range of inventory options across your network
3. Choose the network shape that fits where the business is today, not where you hope to be
4. Get end-to-end alignment across buying, merchandising and logistics
5. Design for where you want to be in three years, not just where you are now
6. Choose 3PL and network partners on service levels, contractual structure and cultural fit, not just cost
7. Keep measuring and adapting, because what was right last year rarely still is

You'll know things are working when you:

1. Understand how far demand realistically varies from forecast
2. Plan for multiple scenarios rather than one
3. Share the forecast openly across the business, instead of letting it live with one team
4. Have rigorous processes for continuous reviews
5. Act on what you learn quickly, rather than waiting for the next planning cycle



About Hatmill

Hatmill is the UK's largest independent logistics and supply chain consultancy, working with businesses from first-time US entrants through to established global brands including Diageo and Lego, on network design, demand planning, and automation.

Its work spans forecasting and demand planning, inventory strategy, and end-to-end supply chain design for brands scaling into new markets.

www.hatmill.com

Customer Acquisition & Experience



Martijn Wiktor-Wagemans,
Chief Strategy & Operating Officer, The Agency

By the time you're reading this chapter, you've hopefully validated the opportunity and got your operational, legal, tax, and fulfilment foundations in order. Now comes the part that earns the revenue, which means getting found and, even more importantly, trusted.

In this piece, we'll look into this misconception that the US market is "just Amazon", and how you can make sure that your content is translated and developed for a US market, not just lifted and shifted from the UK. And finally, we'll look at how customer behaviour is changing, and how AI is driving that change.

The US is more than Amazon

It's no secret that Amazon dominates US eCommerce, but treating "launch on Amazon" as the whole strategy misses the real retail landscape and undersells how different it is to the UK.

Prime examples include Walmart and Target, both growing their online and marketplace businesses fast, in some cases even outpacing Amazon's own growth rate.

Beyond the big three, nearly every category has its own dedicated marketplace, which might sound strange if you're only familiar with how things work in the UK. Examples include Chewy for pet care, Zappos for footwear, and retail formats like Sam's Club (subscription-only) or CVS (part pharmacy, part drugstore, part grocery), each with its own fee structure and its own rules.

Perhaps most importantly, Amazon US is not Amazon UK at a larger scale. Advertising costs more, because more sellers are bidding on the same terms. Review expectations are higher, because a thin review base stalls conversion in a market where shoppers expect volume and recency as standard.

And the cherry on top is that oversaturation means category competition is often brutal, with established sellers defending their niche, which means you need an actual reason for a shopper to choose you, not just a listing.

None of this has been laid out to discourage you. Many UK brands have successfully gone on to do incredible things in the US. This is merely a reality check, with some advice on what you should be thinking about.

The "same language" trap

A costly assumption UK brands make is that US content is a copy-paste job. It couldn't be further from the truth, and the cost of getting it wrong compounds into a long-term problem. Early listing performance shapes long-term ranking, so it's cheaper to launch right than to rescue a listing that started wrong.

Three things go wrong when content is translated rather than rebuilt for the US:

- **You rank for unhelpful UK phrases.** A "pram" instead of a "stroller", "colour" instead of "color", "750 ml" instead of "25 oz" all read oddly to a US shopper, and often enough to make them instinctively disregard the listing.
- **Your imagery reads as foreign, not premium.** Visual cues that signal quality in the UK don't always carry the same meaning to a US audience.
- **Doubt doesn't convert.** A US shopper who isn't sure simply doesn't buy, and doesn't tell you why.

This is transcreation, not translation. Your priority should be to rebuild the content around how Americans search and buy and what resonates with that unique culture and experience. It can't simply be a copy-and-paste job with some small tweaks to spelling and calling it a day.

Getting found, trusted, and bought

Think of the US buying journey in three steps, and treat each one as a genuine hurdle rather than a formality:

Win the search page. Your title and hero image need to earn the click against a wall of competitors, which starts with ranking for terms US shoppers use (which as we've covered, differ to UK ways of searching).

Answer their question. Your gallery and bullet points need to resolve the exact doubt the shopper arrived with, whether that's fit, sizing, or how the product performs.

They buy, or they're gone. Confusion sends a shopper back to search, usually for good, so clarity has to carry the whole listing.

Social proof matters more in the US than it does at home. Review volume and recency carry real weight, rich content like A+ pages, brand stores, and video do a lot of the heavy lifting. Look at how detailed an Amazon listing is - and whether you are selling on Amazon or your own website, aim to replicate that level of detail because that is the norm for US shoppers.

Finally, remember that mobile has to be the default design of your website and listings, not an afterthought. This is true for the UK too, but a much higher number of US shoppers discover and buy from their phones.

