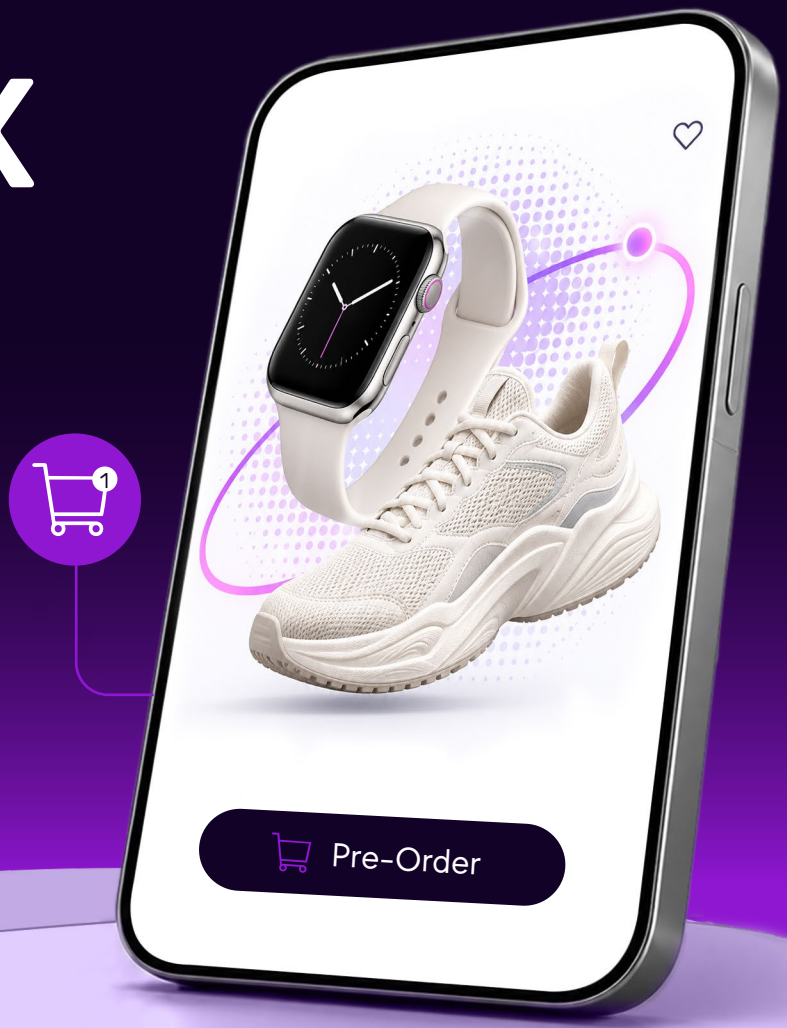
PURPLE DOT

THE PRE-ORDER GROWTH PLAYBOOK

Five strategies to capture more demand, sell inventory earlier, and grow without adding operational complexity

Explore the playbook →



www.getpurpledot.com

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INTRODUCTION

TURN PRE-ORDERS INTO A GROWTH STRATEGY

Every ecommerce brand wants the same thing: inventory that matches demand as closely as possible. Simple in theory, but much harder when inventory decisions have to be made months before you know where demand will land.

That uncertainty shows up everywhere: a launch that sells out faster than expected, a bestseller awaiting replenishment, a delayed collection that impacts sell-through, or an inventory commitment that leaves too much unsold.

PRE-ORDERS GIVE BRANDS A MORE FLEXIBLE WAY TO TURN THAT UNCERTAINTY INTO GROWTH

Whether you already offer pre-orders or are considering them for the first time, the opportunity is bigger than solving a one-off inventory challenge. What if pre-orders weren't just a tactical response to your supply chain, but also a strategic part of your inventory management?

Leading ecommerce brands are using pre-orders across more of the inventory lifecycle: to launch earlier, sell through stockouts and delays, make smarter buying decisions, reduce overstock, and grow without adding operational complexity.

