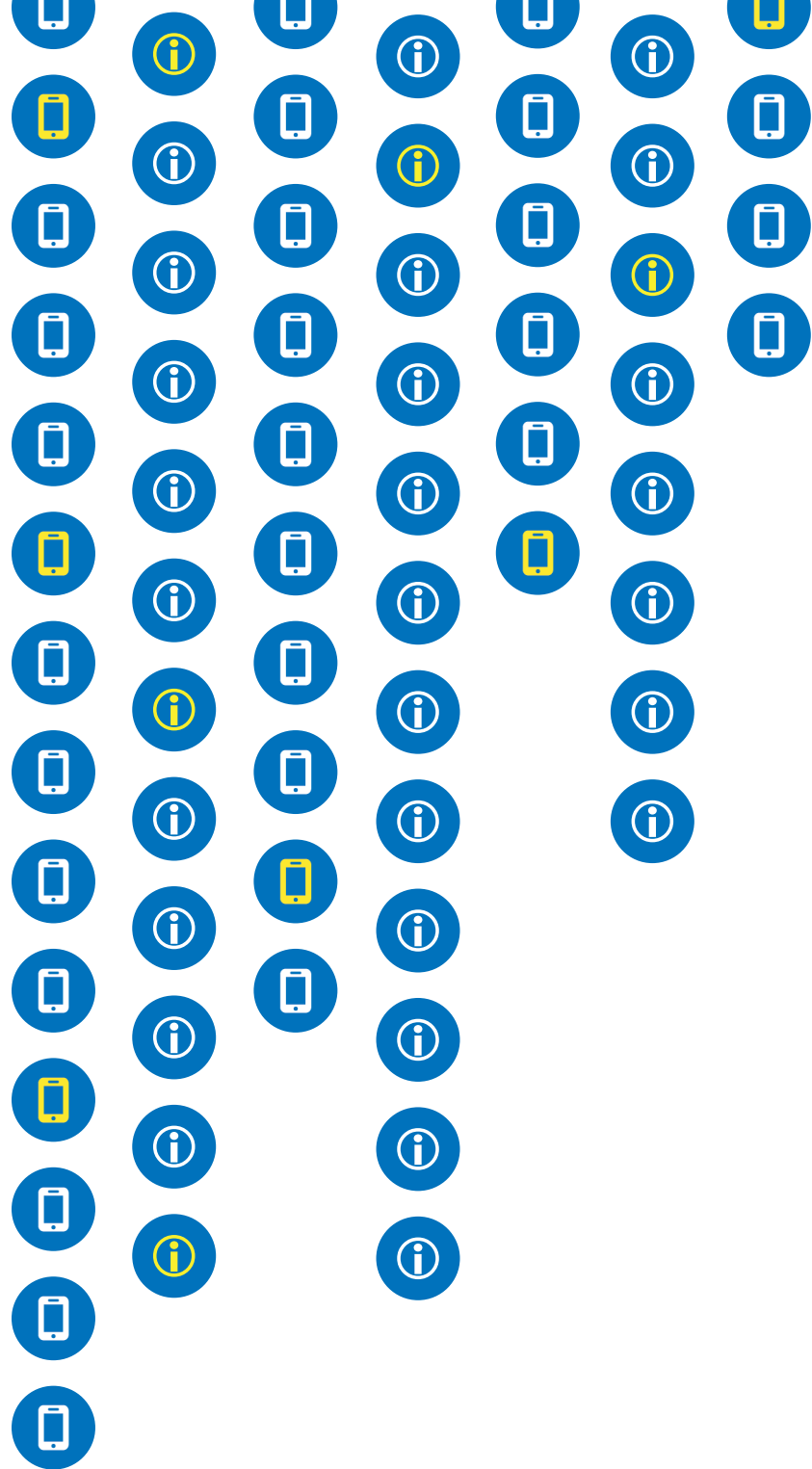In cooperation with

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THE FUTURE OF COMMERCE

The Omnicommerce Insight Series

IMPROVING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE WITH IN-STORE MOBILITY TECHNOLOGY

Converging Physical and Digital Selling into a Seamless, Cohesive Experience

Many consumers vividly remember the first time they walked into an Apple retail store and were pleasantly surprised that the same employee who answered their questions about iPads and iMacs could also process their purchase and provide a richer experience by leveraging a mobile device. Consequently, many retail executives now instinctively want to recreate the "Apple store experience" when they're implementing their own in-store mobility solutions. That's a good place to start, but it's not where the thought process should end.

