

Enrich the Retail Shopping Experience with Store Systems:

Make Your IT Investments Work for You





Immersive, interactive, and responsive retail experiences are essential to driving traffic back to brick-and-mortar retail stores.

Savvy retailers who combine the service consumers expect from a physical store with the information, flexibility, and customization they enjoy from digital will be the winners as delighted and engaged shoppers will continue to return to their stores.

We've all observed that retail has reached a pivotal point in its history. The biggest drivers for retail's transformation are the emergence of the Internet and mobile technology, the rise of millennial spending power, impact of globalization, and consumer empowerment.

Retail technology is crucial to your ability to transform the in-store shopping experience to meet customer expectations and remain competitive, and in the current competitive climate, it's necessary to have a strategy to get the most out of your investments — whether you made them in the past, are investing in new technology now, or are planning technology upgrades in the future. There's an increased focus on strategic technology investments that will add value to the customer experience. The challenge lies in implementing state-of-the-art technology solutions while reducing POS operational costs.



Get the Most Out of Past Retail Technology Investments

The technology at work in your retail business today represents a significant investment. But as your business changes, technology must also change. There are measures you can take to extend the life of technology currently in use, rather than taking a “rip and replace” approach.

➤ 1. Establish a relationship with a retailer advocate to get the most out of your existing systems

Likely it's no surprise to you that one of the first things you need to do to maximize your retail technology investment is to focus on a relationship with people. Your partnership with your technology provider can be an extremely valuable asset to your business, helping you keep technology solutions and devices in service longer, make the best choices from among options for new technology today, and strategize about the best plan for future technology deployments.

To fully benefit from this relationship, you should partner with a **retailer advocate** not just a reseller or manufacturer. Just as you are an expert at operating a retail business, advocates are experts at determining the best technology for your unique needs. A technology provider that is a retailer advocate will speak honestly about what works and what doesn't to help you filter through the variety of options available to you. **They represent your needs, not the latest technology.**

➤ 2. Get every penny out of past investments

Your business needs a technology partner to provide the resources you need to keep technology operating longer. The reality is, things break, but a capable partner can keep devices in service longer. In addition, when your business undergoes a technology refresh, it doesn't necessarily mean having to purchase all new hardware.

For example, if you are deploying a new point of sale (POS) system, it may not be necessary to purchase new printers. Your advocate can assess the condition of your current printers as well as perform maintenance or needed updates. In addition, it's possible they can adapt printers for new uses with reprogramming or by changing their interface cards.

➤ **3. Take a holistic approach to your retail technology**

Work with your retailer advocate to assess underlying causes of malfunction or device damage. Some of these issues can be attributed to your business environment or to user behaviors. Your retailer advocate can help address pain points throughout your retail IT environment — not just repair individual devices or systems — which can help extend total cost of ownership (TCO) of your tech investment. It can also let you focus on providing the best customer experience and running a successful business, because you know your technology is in capable hands.

Make Sure New Retail Technology Investments Address Business Goals

The time will come when your business needs a technology upgrade. The best place to start isn't a product catalog, but rather looking at the challenges and pain points you need your new technology to solve. Consider the direction you want your business to take in the next few years. Work with your retailer advocate to find total solutions that address your issues and support your goals, such as:

➤ **Engage with shoppers in smarter ways to win their business**

Your customers expect your sales associates to know as much as they have learned by researching items online. Make sure your sales associates have access to product (and competitor) information through mobile devices so they can speak intelligently with customers in the aisles.

Mobility is emerging as key to enhancing the customer experience in-store. In addition to allowing sales associates to access information, mobile POS can give your sales associates line busting capabilities, allowing them to take payments and eliminating the need for the customer to stand in a line to complete their purchases.

Global research and advisory firm IHL Group reports 78 percent of retailers are planning to make a new mobile POS decision by mid-2016, and some retailers have seen as much as a 25 percent increase in sales per transaction when they use mobile technologies.

➤ Compete with online retailers

Your customers' behaviors and preferences are changing. They've grown accustomed to shopping online where they have visibility into available inventory and can arrange for delivery or pickup that's convenient for them. They also receive personalized offers and a collection of suggested items to consider based on their shopping and browsing history. Your brick-and-mortar locations can compete by deploying mobile POS to help you focus on personalizing the customer experience in-store. Your sales associates can access data in your POS system through tablets and when engaging customers, can refer to their purchase or loyalty/rewards program history to make service more personal.

You can also consider a solution that alerts you via beacons that customers with your mobile app have returned to your store and sends personalized offers and ads to their smartphones.

➤ Breaking down channel barriers

Technology solutions can help you provide a consistent customer experience, regardless of the channel your customer chooses. Inventory visibility can help you find an out-of-stock item or to suggest a comparable replacement. Enabling free delivery or buy online, pick up in-store allows your customers to shop and collect their items in a manner that's convenient for them. Printers in the back of the store can generate pick order or labels to get customer orders ready for shipment or pickup.

➤ Driving traffic to physical stores

Retail has seen a return to the physical, brick-and-mortar store. The practice of “webrooming,” where customers research items online and then come to the store to purchase them, is becoming more common place. TimeTrade Systems' *State of Retail 2015* report reveals 85 percent of consumers say “touch and feel” of products in store is a big driver in the decision to buy, and 65 percent admit if an item is available online or in a nearby store, they prefer to shop in the store.