At Purple Dot, we think about these opportunities through two pre-order operating models:

SELL WHAT YOU MAKE:
Turns known incoming inventory into something you can sell earlier.

STRATEGIES

1. Launch Early, Sell More.
2. Never Truly Go Out of Stock.
3. Launch Despite Delays.

MAKE WHAT YOU SELL:
Uses committed demand to help determine the inventory you buy or produce.

STRATEGIES

1. Reduce Overstock.
2. Maximize Demand.

Across five core pre-order strategies, this guide shows how leading brands are putting both models to work and where your current pre-order approach may be leaving growth on the table.

PART 1: SELL WHAT YOU MAKE

Capture demand earlier for inventory you already plan to produce.

If inventory is already on its way, why wait until it reaches the warehouse to start, or continue, selling it?

That's the opportunity behind the Sell What You Make operating model: separating your selling window from physical inventory availability.

Whether you're launching new arrivals, have an incoming replenishment, or are experiencing a supply chain delay, the principle is the same: if you know inventory is coming, you can start capturing demand before it gets there.

LAUNCH EARLY, SELL MORE

A new collection doesn't have to reach the warehouse before its selling window begins. Launching on pre-order gives brands more time to sell incoming inventory, turning the weeks before arrival into an additional revenue opportunity.

When Timex launched its Timex x Superman collection, Purple Dot allowed the brand to open pre-orders against incoming stock before all inventory was available to ship.

The additional selling window paid off: nearly **50% of the incoming Superman watch inventory sold on the first day of pre-order.**

Now Timex has made launching early a repeatable part of its merchandising strategy. Within five months of working with Purple Dot, the brand generated more than $1 million in pre-order revenue without expanding the manual workload alongside it.

LAUNCH EARLY, SELL MORE.

1M+ in pre-order revenue generated within five months working with Purple Dot.

50%

OF INCOMING INVENTORY SOLD

on the first day of pre-orders.



THE TAKEAWAY:
Regularly generating demand before inventory arrives can become a repeatable merchandising strategy to increase sell-through, not just a one-off tactic.



> Preorders build buzz around big moments. Particularly for notable collaborations, it gets new people to our site who may not have heard of Timex before, but who may now buy another Timex product.

Kyle Vassallo
Senior Manager, Global DTC
Operations and FLD Brands, Timex

NEVER TRULY GO OUT OF STOCK

Launching early converts demand before inventory arrives. But what about when demand is still there but inventory is (temporarily) not?

For LØCI, stockouts could happen fast. Celebrity-driven demand repeatedly sent popular products surging and selling out, even when replenishment inventory was already on its way. Traditionally, that meant replacing “Add to Cart” with “Sold Out” or “Notify Me” and hoping the customer would come back.

PURPLE DOT GAVE LØCI ANOTHER OPTION: KEEP SELLING

When an eligible LØCI SKU or variant sells out with replenishment inventory available, it automatically flips to pre-order, allowing customers to keep buying with clear expectations about when their orders will ship. And behind the scenes, pre-order operations work seamlessly alongside in-stock orders.

Those once-missed sales added up quickly! By implementing pre-orders, LØCI increased their sales on out-of-stock products by 89%.

PURPLE DOT GAVE LØCI ANOTHER OPTION: KEEP SELLING.

89%
MORE SALES

on out-of-stock products with pre-orders.



THE TAKEAWAY:
When inventory is on the way, a replenishment gap doesn’t have to become a revenue gap.

> With Purple Dot, we can always be selling.
>
> Ross Allsop
> Head of Ecommerce, LØCI

LAUNCH DESPITE DELAYS

Then there's the inventory you expected to have, but don't.

When Handful's summer collection was delayed in transit, postponing meant sacrificing an important seasonal selling window. But previous attempts at pre-orders had created confusion for customers and operational headaches internally.

With Purple Dot, Handful could launch on schedule while keeping pre-orders from flowing into downstream warehouse systems until inventory was ready to fulfill. Customers could buy. The warehouse could operate normally.