This paper describes how a comprehensive mobile point-of-sale system can serve as the glue that holds together all of the different tangible and digital channels used today by retailers – but within the walls of a physical shopping location. A well-conceived in-store mobility strategy can take advantage of the personalization features of online digital channels, the scan and research features of mobile channels, the special discounts offered on social channels, and the instantly accessible inventory of physical storefronts.

A superior user experience is created when the digital and physical worlds are connected together. POS mobility solutions can be best used when they are fully connected to the online environment – to view stock levels across the entire organization, and use the barcode scanning capabilities of tablets to access rich product information. Leveraging all of the technology and capabilities together in one place delivers newer, richer, more unique consumer experiences that significantly increase brand appeal, customer loyalty, and revenues.

The Era of the Endless Aisle

The emerging age of thoroughly integrated retailing is dominated by a new breed of customer; one who is hyper-connected, always on, and routinely expects merchants to provide a real-time response to their every demand.

Whether the shopper is browsing online or visually scanning the shelves of a favorite store, it's important to note that her relationship with the retailer is not built on the limitations of the channel, but on her personal perspectives and feelings about the brand.

Shoppers may use different channels simultaneously – for example, checking prices on a mobile phone while standing in a store. The lines between channels are blurring, and retailers need to interconnect all of them in order to fulfill customer expectations.

For retailers, the best way to understand the shopper's perception is to think of their entire inventory in terms of an "endless aisle" – a continuum of products stocked across online, in-store, and distribution centers that the customer can access and purchase from any touchpoint.

This model demands an operational seamlessness that allows staff to fulfill customers' wishes regardless of channel, stock limitations, or time – an imperative difficult to achieve without investing in a very competent customer-centric infrastructure.

Understanding how mobile point-of-sale can serve as a foundation for an endless aisle is the first phase of the process. Imagine this scenario:

→ A customer scours a department store for a particular size of jeans and asks a sales assistant for help.
→ The sales associate consults a tablet or smartphone that enables inventory visibility across the brick-and-mortar store network, as well as the online store and distribution centers, but without success.
→ Determined not to lose the sale, the associate drop ships the item directly from the wholesaler and arranges for it to be shipped to the store the following week.

This example illustrates how mobile point-of-sale technology and smart fulfillment models can work together to create in-store flexibility and give customers access to an endless aisle – an offering that's playing a growing role in long-term retail survival and success.

The outcome cultivates satisfaction and customer loyalty while optimizing revenue opportunities.
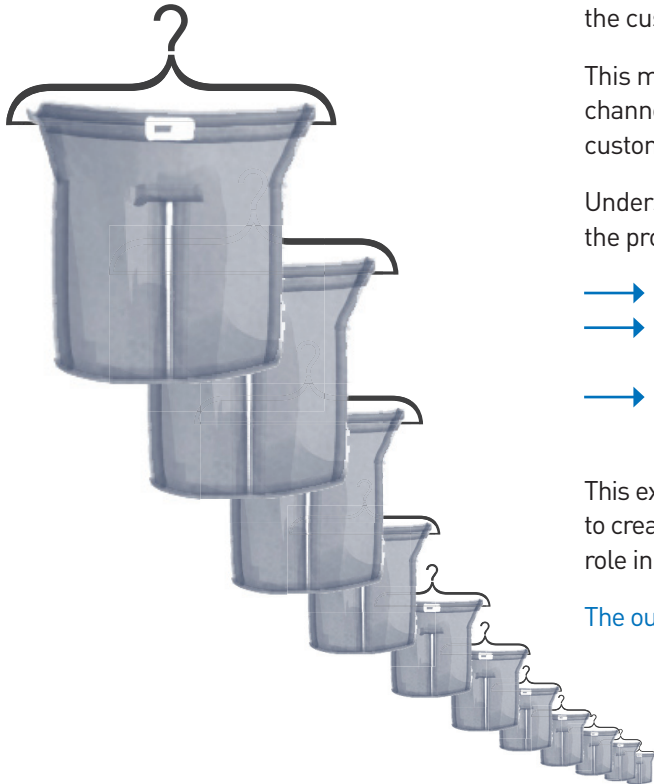
Three Retailers Who Excel with In-Store Mobility

