



Beyond Mobile

Exploring Complementary Technologies for Omni-Channel Strategies



The pressure to create an integrated shopping experience in support of omni-channel retail strategies is very real. But there is no “finish line” when it

comes to omni-channel success. It's not just a matter of creating the right experience, it's a matter of creating a better experience than the guys down the street...and sustaining it. Ensuring continuity between at-home, online shopping and in-store, in-person shopping is critical to the success of the omni-channel strategy. This means that while in the store, consumers must have access to the same products, the same choices, and the same information they can access online from their home, their office, or on-the-go. Without it, the chance of a customer leaving empty handed increases dramatically. Our society has become one of instant gratification and customers just don't wait around. They leave.

Mobile Strategies Lead the Way

When it comes to brick-and mortar, the utilization of mobile technology is hands-down the leading vehicle for carrying over that on-line experience into the store. Today's smartphones give consumers access to mobile applications and mobile-friendly websites from virtually anywhere the phone can connect. But is it enough? Can an omni-channel strategy be effective with such a singular focus? There's no denying that the smartphone has made a huge impact on both our culture and our commerce, but should retailers stop there when it comes to trying to find ways to bring the digital experience to the consumer while they are in the store?

Facts About Mobile

In October of 2014, the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan fact tank that has no agenda in the mobile market, reported that 64% of all adult Americans own a smart phone⁽¹⁾. This means 1/3 of all adults are not candidates for a mobile digital experience. In addition, delivering optimal content to a consumer's smart phone is worthless if they have poor cellular or Wi-Fi connectivity, which sometimes is a very real possibility that can't be discounted. Not every retail location can count on 100% solid connectivity throughout their stores for every cellular carrier, and Wi-Fi can also be problematic, if it's even available.



There are several reports trying to quantify how many shoppers actually use their smartphones while shopping inside a store. However, often times this data is reported by an entity with an agenda in the mobile marketplace, and multiple sources report contradictory data or data that may be inconclusive. For example one report suggests that as many as 75% of all shoppers use their smart phone while shopping, but it doesn't *clarify* if 75% of all shoppers use their smart phone every time they go shopping.

Another report claimed that as many as 81% of smartphone users have done product research

from a smartphone, and 50% have made a purchase via their phone. However, it fails to clarify if they did their research or purchasing while actually inside the store.

Consider this data from a Pew Research report from 2014:

Nearly six in ten cell phone owners used their phone inside a physical store for assistance or guidance on a purchasing decision.

– **46%** of cell owners used their phone while inside a store to call a friend or family member for advice about a purchase they were considering.

– **28%** of cell owners used their phone while inside a store to look up reviews of a product to help decide if they should purchase it or not.

– **27%** of cell owners used their phone while inside a store to look up the price of a product to see if they could get a better price elsewhere.

This data begs the question, while mobile technology is clearly the leading choice for deploying digital merchandising strategies, can it be the “end all” solution for retail companies that are looking for all-encompassing mechanisms to embrace the entirety of their customer base? Are there complementary solutions that should also be employed to ensure a higher probability of engaging more customers in the store?

A recent survey of senior retail executives, by Timetrade, reports that 70% of those retailers represented said that customers will wait 5 minutes or less before a customer abandons a purchase and leaves the store⁽²⁾. 75% of these same retailers say that the top 3 reasons why customers leave without making a purchase are all related to excessive wait times. Note that the top two issues are related to not being able to find the product, or not being able to access information about the product.

- They can't get answers to questions fast enough.
- It takes too long to find what they are looking for.
- Check-out lines are too long.

Complementing Mobile with Self-Service

The leading technology for complementing a mobile strategy should be a self-service technology, such as kiosks. However, the next generation kiosks are not the large, bulky, and expensive “computer-in-a-box” fixtures found at the front of the store, or the small devices sometimes deployed throughout the store as “price checkers”. Today's kiosks combine the best attributes of all personal computing devices. They utilize a desktop operating system with the performance to quickly render web pages, stream video, play stereo audio, and scan barcodes. They use capacitive touchscreens to offer the user an intuitive experience similar to what they experience on their smartphone or tablet. The larger display and higher performance architecture means the kiosk can deliver digital content with more impact than a smartphone. Their compact size and affordability means more devices can be deployed strategically throughout



the store making them more accessible and convenient for the consumer.