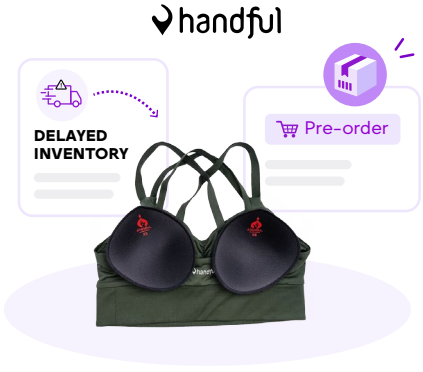
Before the collection even arrived, 30% of the delayed inventory had sold, with a 10% page-to-buy conversion rate.

> We have previously added pre-orders to our website, but it led to confusion for our customers and our internal teams. Purple Dot solved this and helped our pre-order strategy become way more successful and scalable!
>
> Jennifer Ferguson
> CEO & Founder, Handful

LAUNCH DESPITE DELAYS

30%

of the delayed inventory had sold, with a 10% page-to-buy conversion rate.



FROM INDIVIDUAL MOMENTS TO A STANDING STRATEGY

If pre-orders already work for your launches or stockouts, consider other moments when your customer demand and physical inventory fall out of sync.

Timex, LØCI, and Handful all used pre-orders at different points in the inventory lifecycle: before a launch, between replenishments, and during a delay.

Together, they show what happens when pre-orders become a strategic part of your inventory management approach rather than a one-off tactic.

Known incoming inventory is only one side of the equation. What happens when the demand you're capturing can start influencing what inventory you actually buy?



THE TAKEAWAY:
Supply chain delays don't need to mean delayed sales. Take full control of your launch calendar with pre-orders.

PART 2: MAKE WHAT YOU SELL

Use real customer demand to inform what, and how much, you produce.

Using demand to inform your buy can sound a lot like made-to-order, a business model that feels unrealistic for most ecommerce brands. But with more flexible production cycles and customer demand as volatile as the latest social media trend, brands are finding practical ways to bring real demand into inventory decisions earlier.

Because while historical sales, traffic, waitlists, and forecasts can all help predict what customers will buy, there's still a meaningful difference between a customer signaling interest and actually buying.

That's the opportunity behind the Make What You Sell model: using paid customer demand to help determine what, and how much, you buy or produce in order to maximize sales while reducing overstock.

For most brands, that means spotting stronger than expected demand and leaning in: continuing to confidently sell without committed stock versus leaning out and scrambling with a Notify Me. For others, it means producing more precisely from the start of new product development to reduce overstock.

These aren't separate strategies. They are two sides of the same inventory decision: protecting against the downside of buying too much while preserving the upside of selling more.

REDUCE OVERSTOCK

Every inventory buy comes with a familiar tension: order too much and you're left with excess; order too little and you leave demand, and revenue, on the table.

When Sachin & Babi launched its bridesmaid business, the brand approached that equation differently. Rather than produce a full collection based on forecasted demand, it launched its gowns on pre-order.

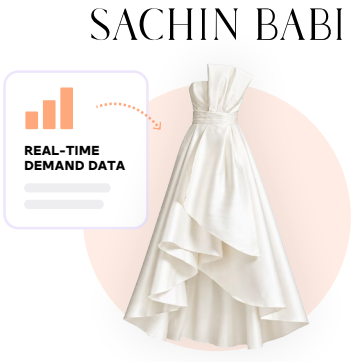
With Purple Dot, Sachin & Babi could use real-time demand and size-curve data to help shape factory orders. The result: **0% overstock on its pre-order collections and up to 50% higher sell-through on gowns.**

The strategy soon expanded beyond bridesmaid gowns and across additional products, helping the brand forecast demand and test category viability before committing inventory.

CUSTOMERS BOUGHT FIRST. THEN THE DATA STARTED TELLING A STORY.

0%
OVERSTOCK
on pre-order collections

50%
HIGHER SELL-THROUGH
on gowns.



THE TAKEAWAY:
Pre-orders give brands something forecasts can't: actual paid demand to help determine where inventory dollars should go.



