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## TRANSFORMING THE RETAIL EXPERIENCE

Optimizing Employee & Consumer Experiences in Retail IoT

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Missing Link: The Employee & Consumer Interaction

To keep pace with today's connected consumer, you need to evolve to serve them better. That means empowering your employees by putting technology in their hands, so they can drive positive customer experiences that in turn will build brand loyalty, increase sales, and boost the bottom line. Yes, big data and analytics are a critical part of any digital strategy. But to win with today's consumers, you need informed employees on the front line who are truly engaged with your brand and with every customer who walks in the door.

More engaged employees

Positive customer interactions

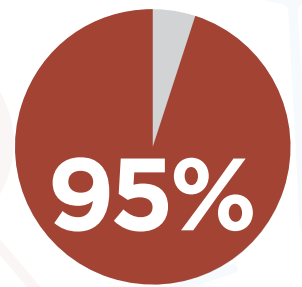**Better business results**

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Better employee retention
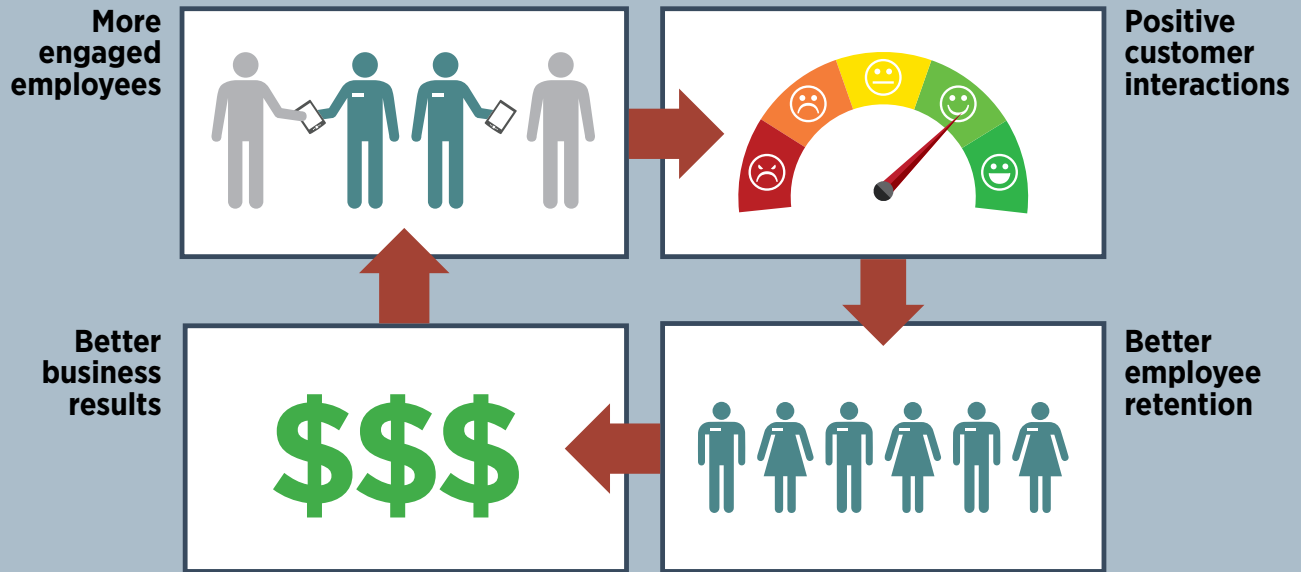
Challenges

To improve the customer's experience and your employee's engagement, you have to understand both sides of the customer-employee interaction.

Customers

Today's customers expect to be greeted by a well-trained knowledgeable salesperson who will provide fast, efficient service. Before they enter your store, consumers have typically conducted online research, so they are knowledgeable and have high expectations that the employees they speak with will be at least as informed as they are. In addition, three in four consumers say it's either critical or very important to interact with a salesperson who is available when they need them.