The applications available to the consumer on these next generation kiosks are limited only by the imagination. Properly written kiosk applications, backed by appropriate content formatting, are the next best thing to a well-trained sales associate, who despite their best efforts

may not always be available. Consider these obvious applications for a consumer kiosk:

- ▶ Endless aisle (See a red chair in the store, but buy a black one online while still in the store.)
- ▶ Research more specific product information.
- ▶ Price verification which leads to opportunities for cross-selling.
- ▶ Selection tools, e.g. finding the right tail light for the 2013 Ford F150 truck.
- ▶ Loyalty program enrollment or checking “rewards” balance.
- ▶ Check gift card balances.
- ▶ Time and attendance terminals for store employees.
- ▶ Access store fliers and promotions.
- ▶ Play movie trailers or listen to music CDs.
- ▶ Play “how-to” videos.

Next generation kiosks can address some of the problems many retailers have had with older devices running embedded operating systems. These new kiosks are running desktop operating systems which allow the enterprise IT department to manage the kiosk just like any other desktop workstation or server on their network. The same remote device management and security mechanisms used for the workstations can be used for these kiosks.

In addition, software developers are not restricted by the limitations of mobile or embedded operating systems. Anything they can develop to run on their workstation will run on the kiosk.

Proper utilization of kiosks, in conjunction with sound mobile strategies, can deliver the Omni-channel results every retailer is looking for. But there are some basic fundamentals to proper kiosk deployment to ensure adoption by the consumer.

Location, location, location — Deploy an adequate number of kiosks in high traffic areas, easily visible and accessible. Use obvious signage to draw attention to the kiosk.

Multi-purpose — take advantage of the technology platform and utilize it for as many consumer-facing tasks as possible. Looking up gift card balances is just as easy as looking up a price. Enrolling in a loyalty program is the same process as signing up for email coupons and fliers.

Application Design — The customer interface must be intuitive and easy to navigate. Modeling the application after a popular search engine, for example, may make sense because the customer would more than likely feel comfortable using something that looks familiar to them.

It's All About the Content — Any content delivered to the customer must be well constructed, visually appealing, and relevant. Don't underestimate how much time should be committed to ensuring the quality of images and copy.

Cross-Sell — Anytime the customer uses the kiosk to research a product or even just check a price, use the opportunity to cross-sell and suggest accessories or complementary products.



Combat Show-Rooming — As mentioned earlier in the Pew Research data, a significant number of smartphone users will use their phone to research a product then look to see

if they can find it elsewhere at a lower price. To counter this “show-rooming” tactic, make technology available to the customer that might just give them a reason to leave their phone in their pocket or purse, and use that technology to control the content, while at the same time prompt a buying decision.

In conclusion, the utilization of mobile strategies alone is not enough to ensure omni-channel success if the goal is to elevate the customer experience for as many customers as possible, not just those carrying a smartphone. The implementation of a kiosk strategy, properly deployed with multi-purpose functionality and the right content control, can bridge the gap and put technology at the fingertips of virtually any customer that walks through the door. Those relying on mobile and mobile alone, may find themselves falling short in the omni-channel arena.



About AML

AML is a leading provider in the development of next generation retail kiosks....powerful, compact devices suitable for a wide-range of interactive, user-facing applications. Designed with the optimal user experience in mind, AML kiosks are engineered and manufactured in the USA.



The all new Monarch Kiosk from AML.

- Windows 8.1®
- 10.1" Capacitive Touch Screen Display
- Omnidirectional Barcode Scanning
- Stereo Audio
- Support for Power-over-Ethernet
- Optional WiFi-Bluetooth
- Sleek design available in custom colors
- VESA 75 Mounting
- Made in the USA

1. Aaron Smith. U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2015. Web. 1 Apr 2015. <<http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/01/us-smartphone-use-in-2015/>>

2. timetrade. Retail Industry Executive Survey. Tewksbury, MA: timetrade, 2013. Web. 2013. <http://www.timetrade.com/files/-content_resource/TT_Retail-Exec-Survey-Brief.pdf>