"We initially began working with Purple Dot specifically to help facilitate the launch of our Bridal Collections, a timelier category. However, we quickly saw how this partnership could augment our sales across our mainline and immediately began implementing 'Presale' as a separate initiative in the business to increase sales, forecast products and test category viability. Onboarding Purple Dot was one of the best decisions we have made for our DTC division to date.

Amy Riordan
CEO, Sachin & Babi

MAXIMIZE DEMAND

Reducing overstock is only half the opportunity. The same paid demand that helps brands avoid producing too much can also reveal when there is an opportunity to produce and sell more.

When pre-orders demonstrate stronger-than-expected demand, brands gain an early, actionable signal to adjust production, direct inventory, or invest more behind the products customers are already buying. That's how the Make What You Sell model supports growth: it helps brands act on proven demand while the opportunity is still there.

When JAXXON prepared to launch its first watch collection, the brand started with a smaller purchase order rather than committing to a full production run based on forecasts alone. It then launched the collection on pre-order ahead of its official in-stock release.

Customer commitment came quickly. **JAXXON generated $100,000 in pre-order revenue within two days**, giving the team early proof of demand and greater confidence in the new category.

The brand then used those demand insights to place more targeted production orders and align its inventory, production and marketing plans around what customers were actually buying. As a result, JAXXON reduced excess inventory by 50% and increased sales by 20% compared with previous new-line launches.

TURN DEMAND SIGNALS INTO REAL GROWTH.

50%
LESS EXCESS INVENTORY

20%
HIGHER SALES compared with previous new-line launches.



THE TAKEAWAY:
When demand is unpredictable, pre-orders help brands act on what customers are actually buying and maximize the opportunity while it is still there.



> Working with Purple Dot was easy, and the results even better than we imagined. Pre-orders are now a core part of our strategy.

Johnii Barbarino
Director of eCommerce, JAXXON

FROM FORECASTING DEMAND TO ACTING ON IT

Sachin & Babi and JAXXON demonstrate two sides of the same opportunity: use committed demand to avoid excess inventory and uncover where there is more opportunity than expected.

Traffic can signal attention. A waitlist can signal interest. Historical sales can help predict what happens next.

A PAID PRE-ORDER SIGNALS COMMITMENT

Captured early enough, that commitment can inform how much you buy, which products or variants you back, and when you make your next inventory move.

Pre-orders become more than a way to sell earlier. They become a way to buy smarter and maximize every opportunity to sell more.

PART 3: EXPAND YOUR PRE-ORDER MODEL

Combine approaches to unlock more selling opportunities and build a more flexible inventory strategy.

For some brands, the next step isn't choosing between selling incoming inventory earlier or using demand to make smarter inventory decisions. It's doing both.

OAK + FORT shows how the two models can work side by side. For seasonal essentials, OAK + FORT uses Purple Dot to sell before delayed inventory physically arrives, capturing demand while it's still in season. For limited capsule collections, pre-orders serve a different purpose: committed demand helps the team see what's selling and make more informed buying decisions while there's still time to act.

One strategy helps OAK + FORT sell what it knows is coming. The other helps determine what should come next.

That combination has become a meaningful part of the business: approximately 25% of OAK + FORT's online sales now come from pre-orders. The brand also credits Purple Dot with contributing to up to a 20% year-over-year increase in ecommerce sales.

SELL TODAY,
PLAN TOMORROW.

OAK + FORT uses pre-orders to capture demand early and make smarter buying decisions.

25%
OF ONLINE SALES come from pre-orders.

20%
YEAR-OVER-YEAR increase in ecommerce sales.



THE TAKEAWAY:
One strategy helps you sell what you know is coming. The other helps you decide what should come next.

SPOKE shows how quickly one model can begin informing the other. The brand used Purple Dot to begin selling eight weeks before incoming inventory was due to arrive, with a target of selling through 25% during the pre-order period.

Within 24 hours, SPOKE sold 97% of its available pre-order inventory, nearly four times its target.

