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Framing Your Mobile Retail Point-of-Service Strategy

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TOOLS FOR A NEW AGE OF RETAIL



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As stores blur the lines between engaging the customer on the show floor and using traditional cash wraps, we are seeing some retailers break down the checkout concept altogether, making existing technologies work in new scenarios. Others are going to start with a blank piece of paper and re-design the entire experience from scratch. In truth, there's no one right way forward. When retailers look to technology to revolutionize retail experiences, the change goes far beyond hardware and store layouts. Instead, as stores seek to advance every interaction into an opportunity to connect, build relationships and collect critical data, they must recognize that the change that technology brings about also demands a shift in mindset and working practices.

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Nearly 60% of retailers agree that while their company is embracing digital and mobile, they are not investing quickly enough to keep pace with the speed of technology change or consumer expectations.¹



In almost every industry, technology is driving a more seamless experience—perhaps none more so than retail. However, without shifting culture and processes in tandem, businesses could fail to see a full return on investment. To guarantee the best results, retailers must develop a robust strategy that spans technology, store operations, staff training, and more.

For retailers considering moving to a mobile or hybrid point of service (POS) to support new or changing strategies, knowing where to start may be the biggest challenge. To jumpstart the process, retailers should consider store operations, the [retail hardware](#) they select, and how the policies they put in place will be impacted by a move to mobile.

POS KEY CONSIDERATIONS

KEEPING UP WITH THE TRANSACTIONS

Retailers may need to handle multiple transaction types from a single device. Just consider these core functions and customer journeys:



In-store purchases: Standard selling spanning cash, credit, and even checks or mobile payments call for a workhorse mobile POS and the right accessories like scanners, printers, and cash drawers.



Orders to be shipped to customers: Out of that size or style? Be prepared to complete the transaction in-store and get it ready to ship, from anywhere in the enterprise, all from a handheld device.



Returns for online purchases: Ecommerce shoppers come in store to bypass the hassle of shipping labels, for a smoother experience. That means retailers need to make the process painless, whether they handle it via mobile POS, a hybrid solution, or a traditional register.

Whether a business chooses to be fully mobile or opts for a hybrid POS, there are inevitable operational challenges and opportunities to be considered, from how your associates use technology in-store to what your customers expect. Several factors will shape your mobile POS decisions:

Functionality: How business is conducted in your store(s) will help inform your POS decision journey. Consider how your customers make payments—do they always scan a card, or is cash more common? What types of transactions will associates handle? A single handheld device can now take cash by merely scanning a barcode on a cash drawer, can create orders that ship or deliver to another store, and can print receipts without the overhead of mobile printers.

Form Factor: Tablet or mobile device? iOS or Android? In reality, different devices may work better than others, depending on the tasks at hand. While a tablet offers a larger screen and may allow for better collaborative selling and tackling back-office tasks, a smaller device may be better suited for pivoting between tasks or quickly scanning items for price checks.

Flexibility: In a retail environment in which associates must quickly switch tasks to transition from assisting one customer to the next, and shift gears at a moment's notice, the mobile devices supporting them must be capable of the same. Whether your staff utilize 'personal' devices or move between phones and tablets assigned to different tasks or zones within the store, getting up and running must be fast and easy.

User Experience: Having an application interface remains consistent from device to device—from traditional register to mobile, iOS to Android, or any other format is critical for a seamless workflow. This consistency helps make user adoption pain-free.



THINK BEYOND HARDWARE

Beyond a change in form factor, moving from a traditional register to a mobile or hybrid POS also means shifts across your in-store operations.



THINK BEYOND HARDWARE

Layout and Logistics: Getting customers in the door and making a sale are two of the biggest challenges in retail, but what comes next can present problems of its own. Legacy store layouts lean on the cash wrap not only as the place to close out transactions, but also to guide behavior. With a queue in front and a physical divide between shoppers and associates, retail staffers have an accepted means to manage customers looking to checkout and a dedicated place to wrap items. Without a traditional register, these behaviors can shift, leaving shoppers to ‘hunt’ for a salesperson to assist them and challenging associates to find space to help shoppers and bag items.

Footprint and Format: Whether you have five stores or 500, chances are each location differs from the rest. Between fully-fledged flagships and scaled-down city stores, the size, selection, and core functions of locations may vary, and these may bring unique technological demands. Further, in today’s retail environment, the store footprint is no longer static. Heavy holiday traffic may call for extra space or an auxiliary location to handle additional, temporary sales capacity, or an event may present the perfect opportunity for a pop-up shop. Retailers should consider the POS technologies they’ll need to support these scenarios and how they fit into their broader technology strategy.

