

The Store of the Future: 10 Ways to Make People Love Shopping Again

In-store shopping is losing out to an increase in online sales - learn how to bring your customers back to store.



People love buying, as shown by retail sales pushing steadily higher for well over a year¹ since the dark days of recession. But people don't seem to love shopping the way they used to due to being so time poor. Rekindling the love of shopping means reconnecting with consumers' desire for a tactile, social and enjoyable experience in today's omni-channel retail environment. People use their leisure time less frequently for shopping than they used to, so appealing to their desire for convenience is key to bringing them back in-store.

Here are 10 ways in which retailers can put the passion back into purchasing and successfully enticing people back into stores.

1. Making it more friendly

The customer service skills of retail staff, or if there is a lack of them, make a massive difference to the shopping experience.



20%

of shoppers feel that a smartphone will be able to answer their questions just as well, if not better, than a sales assistant.

Many online retailers have grasped the importance of customer service for winning and retaining customers. Omni-channel systems can provide the information that facilitates staff to provide good customer service, such as being able to provide product offerings and stock availability. It's time that stores retrained their assistants, particularly on technology that can improve the shopping experience, if they want to keep up with online stores.

This technology can even be as simple as providing sales assistants with iPads, so they can access information more quickly

Dixons gained a lot of attention last year when it changed the way it rewards floor staff². Instead of winning commission on sales, staff now receive a bonus linked to customer satisfaction. The shift marks changing customer demands; people don't want a hard sell, but they do want helpful information when they ask for it.

2. Making it easier

Successful omni-channel retailing blends the best of the online and bricks and mortar retail experience, making it easy and enjoyable for shoppers to buy. Click and Collect is proving to be hugely popular, offering customers added convenience to collect their goods.



Promoting offers directly to customers when they enter the store has become tantalisingly close, through the use of Beacon technology. Waitrose is just one of several retailers experimenting with the technology by pushing promotional messages via an app to customers' smartphones while they are in-store. The same technology could guide someone to the section of the store they're interested in and even perform the purchase, skipping the need to queue. Could it get much easier?



3. Taking advantage of technology

Sales staff with iPads or wireless headsets are an increasingly common sight, allowing them to answer questions or access stock much faster. Shoppers are also able to make immediate purchases as they are able to make transactions anywhere in the store. This improves on the day conversion rates. More than a third of shoppers think that sales staff should be equipped with tablets to help them answer questions faster and more accurately.

Omni-channel retailer of the year, John Lewis⁴, is taking technology so seriously that it's launched a technology incubator – JLAB⁵. The first winners are using Beacon technology to give customers access to specific services based on their precise location in the store.

Customers know that technology can make shopping more enjoyable and they want to see retailers using it.

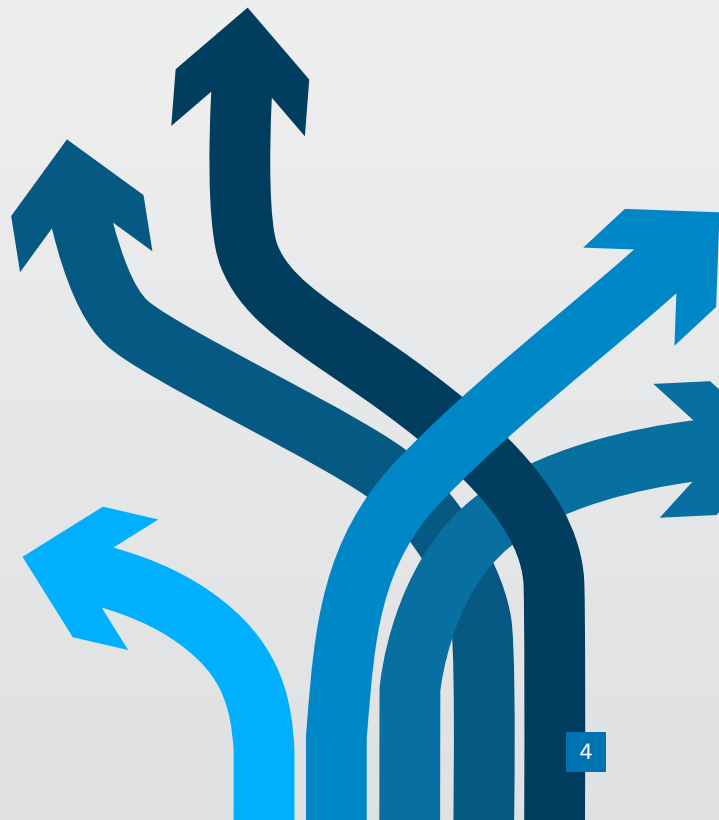
House of Fraser is one retailer already implementing the new Beacon technology by sending information about the products worn by mannequins, including purchase links and prices, to customers in-store.

4. Making it seamless

The generation that's grown up with the internet sees little distinction between buying online and offline. Their shopping journey might start on a tablet, then a mobile, then in-store, while still checking the internet. What they want is a consistent experience with no barriers between channels. This connected shopping experience can be achieved by offering apps whereby customers can add something to their basket at home before coming in-store to purchase it.