What began as a way to sell incoming inventory earlier also gave SPOKE something valuable: real evidence of demand while there was still time to respond.

That's where the two models start to reinforce each other. Pre-orders don't just help brands capture demand earlier. The demand they capture can help inform what happens next.

The most powerful pre-order strategies don't stop at one model. They use each where it creates the most value, turning demand into both revenue today and smarter inventory decisions tomorrow.

SELL EARLIER.
LEARN FASTER.

Spoke began selling 8 weeks before inventory arrived and quickly turned early demand into real result.

97%

PRE-ORDER INVENTORY SOLD

within 24 hours.





"Purple Dot has opened up a significant new revenue line for us. Our first presale drop with Purple Dot beat all expectations. Selling 8 weeks ahead of having the product meant we achieved a sell through 400% higher than we predicted. We've been working to improve our understanding of demand but couldn't entirely crack it. And now with Purple Dot's pre-order platform, we can establish new product lines, see the demand and capitalize on it, all before we even have the product.

Adam Woodhouse
COO, SPOKE

THE TAKEAWAY:
Paid demand doesn't just show you where to pull back. It can show you where to lean in.

PART 4: SCALE WITHOUT ADDING COMPLEXITY

Build the operational foundation to grow pre-orders without creating more manual work or customer friction.

TURNING A SUCCESSFUL PRE-ORDER STRATEGY INTO A SCALABLE SYSTEM

Here's something brands don't always anticipate when they scale or expand their pre-order strategy: success creates its own operational challenge.

One campaign is relatively easy to manage. But start using pre-orders across launches, replenishments, delays, and demand-led buying, and the moving pieces multiply. Products move in and out of pre-order. Ship dates change. Inventory needs to be allocated. Customers need accurate communication. Payments, fulfillment, and integrations all need to work together.

As pre-orders become a larger part of the growth strategy, the manual processes that worked for an occasional launch become harder to sustain. Teams need to manage pre-order and in-stock sales side by side without adding operational complexity or creating a fragmented customer experience.

At scale, the question is no longer simply, Can we sell this product before it arrives? It becomes: *How do we automate these workflows across the business while keeping the experience clear and consistent for customers?*

SCALING PRE-ORDERS REQUIRES INFRASTRUCTURE BUILT TO SCALE

A scalable pre-order program needs more than the ability to add a pre-order label to a product page. Five things need to work together across the pre-order experience:

1. Defining your pre-order strategy: Determine where pre-orders can create the most value, which products and moments qualify, who owns each part of the program, and how success will be measured. This approach ensures pre-orders can be planned, evaluated, and improved rather than managed reactively.

2. Supply chain visibility: Once your pre-order strategy is set, you need to know what goes on pre-order, when, how much you can sell, and what estimated ship date you can confidently give customers. That requires visibility into incoming inventory and purchase orders, quantity allocation, changes to POs or products, and safeguards against overselling. And because reliable estimated ship dates remain a pain point even for experienced pre-order brands, the ability to establish and maintain confidence in those dates is critical.

3. Commerce and payments processes: How will you take pre-orders to maximize conversion? How customers pay for a pre-order can have a direct impact on conversion. That means creating a clear product page and checkout experience, choosing the right payment model (pay now, deposit, or pay later) and determining when payments are authorized and collected. Cancellations, refunds, promotions, taxes, and fraud handling all need to work seamlessly within the pre-order experience.

4. Order orchestration and fulfillment: Once pre-orders come in, they need to flow seamlessly through your existing operations. That means integrating with your OMS, ERP, WMS, and 3PL workflows while accounting for the added complexity of mixed carts, split or combined shipments, partial fulfillment, and exceptions.

5. Customer trust and compliance: The post-purchase experience is what helps make pre-orders a lasting way to generate revenue. Customers need clear estimated ship dates and communication at every touchpoint, including proactive updates when those dates change. Clear consent and cancellation paths, self-service order status and cancellation, and visibility for CX teams help keep the experience transparent, compliant, and trustworthy from purchase through fulfillment.