Connectivity and Cloud: POS applications demand low latency, real-time access to data, consistent high performance, and potentially offline capabilities. Given these requirements, a conventional cloud model is not always the most appropriate choice and not the only option available. The impacts of latency, particularly for POS systems, is significant if a POS moves entirely to a cloud model. Every item lookup, and price validation, must be performed centrally, potentially lengthening the transaction time resulting in poor customer experience. Many retailers wish to take advantage of cloud technology and are investigating alternative environments to deliver many of the benefits but retain the operational control of past solutions. New use of technology at the edge of the cloud has evolved; the Cloud Three Tier architecture model advocates the use of cloud in the data center delivering scalability, consolidation, and centralization and sees the need for edge computing in the form of cloudlets.



Security and Safety: Using mobile POS and other handhelds, retailers can gain access to a more forensic level of detail and a better understanding of how devices are used (when by whom and where). Deployed on an iPhone with a thumbprint scanner or Face ID, your mobile POS could even identify personnel using biometric data. While this enables systems to be instantly locked down in the case of loss or theft, it also leaves retailers guardians of sensitive data, like the associate's fingerprints. Beyond the digital, at a physical level, a mobile POS means a system that is an untethered device that can walk out the door—whether that's a forgetful associate or someone more nefarious.

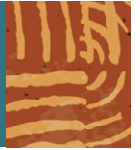
Culture and Service: While associates may be keen to try out the latest tech, retailers must consider how mobile and hybrid options will fit their unique culture, and sales and service models. With no or fewer staff tied to a static register, those “cashiers” can roam the floor, completing transactions on the fly, or encountering new opportunities to upsell. Just as office workers may stay connected by answering emails on their phones at any time, staffers—always carrying a POS—can confidently provide service and focus on the customer, while also concentrating on other tasks like restocking and inventory.

Give Them What They Want



54%
of shoppers say in-store
staff who are enabled to
process payments
anywhere in the store are
important to their check
out experience.²

FINDING WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOUR BRAND



Just as every retailer is different, each brand's operational demands and technological needs differ, too. **While there is no one-size-fits-all answer, considering the following questions will inform your search and help you build a must-have list for your mobile or hybrid POS.**

What's the end goal of going mobile? Whether your focus is on improving the in-store experience, better engaging your customers, increasing flexibility or capacity, or empowering your associates, keep your end goal front and center as you evaluate options and set a course toward mobile.

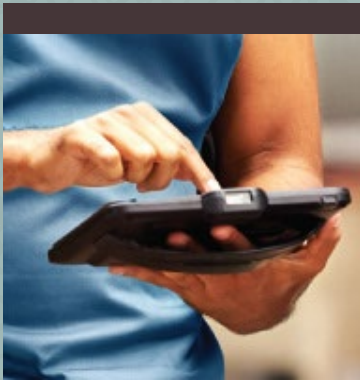
How will mobile change business processes? Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. In retail, this means a change in technology can cause reactions across operations, from workforce management to inventory deliveries.

What will mobile support? Mobile and hybrid POS solutions are more than just digital cash registers—instead, these are fully-fledged store management devices capable of handling critical front- and back-office processes. From completing transactions to taking inventory to checking employees in and out, retailers can choose mobile solutions to handle whatever their needs—the challenge comes in understanding what is needed and what is not.



New Tricks

Beyond a sleek design and higher mobility, the next generation of POS solutions also brings new features and functions.



- **Easy Set-Up:** Today, a new device can inherit all the 'personality' at the scan of a QR code, making it easy to deploy new devices or replace defective ones.
- **RFID-Enabled Inventory:** Need to find a product in a flash? RFID allows you to find the right size in the display or the back-office.
- **One Source Code:** When the mobile capabilities leverage the same business logic, services, and features as the traditional client, the associate experience is consistent. No matter the form factor, the power comes from a single build, saving time and investment upfront and providing a smoother experience for store associates using any device.
- **Transact on the Fly:** IP enabled devices means that you can engage with customers anywhere on the floor, and can cash out using any of the shared peripherals, like printers, payment devices, and cash drawers without having to go back to a cash wrap.

RETAIL POS PITFALLS

(AND HOW TO AVOID THEM)

Even the best-laid plans may not go as planned. Consider these real-life retail pitfalls to help you understand the possibilities you'll need to plan for:

1. Losing Sight of Reality: A retailer looking to use mobile to connect with shoppers might jump to put a tablet in every associate's hands. However, they must consider the tactical realities of their stores. If they've only budgeted for two associates in-store at a time, that means while one assists the customers, the other sits at the register and keeps their eyes on the exit to ensure no unpurchased items walk out the door. Replacing traditional registers and tasking everyone with sales might mean that associates need to be re-trained to change behaviors slightly, to pay more attention to possible theft while engaging with customers, or even assign a specific associate to be aware of potential threats.

