

# The Post-omnichannel World

Four steps toward creating a truly connected experience.

By Jim Crawford

In the 1990s, when the internet and e-commerce created a tangible link between modes of shopping that had previously been isolated (stores and catalogs), traditional retailers struggled with how to understand, measure and connect with shoppers in multiple ways.

It was out of this confusion that the concept of “multichannel” was heralded as retail’s saving grace, and soon, retailers were all abuzz with cross-channel shoppers.

Fast-forward a few years, and retailers began scratching their heads, wondering why their multichannel initiatives hadn’t delivered the stunning ROI they were promised. Shoppers still longed for a more consistent experience, but multichannel just wasn’t cutting it. Thus, “omnichannel” was born.

The real problem, however, isn’t whether the channels are “multi” or “omni,” it’s that retailers are still focused on “channels” rather than on how the shopper views the world.

## A Future Beyond Channels

What’s next? The future is beyond channels.

To bridge in-store, on-the-go and at-home experiences, consider these four important steps:

**1. Inspire to shop:** If you’re never providing inspiration for what’s possible, you’re only selling a commodity. There’s a reason that the social media platform Pinterest is so popular: People still want inspiration and ideas. Whether it’s guidance on cooking a meal with the newest superfood or pulling together all the ingredients for a featured recipe, give your customers the how-to that encourages them to shop. Provide in-store grocery lists that

include featured items, and showcase popular items trending online.

**2. Aid the experience:** Over the past few years, mobile capabilities have presented a threat to retailers that feared the “showrooming” effect of price-conscious shoppers comparing prices in-store and purchasing from another retailer or online. Retailers need to reposition their thinking in terms of how the digital world can aid in the shopping experience.

Offer access for in-store price comparison and consumer reviews. Share information on buying wine, or health advice. The transparency of access to information will earn you points with consumers. Install terminals that allow shoppers to order hard-to-find or specialized items online. Offer your loyal customers digital coupons that are automatically redeemed at checkout.

The additional options could just be the difference between a product purchased and a sale lost.

**3. Make it convenient.** Retailers can win loyalty with consumers through convenience. Use digital technology to enhance the customer experience by adding an element of convenience. That can create a true competitive advantage for brands, when done right.

More and more, grocery retailers are offering in-store pickup for online orders, while others are offering home delivery.

In Belgium, both Carrefour and Delhaize Group are opening stand-alone pickup points that allow their customers to order groceries online and pick them up at the most convenient spot on their way home from work (often near a major commuter route).

Some grocery retailers are using geolocation to notify users about their acquired loyalty points, nearby food offerings, discounts on merchandise,

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and current weekly sales when they come to the store.

At the least, offer mobile navigation to help consumers find the precise product location in the store. They won't buy it if they can't find it.

#### **4. Establish a history:**

When retailers think about the ideal length of a relationship with a consumer, it isn't always the immediate purchase that matters.

In categories that consumers shop more frequently than most others, the knowledge that grocers have available to communicate at a more intimate level, and anticipate and respond to consumers' needs, is a powerful tool. It's time to rethink what a loyalty program really means.

Use customers' loyalty card purchase history (in-store and online) to create shopping lists for them. Employ mobile scanning or offer in-store kiosk access to let consumers add products to their lists for future purchases. Or provide in-store notifications for items consumers have browsed or left in their online carts, giving them the incentive to make the purchase in-store.

What's the story you're telling consumers in all environments — at home, on-the-go and

## **4 Truths of an Omnichannel Present**

### **1. It's still a store world**

In 2013, 90 percent of retail transactions happened in-store. We're still in a store world, and the proof is in the fact that brands are investing more heavily in stores.

### **2. The shopper is large and in charge**

Although 90 percent of shoppers expect consistent brand experiences across channels, just 5 percent of retailers have a fully executed omnichannel strategy.

### **3. It's a matter of trust**

Whom do shoppers trust? 52 percent of shoppers said a single negative review would affect how they felt about a brand. Mistakes on quality, service or value can have a profound, tangible effect on the brand.

### **4. Mobile is only part of the answer**

84 percent of smartphone shoppers use their devices to guide their in-store shopping experiences. This signifies recognition that mobile is a way to engage with shoppers and keep them coming back.

in-store? Is it consistent, and are you being responsive to their needs? Retailers that can move toward a more connected consumer shopping experience can remain competitive in a rapidly evolving retail landscape. 🛒



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