Technology giant Apple may be best known for its sleek, user-friendly mobile devices, but it has also mastered the relationship between in-store mobility and the type of fluid shopping experience that keeps customers coming back. Apple was among the first brands to introduce mobile point-of-sale systems to empower sales people at every stage of the customer journey – from product research and comparison to closing and processing the sale. Apple's use of mobile point-of-sale systems heightens the intimacy of the interaction between customers and staff members, a factor with direct implications for brand loyalty down the road.

For adventure retailer Moosejaw Mountaineering, an omni-channel outlook isn't an optional extra but serves as the primary catalyst for everything they do. The retailer's in-store mobility strategy focuses heavily on driving customer engagement at every step of the buying process, leveraging every customer touchpoint is an opportunity to strengthen awareness of the brand. Moosejaw's brick-and-mortar stores are divided into customer engagement areas rather than traditional point-of-sale stations – sites of customer service activity around which shoppers converge. This also means that the pre-purchase and research stages of the customer experience are treated as equal to the transaction itself, a perspective that shows customers that they're always front and center in the retailer's mind.

Omni-channel fulfillment is essential to creating an endless aisle, yet it's an aspect of in-store mobility that often eludes retailers. Eastern Mountain Sports has made it easy for sales associates to address specific demands from in-store customers by effortlessly accessing online and warehouse inventory and shipping into the store. Sales associates can search an item across the entire inventory on a mobile point-of-sale device and identify the relevant item in real time. This creates a customer-centric shopping experience and minimizes the chances of losing a sale.
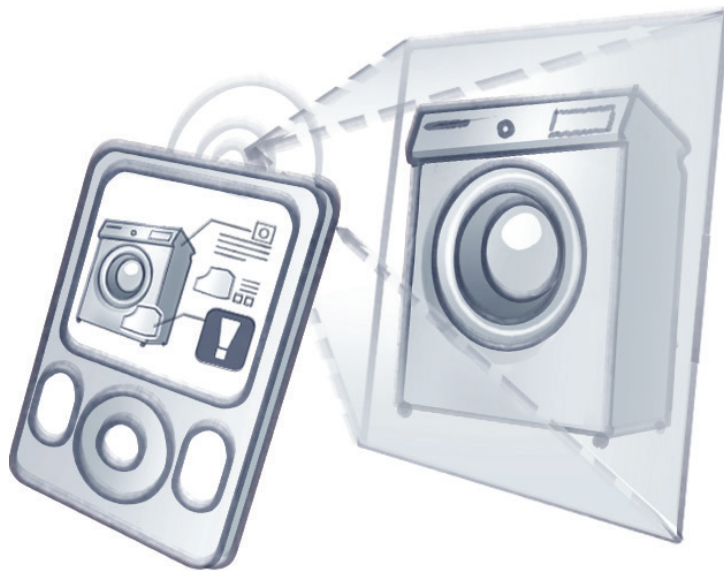
Demand for Deeper Product Research

The desire to make smart, well-researched purchasing decisions is one of the major objectives of today's consumer. The rise of easily accessible digital information has meant that customers can instantly access complex product information in real-time, applying insights on availability, product attributes, pricing information, high-resolution images, customer reviews, and product range at every stage of their journey.