How to Steer Clear: Before making a significant change, it's essential to consider the potential impact on everything from staffing to service, including possible ripple effects. Taking a broader view of the implications of a shift to mobile, or other changes, will help retailers make strategic decisions.

2. Mobile in Name Only: In retail businesses like jewelry, store associates may stay with a single shopper from browsing to check out. While a mobile device can empower associates, it also can become an impediment as a shopper's journey comes to a close.

When the associate heads to the back of the store to wrap up a purchase or just needs a free hand, they may set down their device, often where a traditional register once sat, bringing the journey full circle.

How to Steer Clear: At the outset of the journey to mobile, retailers should consider how associates interact with guests. Associates have been trained to provide shoppers with the smoothest possible experience, even if that means not using the mobile capabilities to their fullest if the device gets between the associate and their customer.

3. Forgetting Functionalities: As consumers adopt the BORIS (buy online, return in-store) model and head in-store to return online purchases, retailers must balance traffic from returns and new purchases alike at the register. In a line of six customers, five might be making online returns while one waits at the back with an item on a hanger, ready to make a purchase. In the hustle and bustle of handling returns, store associates may lose sight of one of mobile's most prominent use cases—line busting.

How to Steer Clear: Retailers should consider the possibility of challenging scenarios like this playing out in their stores and should plan for flexibility, so associates have the tools they need to solve challenges on the fly—like keeping returns to a fixed register while checking those waiting to make a purchase out using mobile.

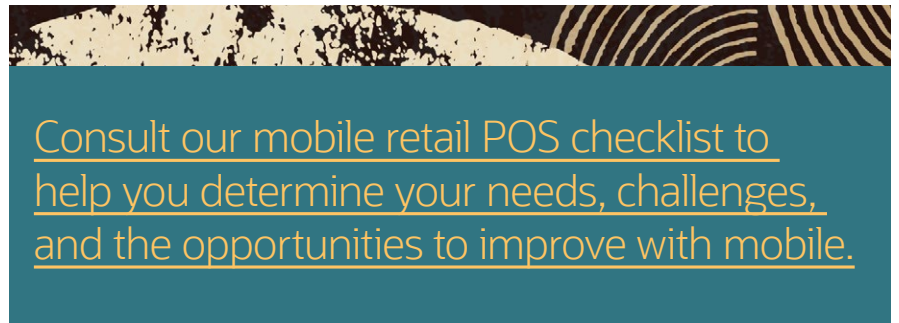


A Case Study in Mobile

- **The Status Quo:** When a jewelry retailer was ready to update their stores, they saw an opportunity to provide a more engaging, one-to-one experience for the customer. Their traditional cash wrap and staging area handled most tasks, which often meant a cluster of associates gathered behind a counter opposite a long line of customers growing restless while waiting and potentially disrupting other shoppers' journeys.
- **The Reason:** To better engage customers, the jeweler found the key was to push associates out from behind the register and onto the floor where they could engage with customers. Getting staff outside their comfort zone to interact with shoppers, and their ability to connect on a more personal level cut down friction for shoppers.
- **The Results:** By moving to a fully mobile POS, the retailer has created an inviting environment in-store, providing shoppers with a leisurely, less confrontational, more collaborative experience. Carrying tablets equipped with [Oracle Retail Xstore](#), associates can now meet shoppers on the store floor, for no-pressure conversations and lines have disappeared in favor of one-on-one customer interactions.

Making the Leap to Mobile

In today's mobile-first world, we've become experts at learning and absorbing mobile technologies into our everyday lives. For a retail business, technology-driven transformation requires more planning and forethought. Once you've established a clear direction for both technological, attitudinal, and operational change, you will be ready to take the next step in your POS evolution.



Sources:

- 1 [Retail Mobility Insights](#)
- 2 [The New Topography of Retail](#)

ABOUT ORACLE RETAIL



Oracle provides retailers with a complete, open and integrated suite of business applications, server and storage solutions that are engineered to work together to optimize every aspect of their businesses. Twenty of the top 20 retailers worldwide—including fashion, hardlines, grocery and specialty retailers—use Oracle solutions to drive performance, deliver critical insights and fuel growth across traditional, mobile and commerce channels. For more information, visit <http://www.oracle.com/goto/retail>.



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Oracle Corporation
World Headquarters
500 Oracle Parkway
Redwood Shores, CA 94065
U.S.A.

Find your local Oracle contact number here:
<http://www.oracle.com/us/corporate/contact/global-070511.html>

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