If the customer's needs are not met, you can be sure other customers will hear about it—95% of customers tell others about their bad experiences.

Employees

On the other side of the interaction, your employees need to be not only knowledgeable but also engaged in their job to serve their customer well. An

95%

of customers actively share their bad experiences

engaged employee—someone who is committed to the success of the customer, the company, and the brand—is a rare commodity. In fact, a Gallup poll found that only 30% of employees say that they're engaged in their job; more than half said they weren't engaged, and almost 20% said they were "actively disengaged."

One of the core challenges for retailers is to make sure their employees are ready, willing, and able to meet the high demands of today's customers. Technology deployed with the right digital strategy is a key factor in addressing this challenge.

5 Ways You Can Use Technology to Improve Customer-Employee Interactions

Plenty of retailers give their employees a tablet or smartphone loaded with apps, and set them loose on the sales floor. That is not a digital strategy and it is not going to improve customer-employee interactions. A poorly planned and executed technology deployment can distract employees and undermine the customer experience.

A comprehensive digital strategy considers not only the technology and how its deployed, sustained, and maintained; but it must consider the employee and customer interaction. Here are five recommendations on how to apply technology as a tool to enhance employee engagement and the customer experience:

1. Empower employees

Employees feel more engaged when they are trusted to carry out their daily tasks without the constant need to ask their superiors for help. Technology can be used to give them that sense of autonomy. For instance, RFID keys can be used to track which employees are accessing high-value drawers and cabinets, so they no longer have to repeatedly ask managers for assistance. This example increases employee accountability while at the same time improving their engagement with the customer and improves speed of service. Nobody wants to have to ask for the manager.

2. Reduce interruptions

Every time an employee is forced to leave a customer interaction—such as to ask a manager a question, acquire keys, or search for inventory—the risk increases of frustrating the customer, losing the sale, and tarnishing the brand. With the right technology in place, those annoying interruptions can be decreased. For instance, inventory information can be made available in real-time on employees' devices, so they don't have to leave the customer waiting while they search for it in the back room.

3. Increase efficiency

Technology that empowers employees also frees up more time for store management creating new opportunities for things often overlooked like more coaching and training, which feeds both employee engagement and customer experiences. When managers don't have to assist employees in daily tasks, such as answering basic questions and opening registers, they can devote more time to higher-value responsibilities that benefit every aspect of the business.

4. Make it fun

There is a reason people of all ages spend so much time with technology: It can be a lot of fun to use. Retailers can implement digital platforms that engage employees through competition, humorous training videos, and other content that makes it fun to become a better and more knowledgeable salesperson. Interactive trainings have repeatedly been shown to be more engaging, better attended, and more memorable—and they can be provided in small doses on the devices employees carry with them every day.
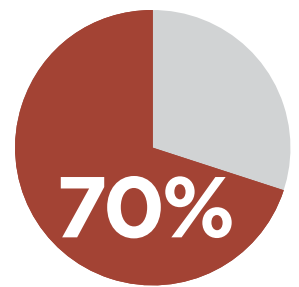
5. Implement a BYOD strategy

Technology can be very personal. Each of us curates our personal devices to our unique personal, social, and work lies. Implemented in a thoughtful way, a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) strategy can leverage a personal device into a powerful resource in employees' hands. 70% of HR professionals believe Gen Y employees perform faster if they are allowed to use their own mobile devices instead of computers.[3] In addition to speeding customer service, the devices give employees more comfort and control, which can lead to better engagement.

70%

of HR professionals believe Gen Y employees perform better with their own mobile devices

The Bottom Line

Most connected technologies are designed to help retailer management track, measure, and analyze to make better business decisions. A successful digital strategy needs to consider the impact technology will have on the employee-customer interactions that define retail experiences.

Learn More

To learn more about how technology can enhance the customer experience and employee engagement, contact **Connect@mobiletechinc.com**.

[3] https://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/obsolete/enterprise/cisco-connected-world-technology-report.html