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## Retail digital strategy #1: Ready your employees for digital transformation

Retailers today are finding it increasingly hard to stand out from the crowd in terms of pricing, products or services. The digital age has put the consumer in control with mobile technology, a stronger voice, real-time information, and lower switching costs. In fact, according to Nielsen, more and more American customers are accessing the Internet through one or more of their mobile devices to look for information and deals, search and compare, and even buy.

With this new empowered and connected consumer as the dominating retail trend, firms now realize that the only way to differentiate themselves is by delivering a superior and delightful customer experience. In a survey by one of the leading research firms, 89 percent of marketing professionals predict that customer experience would be their primary basis for competitive differentiation by 2017. That is why more retailers than ever are focused on creating and sustaining customer experiences that not only wow customers, but convert them into brand evangelists.

Retail businesses are gearing up their digital transformation efforts to meet the rising expectations around customer experiences. They have done this by unifying their multiple channels into seamless omni-channel experiences that are consistent and responsive to ever changing customer needs. Remaining relevant to the customer across their entire journey while interacting with a brand is a concurrent priority. Being able to run a retail engine on all these cylinders will determine success in differentiation and, ultimately, in competing for retail sales.

In this series of blog articles focused on digital strategies for retailers, we'll explore five ways to achieve those goals. The intention is to provide insight on digital transformation initiatives in the retail space, as well as identify opportunities in delivering exceptional customer experiences.

## **Blog series: 5 ways digitalization can help retailers differentiate and compete**

### **Retail strategy #1: Ready your employees for digital transformation**

Retailers continue to empower customers with investments in technology across multiple channels, but it's worth emphasizing that they need to make this same technology readily available to their employees. As your showroom floor leaders, your employees must have the tools to effectively project the brand values, image and knowledge that's needed to inform and engage the shopper.

With the right digital technology and processes, empowered employees can easily deliver the much desired customer experiences in-store. There are numerous ways this can manifest on the showroom floor, including:

- Helping customers find what they are looking for
- Instantly compare prices and products and help shoppers with their buying decision
- Help shoppers close the sale without having to wait too long in check-out queues
- Walk customers through kiosks and large touch displays to help them with store layouts
- Assist in home delivery orders for items not in stock instore

In addition, strategies like gamification, often used with electronic retailers, ensures sales reps are on top of the latest discounts, gadgets, service and warranty information... basically anything that front-line staff needs to know to enhance the customer experience. This helps train and prepare sales staff so they can engage with people and smooth their customer journey while in the stores. Gamified mobile and tablet apps can also help keep track of their product IQ and compare it with their peers, fostering a spirit of friendly competition along with incentives so the staff can learn, grow and perform.

These are just some examples. The important point to note is that retailers need to understand that their internal staff, their store employees, are on the front line of their digital transformation. The first step is to prepare them so they are ready adopt digital tools that inform, assist and engage customers.

Keep a lookout for the next blog article in this series, "Retail digital strategy #2: Creating a seamless transition between the physical, online and mobile environments."