Compliance shapes the copy

In the US, a wrong or vague claim carries legal consequences, so content and compliance should feed each other. For example, FTC rules require you to be able to substantiate any claim you make, so there should be no “smoke and mirrors” when it comes to your marketing.

Additionally, FDA and CPSC standards vary by category, so labelling and safety claims need checking against the specific category you’re selling into, not assumed from the UK equivalent.

Discovery in the world of AI

Discovery is moving away from search toward AI, as shoppers opt to have more personalised conversations with their LLM of choice rather than jumping directly to Google or Amazon.

That means structuring your content so AI tools can read, trust, and recommend your product, sometimes called generative engine optimisation, is quickly becoming as important as traditional SEO.

This is less scary than it sounds. Be reassured that a listing built properly for the human shopper is already most of the way to being ready for an AI one, since both reward the same clarity and structure. Much of what we traditionally saw as “good SEO” is also good for optimising for LLMs.

Some general tips include:

Write titles that say plainly what the product is. Brand, product type and the key attributes a shopper would filter by (size, material, colour, quantity) will do a lot of work here.

Complete every attribute field your platform or marketplace offers, even the optional ones. AI agents rely on this structured data to filter and compare products, and a blank field can mean you're left out of a comparison.

Add schema markup (Product, Offer, Review) to your own site so price, availability and ratings can be read by machines as well as people.

Answer the questions buyers ask in the description itself: dimensions, compatibility, what's in the box, care instructions. A short FAQ section is an easy way to cover these.

Swap vague claims like "premium quality" for specific, checkable ones. "Made from 100% recycled aluminium" gives an AI something to match against a query, whereas "premium" gives it nothing.

Keep product details consistent across your website, marketplaces and product feeds. Conflicting prices or specs make it harder for an AI to recommend you with confidence.

Keep stock levels and pricing in your feeds up to date, since agents are less likely to recommend something that might not be available.

Encourage reviews that mention how and where the product was used. Specific review content helps AI tools match your product to specific needs.

Write descriptive alt text for images so the information in them isn't lost to anything that can't see them.

To wrap things up, the key takeaway for you is to treat the US as a genuinely distinct market, not a bigger UK. Build the right portfolio across platforms, transcreate rather than translate, and get your content ready for AI and agents now, while most brands still haven’t started.



About The Agency

The Agency is a specialist marketplace consultancy helping brands launch, localise, and scale across the world’s marketplaces, working across more than 30 marketplaces and over 100 markets.

Its approach combines commercial strategy with AI-enabled, human-reviewed execution, spanning marketplace launch, localised content and SEO, and generative engine optimisation for brands adapting to how AI tools are changing product discovery.

www.eretaileragency.com

Shopper Visibility on the Chat LLMs



Emma Jones,
Founder, Amp'd

When a US customer asks AI what to buy, the question that matters isn't simply whether your brand exists online. It's whether AI can find one clear, consistent, trusted version of your product, and whether your brand wins the sale that follows.

For most brands, that's a very different challenge from the one they've traditionally been set up to solve. Since eCommerce took off, most online businesses began with a Google Search. Over the last few years, and especially the last twelve months, users are moving toward LLMs to begin their buying journeys, and it's no longer just a game of ranking well in search engine results.

AI is already part of the shopping journey

US online retail sales reached $1.23 trillion in 2025, and AI is becoming an increasingly important part of how customers research what to buy.

Around 60% of US adults now read AI-generated search summaries as part of their research, while AI-referred visitors are converting at notably higher rates than traffic from many other channels.

The impact on brand choice is already significant.

Envision Horizons found that 79% of US consumers who use AI for product research have switched brands because of an AI recommendation. Meanwhile, research from Rithum and Retail Dive found that 58% of shoppers lose trust in a brand when AI provides incorrect product information about it, with 16% abandoning their purchase entirely, even when the AI, rather than the brand, made the mistake.

Trust in AI recommendations is still developing. Around 35% of consumers say they trust AI recommendations, while willingness to let AI make a purchasing decision entirely on their behalf remains much lower.

That creates an opportunity. Brands that can provide AI platforms with clear, consistent and trustworthy information have the chance to establish visibility while many competitors - even traditional dominators - are still absent from the conversation.

This isn't simply SEO for AI

Traditional search presents customers with a list of links and leaves them to research, compare and decide.

AI-assisted commerce works differently. AI can research products, compare options, verify claims and shortlist recommendations before the customer ever visits a website. In effect, it can act as the researcher, comparison site and sales assistant at the same time.

That changes what brands are competing for. The traditional objective was to rank for a keyword and secure a prominent position on a search results page. With AI, the objective is to ensure the correct US product page can be found, the information on it can be understood, its claims can be verified, and the product can confidently be included in a recommendation.

