Fynd

If Software Were Free, Would Anyone Change?

AI is taking the cost of software toward zero. That will not transform Indian business on its own. The real limit is how much change a company can absorb.

Farooq Adam, Founder of Fynd

3 November 2026 · 4 min read

The true ceiling on adoption is not what customers can pay. It is how much change they can absorb.

1 The Free Test

Here is a simple test for any product. If it were free, would demand become infinite?

Palmer Luckey, who built the Oculus headset, applied this test to virtual reality. The answer was no. Make the headset free, and most people still stop using it within weeks. Make a ticket to the moon free, and most of us still stay at home. The price goes to zero. The cost does not. Risk, effort and fear remain.

This question matters now because AI is doing to software what the internet did to information. A screen that took a team three months to build now takes an afternoon. A workflow that once needed a vendor and a long contract now needs a clear description of what the business wants. Software is on its way to becoming nearly free.

If price were the thing that held companies back, every retailer, distributor and manufacturer in India would transform this year. They will not. A retailer does not rebuild itself because a licence became cheaper. A factory does not change its floor because code became free. Something else is in the way.

After more than a decade of building commerce technology for Indian and global businesses, I see six things in the way. The first is risk: if the store stops, someone takes the blame. The second is the cost of change: the software is cheap, but retraining people and rewiring old systems is not. The third is imagination: many leaders do not know what to ask for. The fourth is proof: nobody wants to go first. The fifth is ownership: if nobody inside the company wins when the project works, nothing moves. The sixth is bandwidth: an organisation can absorb only a few big changes in a year.

The true ceiling on adoption is not what customers can pay. It is how much change they can absorb.

2 What Commerce Will Look Like in 2027

The gap between free software and slow adoption will define the next two years of commerce. Several shifts are already visible.

© 2026 Shopsense Retail Technologies Limited. All rights reserved.

The customer will often be an AI agent. A growing share of shopping will start with an agent that compares, negotiates and buys on behalf of a person. That agent does not see a banner. It reads product data, prices, promises and return policies. Brands whose data machines cannot read will not be found.

The storefront will dissolve. Commerce is moving into chat, voice, video and agents. The website becomes one surface among many, and every surface needs the same truth about product, price and stock.

Dashboards will give way to actions. Instead of training managers to read reports, systems will propose specific actions: move this stock, change this price, fix this display. The manager accepts or rejects. Each decision teaches the system.

Customers will pay for outcomes, not logins. When software is nearly free, nobody pays for a seat. Businesses will pay for orders delivered, margin gained and stock-outs avoided.

The store and the factory will move closer to the customer. Every store becomes a warehouse, a showroom and a returns point at once. Demand signals will reach the factory floor in hours, not seasons, and production runs will get smaller.

Content will become infinite, and trust will become scarce. Every product and every customer will get its own images, video and copy. When machines write the content and agents do the buying, verified data and guaranteed outcomes become the premium.

In every one of these shifts, the technology is the easy part. The hard part is the change.

3 Abundance Moves the Scarcity

When software, content and intelligence are nearly free, value moves to what is still scarce: trust, attention, judgment, deep knowledge of a domain, and the human capacity to change.

This changes what businesses should ask of their technology partners. The question is no longer “How cheap is your software?” It is “How much change can you help me absorb, safely?” The partner who does the integration, takes the outcome risk and makes the future visible will matter more than the partner with the lowest price.

There is one more scarce thing that most boardrooms are not yet discussing: security. Every change a company makes in the AI era also opens a new door for attackers who now use AI themselves. That is the subject of my next article.

Price is not the problem. Fear, effort and imagination are. The companies that win this decade will be the ones that remove all three.

Farooq Adam is the Founder of Fynd.

Sources

Palmer Luckey, “Free isn’t Cheap Enough”, 30 October 2018.
https://palmerluckey.com/free-isnt-cheap-enough/

The series

1. If Software Were Free, Would Anyone Change? · current
2. The Attack Surface of Change
3. Choose Partners Who Can Defend and React

Read the series online at secure.fynd.space/insights

© 2026 Shopsense Retail Technologies Limited. All rights reserved.