



KEEPING UP EXPERIENCES FROM CUSTOMER TO EMPLOYEE

Solution Brief

The widespread digital transformation of retail operations has empowered businesses to keep running and thrive financially, even in the face of labor and supply chain challenges. But as retailers seek to mature their digital approaches, gaps in both customer and employee experiences are surfacing.

Sure, digital-first approaches to the physical store have seen rocketing success with the likes of services such as click and collect (buying online and picking up in store) and curbside pickup. But these services often aren't fully optimized to support the customer's path to purchase or the associate service process. To optimize both areas of the retail associate and customer environments, retailers need to leverage data in way that allows them to clearly see gaps in both customer experience and associate workflows.

FORGING CROSS-CHANNEL CONNECTIONS

In-store associates need to be part of retailers' digital experience and equipped to deliver more in tighter timeframes as they navigate the eternal tide of customer demand. As 66% of consumers prefer to engage with brands digitally, and pure-play online retailers have ramped up the speed of delivery and choice, physical stores

must respond by facilitating memorable and seamless customer experiences.

Many consumers begin their connection with retailers online long before they even consider stepping foot in store. As such, associates need to be empowered to become 'omniassociates' – supporting the merging physical and digital worlds by making the purchase journey effortless throughout. Customers entering brick-and-mortar stores are even more digitally informed about products within and no longer must rely on the expertise or influence of the store associate. Who and where they choose to buy a product from is also often pre-determined based on online visibility of stock availability.

As John Furner, U.S. President and CEO of Walmart, aptly pointed out at NRF, "Loyalty in retail is the absence of something better." Understanding how customers are evolving and adapting services to cater to those needs is essential to maintaining relevance.

The store isn't becoming redundant – retailers just need to rethink how digital approaches can help them match the efficiency and nimble nature of eCommerce giants. They must redirect lost focus back to the store, knowing where and how to drive constantly faster, easier, personalized and hybrid experiences.

66%

of consumers prefer to engage with brands digitally¹

4.3 million

workers have left the US workforce²

35%

boost in overall productivity³

¹ nrffigshow.nrf.com

² forbes.com

³ Average result based on Honeywell Customer Implementations. Results may vary.

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INSIGHTS WITHIN ARM'S REACH

Poor employee efficiency and productivity is often a barrier to positive experiences. Rising wages, inflation and increasingly squeezed margins show no sign of easing and it's estimated that 4.3 million workers have left the US workforce – meaning that existing associates' roles are becoming more fluid as they make up for diminishing headcounts. They need to work effectively across all operations, and to do that they need rapid training to deliver seamless experiences at each touchpoint, from the back room to the point of sale.

Deploying mobility devices is one such essential tactic to getting new employees off to a head start and maximizing the existing workforce. Access to immediate data about products, inventory, supply and customer activity means associates can stay knowledgeable about the brand's products and make informed decisions about workflow priorities based on customer activity and real-time analytics.

Such devices have previously been underused, yet when they are fully leveraged, they serve as a gateway to the customer – workflows connected at the edge offer a way in to getting the right stock on the floor at the right time. They can also support faster in-store fulfillment and boost overall productivity by 35% , as well as relieving frustrations from workforce experiences - whether it's a device that empowers people to train in a new role quickly and easily, or a way to make their days more rewarding with better communications.

The nature of mobile solutions, however, has often held retailers back from realizing their full value. They can create

an additional dimension of operational headaches in delivering a competitive customer experience. If misplaced, lost or not properly maintained, the cost to the business mount up considerably – costs that inevitably get passed on to the consumer and damage reputations.

STAYING IN CONTROL OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

On the face of things, customer experiences may be set up for success – with all the right tools to help associates give customers what they want. However, the efficiency of creating experiences is often let down by a lack of data to make them valuable.

Buying behaviors are easily changed, meaning that eliminating the friction in the way people interact with a brand – whether it's how they shop, pay, engage with associates, or access product information – goes a long way. But without dynamic visibility of the retail environment, it's near impossible to make mobile devices deliver on these experiences.

Something seemingly inconsequential such as a drained battery or a poorly timed update, for instance, can result in downtime and an associate left unable to answer customer queries or efficiently replenish or re-order items for the store. The impact on productivity is one thing, but the outcome of bad customer experiences can leave lasting damage.

Retailers must think about the relationship between people, physical assets and software, staying tuned into how the environment works efficiently as a whole. For example, greater visibility and analysis of tasks can flag improvements



for how people and assets can seamlessly join forces to elevate performance – and subsequently experiences.

A centralized view of what's happening across the enterprise can improve device lifespan and ensure that associates are always ready to deliver at the drop of a hat. Retailers can greatly benefit from having a full scope of data showing how their deployed devices and associates are working together. They can then leverage this data to improve workflows, elevate customer experiences and ensure customer service is aligned with customer expectation.

THE RISE OF THE DATA-FRIENDLY STORE

The physical store's evolution from a transactional focus to an experiential focus means that it's more important than ever to free employees to deliver greater value efficiently while mitigating disruption. As stores merge towards eCommerce approaches by harnessing customer and product data across the journey with smart solutions and software, the opportunity for richer engagements evolves.

This is not the end of the store; it's the time for a renewed, digital focus on its operations to combine the best of both worlds.

For more information

sps.honeywell.com

Honeywell Safety and Productivity Solutions

855 South Mint Street
Charlotte, NC 28202
800-582-4263
www.honeywell.com