

COLUMNS

Are in-store tablets the right prescription for retail effectiveness?

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By **Jerry Rightmer**

In the near future, you are likely to see a device identical to the tablet you use at home to browse the Web or watch a video at the cash wrap of your favorite retailer. The phenomenon is not limited to a select group of luxury or consumer tech stores.

According to one estimate, retailers will be using more than 2 million tablets as payment terminals as early as 2016. In fact, one high profile retailer has gone as far as to say, "We placed our very last register order. We're out the register business."

So why is this relative newcomer to the retail scene replacing the iconic cash register? The retailers we work with have several reasons:

Cost-effective: The traditional cash register costs significantly more than a tablet not to mention that it takes up valuable counter space that could be put to more profitable use. Retailers can deploy more of them at a lower cost, busting cash wrap lines in the process, and update them with less disruption.

Intuitive functionality: For today's associates, the mobile interface is part of their daily lives. They are already power users. From their point of view, the retail-specific functionality is simply a new app that they need to learn. For the retailer, this means shorter training times required to bring associates up to speed and make them productive members of the team.

Personalized selling: Tablets give associates easy access to a customer's loyalty program information, purchase history and account information everything they need to tailor a transaction and personalize the sales experience.

Rich content: With the same device that they use to process a transaction, the associate can access product videos, social media conversations, and ratings and reviews to share with the customer an often-overlooked form of customer service in today's bricks-and-mortar stores.

Enhanced store operations: Tablets can also provide access to back-office capabilities and data store managers need for daily operations. Managers can complete store open and close tasks, access store and employee performance data and reporting, and maintain employee roles, security, and passwords without leaving the store floor.

Mobility: While retailers can certainly replace cash registers by installing tablets at a fixed location, the real game changer is the ability to make any point in the store a point of sale. The same device that associates on the floor use to access customer and product information can be used to process transactions on the spot. The tender process

can be a more seamless part of the entire in-store experience. Some tablet implementations can even process transactions offline, so power outages and network downtime do not have to bring business to a grinding halt.

CHANGING TECHNOLOGY is business as usual for the retail industry.

The tablet is the latest step in this evolution, and it is helping retailers provide customers with a true omnichannel shopping experience.

Tablets offer an intuitive, feature-rich and highly flexible platform that allows retailers to maintain a standard of service and consistency, regardless of which channels the customer navigates during the shopping process.

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