→ Comparison shopping is a fundamental part of the pre-purchase research process, and is becoming increasingly common among customers standing, walking, and browsing in-store with wireless devices.

→ This phenomenon is taking a serious toll on retailers who fail to create a customer experience that addresses this unavoidable behavior.

→ Ensuring that sales associates can help customers conduct product research and analyze complex attributes – and then guiding customers with all the product information they need through the buying process – are essential for designing an in-store mobility strategy that responds to emerging requirements.

Providing all of this information to sales associates and making them part of the product research process can help heighten customer loyalty and serve as a decisive factor in completing the sale. Sales associates should be armed with mobile devices and easy access to rich product information – such as technical specifications, product reviews, data on similar products, manufacturing and warranty details – and be able to drill down and retrieve this information upon request.

Designing an in-store mobility strategy that encourages customers to conduct product research can powerfully boost brand credibility and customer intimacy, while paving the way for further growth.

A Rage for Ratings and Reviews

Ratings and reviews are a powerful catalyst for conversion. According to 2012 statistics compiled by social commerce provider Revoo[1], brands that included ratings, reviews, and product recommendations across their website enjoyed an 18% increase in sales.

Product reviews published on third-party sites can also inspire customer loyalty and sharpen awareness of a brand – factors that can generate foot traffic and help brick-and-mortar customers commit to making a purchase.

HOW CAN RETAILERS USE RATINGS AND REVIEWS TO FOSTER A SUCCESSFUL IN-STORE MOBILITY STRATEGY?

→ Recognize that user-generated content represents an important source of purchasing information; incorporate it across mobile, online, and social channels.

→ Ratings and reviews can also give rise to a powerful form of in-store mobility, when coupled with a location-specific mobile technology like GPS.

→ Customers who search for a store location can access online ratings and reviews for the very products they plan to shop for in-store and in real time.

→ Display customer reviews in-store at kiosks, or on sales clerks' mobile devices.

[1] Source: Reevoo, Ltd.

18%

(42 reviews)

4.3 out of 5
Durability   4.1 out of 5
Performance   4.3 out of 5

Continuous Cross-Channel Promotions

Adopting a cross-channel mindset can help lay the foundation for creating continuity, the heart of an in-store mobility best practice. Understanding the need for brand consistency across multiple customer touchpoints, and the way shoppers navigate between various channels, are key prerequisites to implementing mobility strategies with the customer at the core.

This is especially important in the area of customer promotions, where failure to provide seamless dialogue across all the channels can damage credibility and brand integrity.