The evidence chain

An AI-assisted purchase typically moves through a chain of steps:

Prompt

Research

Page retrieval

Product verification

External evidence

Recommendation

Offer

Being a well-known brand doesn't necessarily mean being easy for AI to retrieve. For a product to surface reliably, several things need to work together. It needs to appear during AI's initial research. The correct US page needs to be indexed and accessible. Country selectors, JavaScript or other technical barriers can't prevent the page from being read. Important product information needs to be available as text and structured data rather than buried inside images or PDFs.

The brand and product also need to resolve to one clear identity, with current and consistent evidence supporting any important claims. Even a recognised brand can fail to appear if one of those elements falters.

Your US product page matters

As The Agency covered in the previous section, for brands expanding into America, the official US product page is particularly important.

It should have a stable URL and clearly show:

- USD pricing
- US stock availability
- US measurements and terminology
- US delivery information
- US returns policies
- Relevant US compliance information

It should also be clearly distinguishable from a UK version, filtered product page or third-party retailer listing.

Behind that, accurate product information needs to feed consistently across every channel, including your website, schema markup, retailers and marketplaces. If an AI platform encounters several conflicting versions of the same product, confidence in the information can quickly fall.

Owned content isn't enough

Your own website establishes what your product is. That includes things like specifications, ingredients, pricing, warranties, FAQs and product descriptions all help AI understand your offer.

But independent evidence helps establish why that information is trustworthy. That can include customer reviews, community discussion, editorial coverage and scientific or institutional evidence where relevant.

For brands entering the US, that authority also needs to feel genuinely local. US customer reviews, American terminology, the correct units, USD pricing, stock availability, delivery information and returns policies all need to reinforce one another.

If anything signals a conflict, AI may understand that your product exists while still deciding that it isn't appropriate, available or sufficiently verified for an American customer.

Every platform needs to be tested separately

ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity and other AI platforms don't all retrieve and verify information in the same way. Success on one platform doesn't automatically translate to another.

Brands therefore need to test visibility by platform, market and product category, and repeat those tests regularly rather than treating AI visibility as a one-off audit.

Different failures point to different solutions. If your product never enters the AI's research, you may have a discovery or content problem. If the wrong page appears, there may be a canonicalisation issue. If product information conflicts across channels, the problem may sit within your PIM or product feeds. If the product is found but not trusted, more independent evidence may be needed. And if your brand appears but loses the merchant offer, factors such as pricing, availability or fulfilment may be responsible.

A practical starting point

For brands starting to explore AI commerce visibility in the US, a focused pilot can be more useful than an open-ended programme. A simple starting structure could look like this:

Day 1: Establish the baseline

Audit current visibility, test high-intent US shopping prompts and review competitor activity.

Days 2–3: Fix product truth

Review canonical US pages, PIM data, schema and product feeds, while creating FAQs around the questions customers are actually asking.

Days 4–13: Build proof

Strengthen reviews and third-party authority, support PR and community activity, and create useful content that reflects the brand's genuine expertise and values.

Day 14: Measure movement

Repeat the original tests and review changes across visibility, evidence integrity, product-card appearances and merchant-offer performance.

A sensible first scope could cover one market, two AI platforms and a handful of priority categories, tested against a defined set of commercial prompts and reviewed regularly.

Make your brand easy for AI to trust

When a US customer asks AI what to buy, the brands that appear aren't necessarily the biggest or best known. They're the ones that AI can clearly find, understand, verify and recommend.

For UK eCommerce brands looking to grow in the US, getting that evidence chain right is quickly becoming another important part of building a strong local presence.



About Amp'd

Amp'd is an AI commerce visibility platform that helps brands understand and improve how they're discovered, evaluated and recommended across AI shopping tools including ChatGPT, Gemini and Perplexity.

Its work covers the full evidence chain behind AI-generated recommendations, from product data and canonicalisation through to independent proof and merchant-offer performance, across multiple platforms, markets and languages.

www.ampdaxo.com

We're here to help you Cross the Pond

We hope you've found this whitepaper useful, whether it's given you practical actions to take or simply a clearer understanding of what it takes to launch and succeed in the US.

Expanding into a new market isn't always straightforward, but J&J can help make the journey easier. With fulfilment facilities across the US, including locations serving both the East and West Coasts, we help you move and store inventory closer to your customers, reduce delivery times, and deliver an experience that feels much closer to what they expect at home.

It's all powered by ControlPort™, our award-winning inventory management platform, giving you a bird's-eye view of your operation alongside the data and business intelligence you need to make better-informed decisions.

If you'd like to learn more about J&J and how we can help you achieve your global ambitions, get in touch with our team.

Thanks for reading.

J&J