5. Offering choice

Choice is an exciting part of the shopper's experience, which is why barriers to choice are a deterrent. Some retailers are using mobile technology such as iPads to expand their product offering, without reducing already limited floorspace. Retailers' full eCommerce range is then available in-store. Choice is about more than just the mix of goods on the rail or on the shelf; it includes delivery options and even access to wifi for online comparison. To boost choice, successful retailers have chain-wide visibility of stock and have cut delivery times to within two or three days⁶.





Four out of ten people
say availability of free wifi influences the
choice of where they shop.



Half of all online shoppers
have abandoned transactions because the
delivery options did not meet their needs⁷.

6. Embracing storytelling

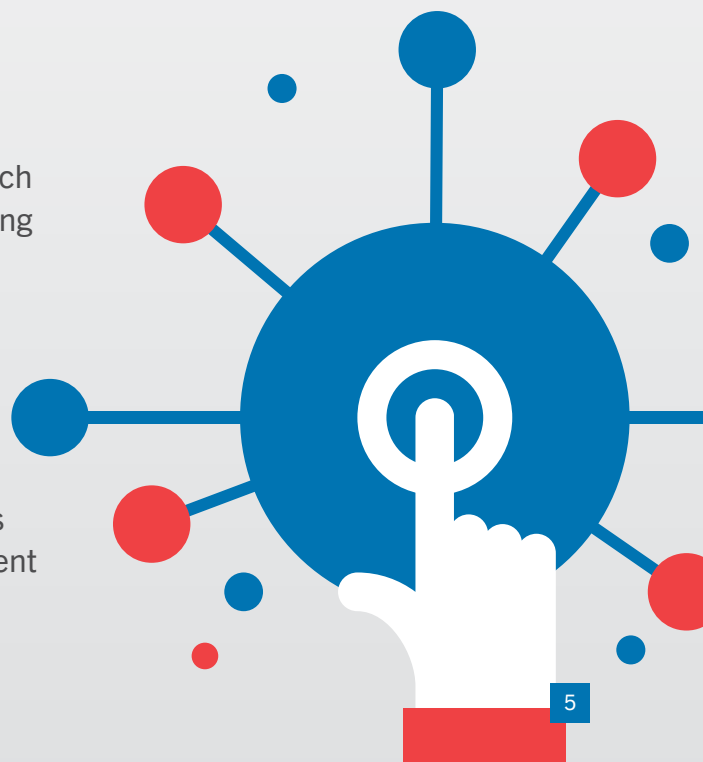
Marketers have grasped the power of the story to connect with customers. Apple understood the power of the story long before they got into retail and their stores maintain the minimalist 'we are different' theme. Details such as the roaming and wireless checkouts draw the customer into the brand story.

Aldi's down-to-earth, 'real' people advertising is part of the same storytelling narrative, with a strong connection to their practical, no-nonsense in-store experience. Take customers to a happy ending of their shopping experience and they'll keep coming back for more⁸.

7. Keeping it dynamic

Change and variety are essential to an exciting retail experience. Today's concept stores offer a technology-rich blend of entertainment, interactivity and shopping, making retail a destination not a chore.

The new JD Sports store in Manchester encourages customers to tweet and post on Facebook using the #JDTrafford hashtag. A social media wall allows them to see their messages. Once they've ordered footwear to try on, screens allow customers to track their progress from the stockroom, holding their interest at every moment of the retail process.



8. Making it faster

Three out of four shoppers say queuing is the worst part of in-store shopping and most will abandon their purchase if the wait is more than five minutes⁹.



Queue-busting technology unlocks sales currently being lost. Fully transactional in-store iPads allow customers to make transactions anywhere in the store, while kiosks offer a dedicated ordering point in-store, thus reducing queueing time.

9. Making it personal

People love products that are ‘made for them’ and also ‘picked for them’. Personalised products don’t need to be unique, but they need to be presented in just the right way, at just the right time. This means understanding the customer at a whole new level. Social media and email are other channels being used to deliver personalised offers and information. The use of data capture in-store - for example, at the point of sale - means that customers can be targeted with relevant offers more effectively, increasing the likelihood that they will make purchases in-store.

10. Keeping it real

People know that one size does not fit all and that imperfection happens. Online retailers have embraced the practice of publishing customer reviews, warts and all, because it gives competitive advantage.

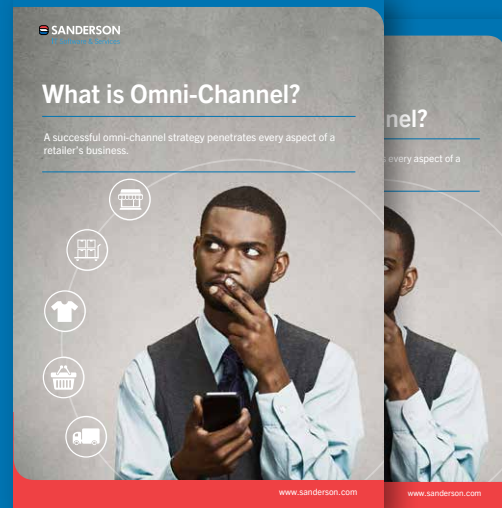
M&S use digital kiosks giving customers access to videos and product reviews. Some retailers use digital labels that can hold QR codes which, if scanned, could give links to product information and reviews.

By following these 10 tips, you’ll be encouraging your customers to love shopping in-store in no time.

Discover more ways to gain competitive advantage in a world that increasingly looks to online sales. Download your free eGuide:

What is Omni-Channel?

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