It's essential that customers have the ability to redeem e-coupons or promotions issued via Twitter, Facebook and other social sources when frequenting brick-and-mortar stores. Failure to integrate online, offline, and social promotions can interrupt the customer journey and undermine shopper loyalty and conversions.
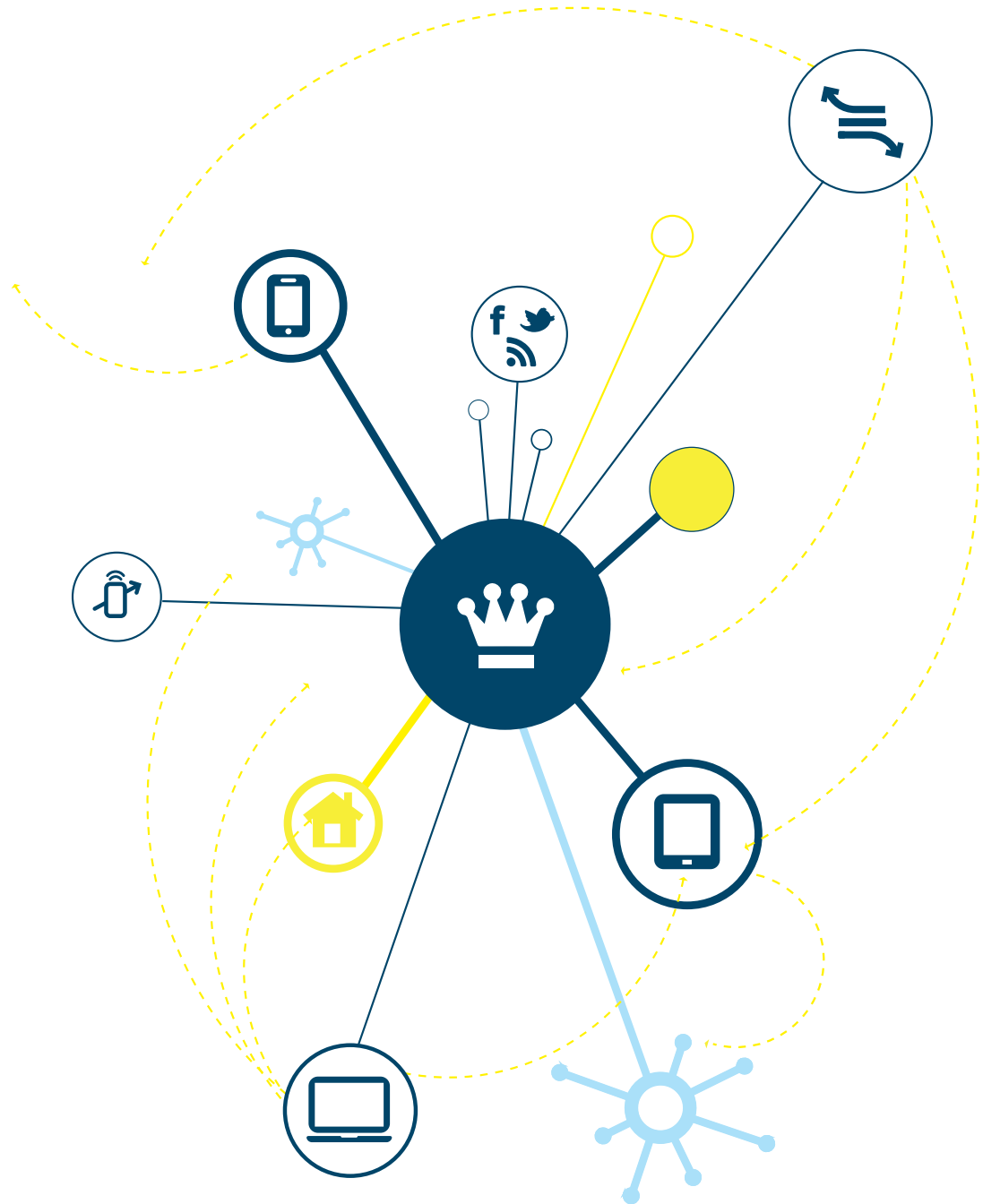
Everyone Loves Line Busting

Although in-store mobility is most often equated with creating a seamless customer experience, it's just as strongly premised on fostering customer convenience.

→ The practice of line busting – where sales associates eliminate cash register lines by using mobile devices to process payments – is a powerful case in point.

→ Line busting can relieve stress during busy periods, such as holidays and seasonal sales events, by providing an in-store solution that doesn't place demands on a customer's time.