When these five pieces work together, pre-orders can scale without adding complexity behind the scenes or friction for the customer. Astrid & Miyu and Knockaround show what that looks like from both sides: making pre-orders easier to operate internally and designing an experience customers can trust.

AUTOMATE THE WORK, NOT JUST THE SALE

Astrid & Miyu already knew pre-orders worked. The problem was everything its team had to do to keep them working.

Each week, the team manually reviewed inventory and purchase orders, tracked spreadsheets and delivery dates, configured products, and updated estimated ship dates. And because the process depended on people catching every pre-order opportunity, products could simply get missed.

THE MANUAL PROCESS HAD BECOME THE CONSTRAINT

Purple Dot connected directly to Astrid & Miyu's ERP and applied the brand's business rules to automatically identify eligible products, move them into pre-order, manage inventory holdbacks, and keep shipping dates aligned with incoming inventory.

The impact: **68% uplift in pre-order sales** while eliminating approximately two days of manual work every month.



68%

Uplift in pre-order sales

While eliminating approximately two days of manual work every month.

THE TAKEAWAY:

Scaling pre-orders shouldn't mean scaling the workload. Automation can remove manual work while helping brands capture more of the demand already there.

> Going live with Purple Dot's Pre-order Automation enabled us to see the true value of pre-orders at scale. It was easy to activate and we wish we had operated like this from day 1 of our pre-order strategy.
>
> Anita Akai
> Merchandiser, Astrid & Miyu

~30 minutes

to establish the business logic. No ERP changes required.

Purple Dot automated a pre-order process Astrid & Miyu had previously managed manually.

MAKE SCALE WORK FOR THE CUSTOMER

Operational efficiency is only half the equation. Scaling pre-orders should also preserve the experience and values customers expect from the brand.

For Knockaround, that meant staying true to its mission of making quality sunglasses affordable. Because the brand regularly launches products before inventory arrives, it preferred to give customers the option to make a smaller upfront payment rather than pay in full months before receiving their order.

With Purple Dot, Knockaround could easily configure split payments and automate collection of the remaining balance when the order was ready to ship. This allowed the brand to scale pre-orders without adding manual payment workflows while delivering an affordable, trusted experience aligned with its mission.

Customers pay **10% at checkout and the remaining 90% when the product ships.** Behind the scenes, Purple Dot manages the payment process and integrates with Knockaround's existing technology stack, including NetSuite.

The integration took less than a week, and Knockaround has sold more than 60% of inventory before it even reached the warehouse.

SCALE PRE-ORDERS WITHOUT COMPROMISE

Knockaround scaled pre-orders with flexible payments while delivering the trusted experience its customers expect.

60%+
OF INVENTORY SOLD before it reached the warehouse.

10% AT CHECKOUT
90% WHEN IT SHIPS



THE TAKEAWAY:

A scalable pre-order strategy shouldn't ask customers or internal teams to accommodate the system. The infrastructure should flex around the way the brand wants to sell.



> With Purple Dot, our pre-orders meet the high bar we set for our end-to-end customer experience. Now, we never hesitate to launch a product early, even if it's not yet in our warehouse.
>
> Jakob Bechgaard
> Director eCommerce, Knockaround

FROM SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY TO SCALABLE SYSTEM

Astrid & Miyu and Knockaround show the two sides of scale: make pre-orders easier to operate internally and dependable for customers externally.

Ecommerce shouldn't have to manually manage every product. Operations shouldn't have to work around pre-orders. And customers shouldn't have to accept a lesser experience because they're buying before inventory arrives.

A scalable pre-order program makes the strategy dependable for everyone involved without adding another layer of manual work every time it expands.

PART 5: FIND YOUR GROWTH OPPORTUNITY

Identify the pre-order strategy best suited to your products, inventory model, and growth goals.

WHERE IS YOUR NEXT PRE-ORDER GROWTH OPPORTUNITY?

