



How Teams Are Working More Intuitively in Retail

Retailers today may feel like they're bearing the brunt of an apocalypse. With a challenging in-store environment, where a growing chasm exists between consumer expectations and their actual experiences, retailers face a tenuous future. Many had to cut back on staff during the Great Recession, further frustrating shoppers who increasingly expect instant gratification.

The decline is not universal. Nordstrom, for example, is often cited for making advancements in the customer experience, while Apple since 2001 has opened more than 500 retail locations in 24 countries. Even Amazon is opening up storefronts where the online and in-store experiences blend or overlap. Several reports, such as a Harvard Business Review study featuring Costco and Trader Joe's, show that engaged store associates are more productive and customer focused, with higher shopper satisfaction and increased sales.

To stem this tide, retailers recognize that they need to meet employee desires for a more flexible environment. Employees today want to work collaboratively and access information, for themselves and customers, when they need it, where they need it. That includes digital-savvy Millennials, who expect to work in a flexible and responsive environment and be given a broad scope in their work.

Collaborative worker model

In today's customer-driven retail environment, a "frictionless" service experience requires employees who are empowered to provide truly personal attention.

Wireless networking and new collaborative tools in the store can become the basis of a more collaborative worker model, enabling customer and employee communications that

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empower associates to do their jobs better, and, in turn, help managers to attract, develop, and retain the best talent.

Retail CEOs, according to [Accenture](#), “must put the expert in the center to ensure that store associates become brand ambassadors—or storytellers of the brand’s purpose. For instance, sales associates must be personable and passionate about the brand and its story, sharing a depth of product and service knowledge while using technology to enhance the interaction and deliver high-quality service.”

Real-time, on-floor access to information is vital to enabling employees to provide exceptional customer service. When employees have access to product information, transactional and loyalty information about the customer, they are uniquely able to deliver a differentiated experience to each shopper. Stores need to connect their workers to data, to team members within a store, and to personnel in other stores and at corporate locations to ensure the customer hardly ever goes away unsatisfied.

Transformational associates

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can adapt — if they are given the right tools and training,” [RetailDive](#) advises.

Collaborative tools can provide associates with ready access to central office news, pending sales, discount offers, recalls, new processes, and other critical issues that directly affect their jobs. Video conferencing enables retailers to cost-effectively train and retrain associates, keeping them current on pertinent skills. It also allows store employees to participate in meetings with peers in other locations to share experiences about increasing sales and making operations more efficient. Creating a more lasting relationship with employees via video conferencing and group collaboration fosters teamwork and can help strengthen retention.

Equipped with mobile devices, associates on the floor can provide shoppers with up-to-the-minute product information and system-wide inventory. When a customer asks a technical question about a product, an associate can launch a video call with a remote expert to get in-depth product or service information that may be crucial to closing the sale. Managers can better track where customer lines are backing up and shift available team members to assist and help close sales.

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Retailers can’t hope to thrive simply by cutting staff. They need to take steps to maximize the productivity and efficiency of store associates by equipping them with collaboration tools that make them part of a connected team. With video conferencing, mobile apps, and access to experts throughout the organization, retailers can ensure a consistent customer and employee collaboration experience across multiple touch points and devices, transforming associates into trusted advisors for customers.

 To learn more, go to www.cisco.com/go/retail