→ This simple strategy can have a transformative impact on customer relationships while fueling an in-store mobility strategy that increases scale and stimulates profits.
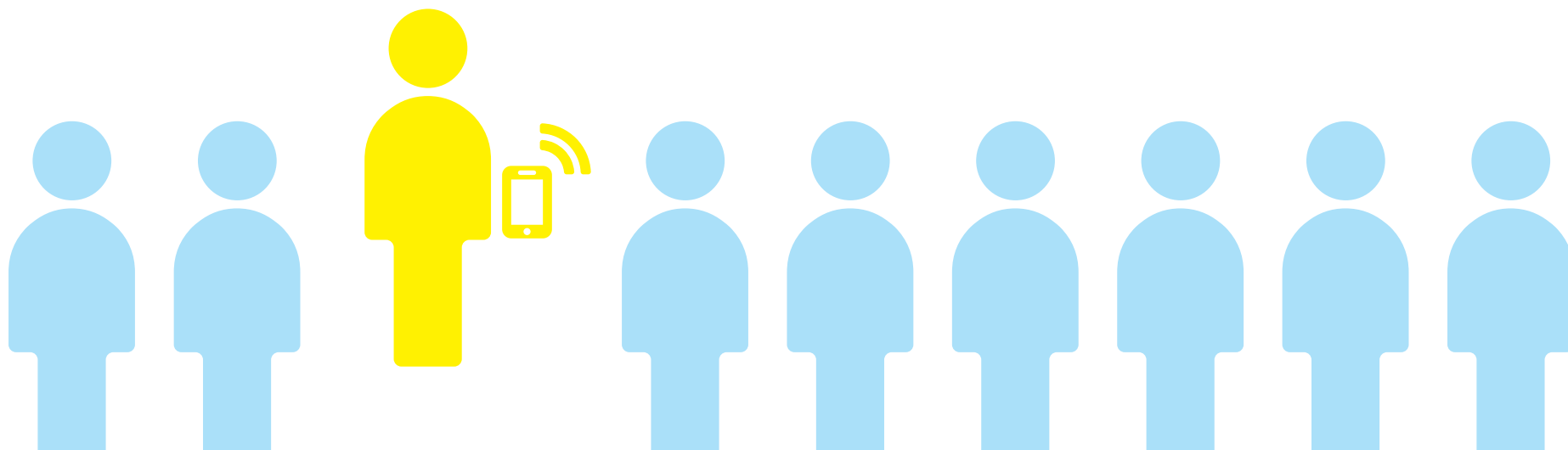
Price Matching, Please

Today's customer has unprecedented access to product range, brands, and choice. That's why it's important for retailers to develop a method to easily validate customer claims that they have found an item elsewhere at a lower price.

In recent years, the increasingly competitive retail market has made it critical for brands to engage in price matching. In-store solutions that allow sales associates to verify competitive prices result in a double benefit of customer retention and incremental sales.

On the other hand, brick and mortar retailers have higher overhead than pure plays, so price matching every competitive offering might not be a sustainable strategy. It may be wiser to deliver a superior level of customer service and customer satisfaction by enabling retailers to leverage cross-channel product information, pricing data, promotions, marketing materials, and inventory availability to increase customer loyalty over the long term and deliver sustainable profitability.

Pop-Up Stores Anywhere and Everywhere

In the last few years, pop-up stores have emerged as a more agile, economical alternative to the traditional, anchored, brick-and-mortar store. Downsizing floor space can not only generate serious savings in terms of operating costs, but can also allow retailers to create tightly curated offerings that appeal to customer preferences, buying habits, and tastes.