For brands new to pre-orders, the opportunity starts with identifying where you can solve a meaningful inventory challenge or unlock new growth. For brands already using them, it is about expanding beyond one-off launches and building a more strategic, scalable program. The bigger opportunity is asking how to turn a tactical approach into an embedded strategy that can create ongoing value across your business.

Could you capture more demand across launches, replenishments, or delays? Use the demand you're already seeing to make smarter inventory decisions? Make the entire program easier to operate and more dependable for your teams and customers?

That's the progression leading brands are making: capture demand for inventory already on its way, use committed demand to make smarter decisions about what comes next, and build the infrastructure to operate reliably at scale.

SELL WHAT YOU MAKE. MAKE WHAT YOU SELL. THEN SCALE.

The question isn't whether pre-orders work. It's where they could create the greatest value next.

READY TO FIND YOUR OPPORTUNITY?

Purple Dot can help you identify the right starting point, uncover gaps in an existing strategy, and build a plan to grow pre-orders with greater control and confidence.

REQUEST A PRE-ORDER STRATEGY CONSULT →

PURPLE DOT

ABOUT PURPLE DOT

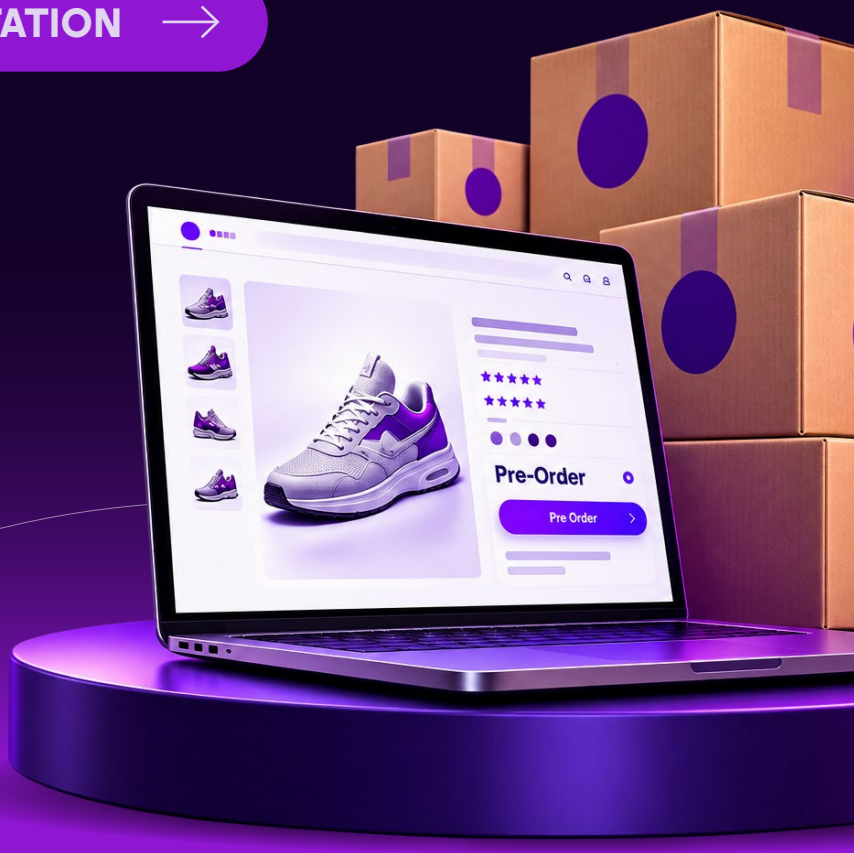
SELL SOONER.
OPERATE SMARTER.
DELIGHT YOUR CUSTOMERS.

Purple Dot is the premium pre-order platform for flexible commerce. We help brands sell before inventory arrives, capture revenue earlier, and give customers confidence from purchase to delivery.

With automated workflows, clear customer communication, and support from our team, you can make pre-orders a repeatable part of your growth strategy.

Whether you're planning your first pre-order or expanding an existing program, let's explore where you can capture more demand and how to make it work for your business.

BOOK A PRE-ORDER CONSULTATION →



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