Effective in-store mobility solutions leveraging secure 3G and 4G networks can take the pop-up store concept one step further by making inventory available to everyone – from sales associates and floor managers to delivery personnel. In this way, pop-up stores present the ultimate example of in-store mobility – meeting the demands of the on-the-go customer on their own terms and time schedule.
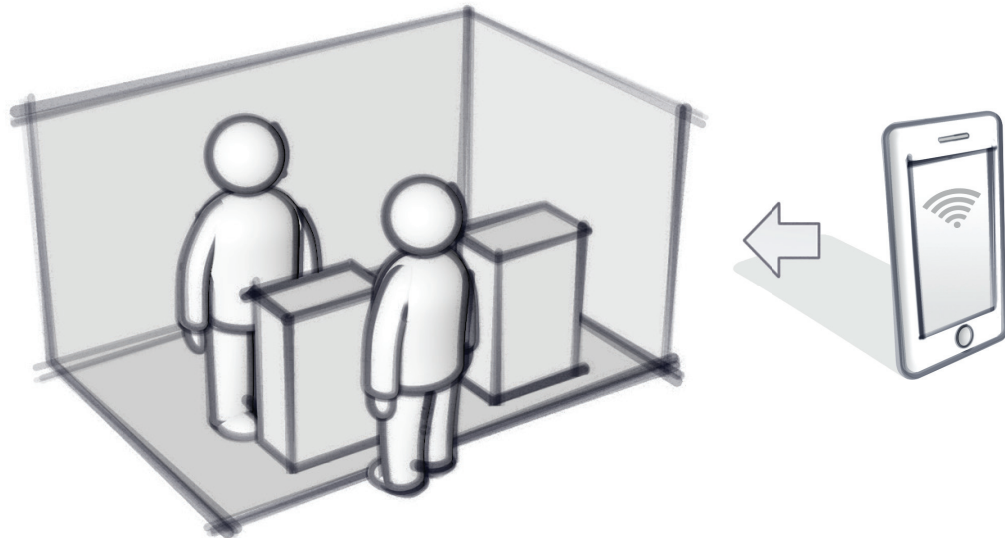
From the Field: Five Cautions on In-Store Mobility

Don't... Fail to be seamlessly integrated across multiple channels.

Ridding yourself of silos is critical for creating a mobile POS strategy to stand the test of time. Make sure you evaluate your organizational structure, workflow, and inventory so it speaks to the on-the-go customer while delivering flexibility.

Don't... Use amateur grade networking

It's essential that you invest in commercial-grade networking infrastructure to support your in-store mobility solution. Linking your lightning-fast point-of-sale device to low-cost solutions will do your reputation more harm than good.

Don't... Be tempted to use home or consumer-grade Wi-Fi networking devices

Ensuring that your in-store solution is equipped with business-grade wireless networking equipment with the proper bandwidth, reliability, and availability is one of the best measures you can take to assure customer satisfaction, convenience, and trouble-free transactions. Also, it's a wise idea to provide free customer Wi-Fi access within the store.

## Don't... Mix and Match In-Store Devices

While tablets and smartphones support in-store mobility in their own ways, each device demands a separate use case to line up with a specific customer need. For instance, a smartphone might be ideal for line-busting, but make sure that staff members are also equipped with digital tablets for accessing rich content and performing more readable product research.

Don't... Misalign Incentive Plans

It's a mistake to assume that the technology itself will be enough. Omni-channel commerce is as much a shift in business thinking as it is in platforms. Although the concept of an endless aisle might be easy to understand, grasping the dynamics of staff motivation is trickier. That's why it's essential to establish KPI's that reflect staff members' individual targets and goals. Failure to do this will demotivate resources and result in lax customer service and missed sales opportunities. Also, make sure that different parts of an organization are aligned on where to give credit for generated revenue. For example, if a store clerk pulls up an item online and has it delivered to a customer, the store should be credited for booking that revenue.

Mobile Point-of-Sale Enhances Communication, Collaboration and Loyalty
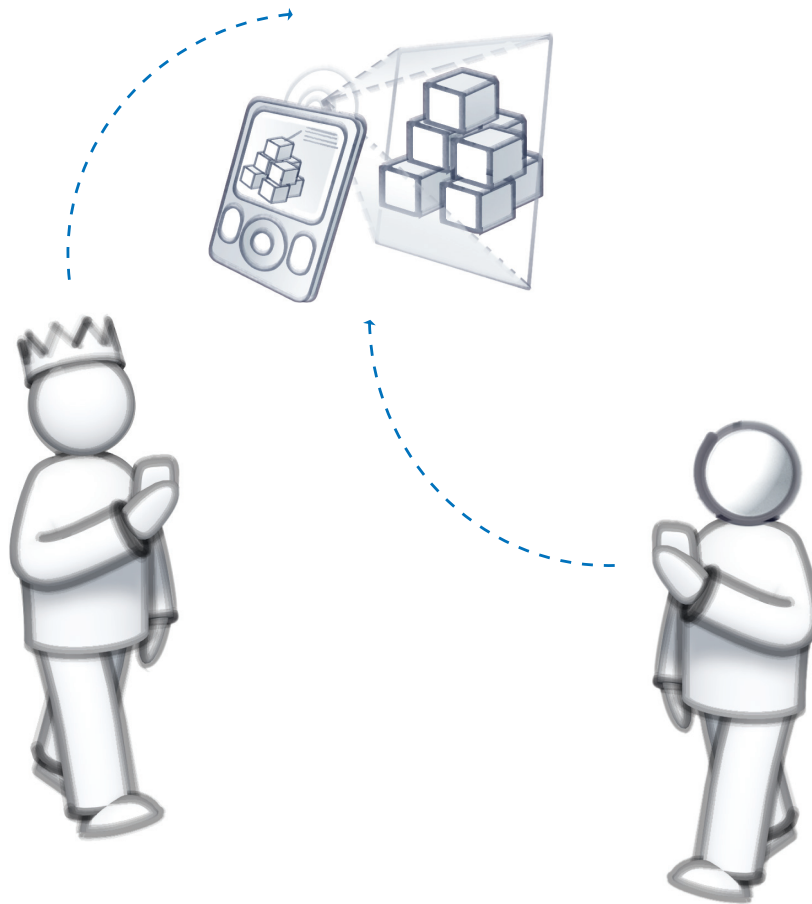
In-store mobility can remove the adversarial, competitive elements from the sales process and shift the focus to cooperation, collaboration, mutual respect, and productive exchange. In many ways, it's a testament to a new retail climate where brand loyalty is just as important as the way the customer perceives the brand over the long term.

In-store mobility erases tiered hierarchies by putting store associates on the same level as savvy, networked consumers who might have special knowledge and expertise to share. This can give rise to a more open dialogue that tightens customer loyalty, clearer communications, and higher revenues.

Ultimately, in-store mobility solutions smooth the transition for retailers into omni-channel commerce by connecting the physical store network with the online environment, and delivering an exceptional, seamless, user experience. Sales people in physical stores can embrace the portability of mobile devices to leverage content-rich online resources and better serve customers on-the-go.

About CrossView

CrossView is a premier provider of commerce solutions and services. Through retail technology and strategy services, we help leading brands to unify the Web, stores, call centers, mobile devices, and other channels on the hybris platform. Our E-Commerce for Retail solution offers a radically simple, fast and affordable way to build and launch web solutions to create a seamless shopping experience, while E-Commerce for B2B unites world-class commerce technology with proven online best practices to help clients drive revenue with greater efficiency. Across countless customer engagements, we've helped companies achieve their interactive objectives while ensuring the highest return on their technology investments.

For more information, visit www.crossview.com.

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hybris helps businesses on every continent sell more goods, services and digital content through every touchpoint, channel and device. hybris delivers „OmniCommerce™": state-of-the-art master data management and unified commerce processes that give a business a single view of its customers, products and orders, and its customers a single view of the business. hybris´ omni-channel software is built on a single platform, based on open standards, that is agile to support limitless innovation, efficient to drive the best TCO, and scalable and extensible to be the last commerce platform companies will ever need. Both principal industry analyst firms rank hybris as a "leader" and list its commerce platform among the top two or three in the market. The same software is available on-premise, on-demand and managed hosted, giving merchants of all sizes maximum flexibility. Over 500 companies have chosen hybris, including global B2B sites W.W.Grainger, Rexel, General Electric, Thomson Reuters and 3M as well as consumer brands Toys"R"Us, Metro, Bridgestone, P&G, Levi´s, Nikon, Galeries Lafayette, Migros, Nespresso and Lufthansa. hybris has operations in 15 countries around the globe. hybris is the future of commerce™.

For more information, visit **www.hybris.com**.

If you'd like to discuss the strategies described in this paper, or meet with one of our e-commerce solutions experts to help you expand upon these concepts, please feel free to send us an email message or call our nearest office.

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