When webrooming customers have decided to go to a store, you want to make sure it's your store they choose. Use online customer data to create targeted offers and promotions. Also keep sales associates armed with information so they can recognize customers and their shopping preferences when they arrive.



Get the Most Out of Retail Technology Investments in the Future

Your retailer advocate also can help you put a plan in place to get the most out of your new retail technology investments for years in the future. Components of that plan will include:

➤ Choosing solutions designed with the retail environment in mind

There are myriad technology solutions to choose from, but not all are designed specifically for retail. Work with your retailer advocate partner that understands the mission-critical nature of the solutions for your business, to design a solution that's right for you.

➤ Implementing a holistic, cohesive solution

If your technology solutions are disjointed, it will detract from the customer experience and be more difficult for you to support them — and to gain the full benefit from them. All components of your business's technology should work together to provide you with the data and business intelligence you need, as well as automate data entry to help reduce errors.

➤ Partner with a solution provider that can meet all of your needs

Choose one partner that can help you address technology from the front of the store, the sales floor, throughout each department with both fixed and mobile terminals, and to the back of the store. By choosing one partner, you can simplify integrations, standardize the user experience, and better manage maintenance and ongoing support — not only for hardware but for all in-store systems. Using hardware from a variety of vendors adds complexity to your systems, increases costs, and negatively impacts shopper engagement. Also look for:

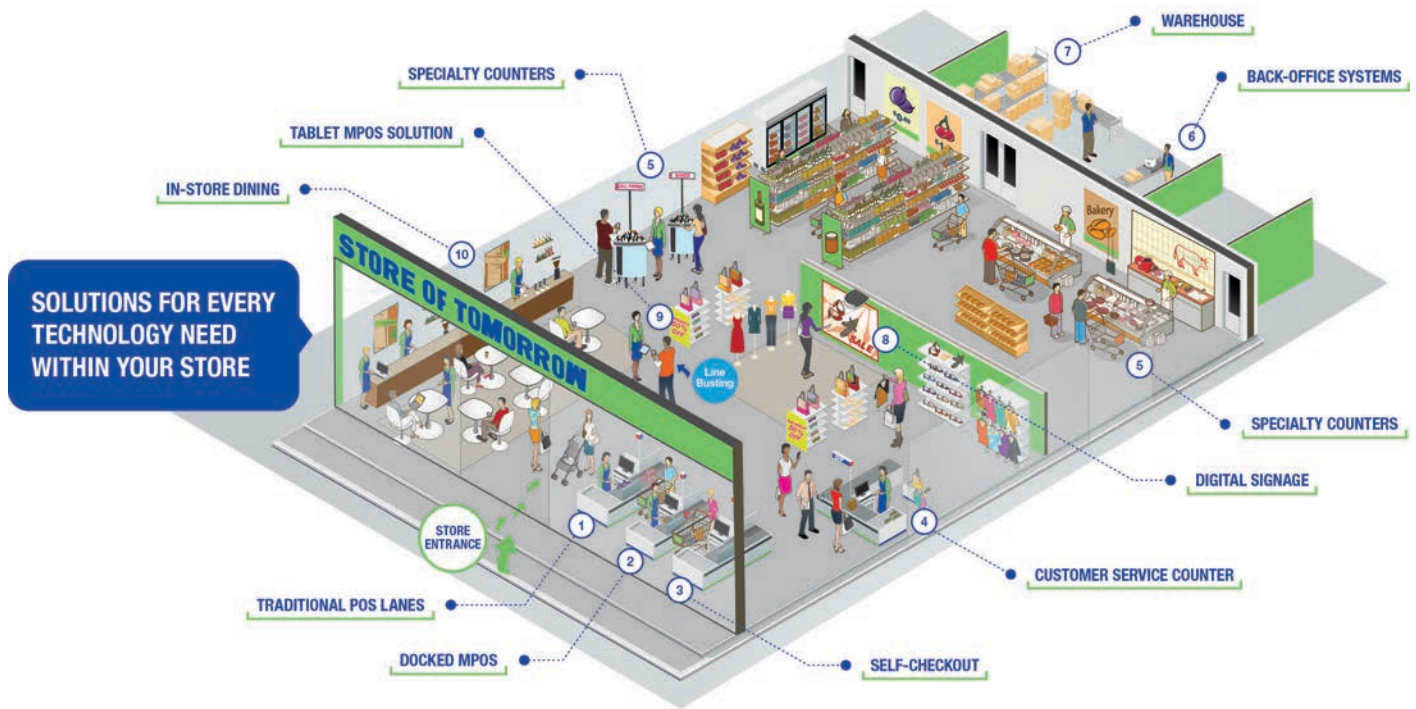
Custom solutions: Don't settle for an off-the-shelf solution rather than investing in a solution tailored to your specific needs.

Personalized pricing programs: Work with your partners to stretch your budget with options such as volume pricing, buyback programs, and leasing or finance options.

Immediate cost savings: Insist on solutions that can help trim costs associated with your old systems and devices such as consumables, power consumption, or labor costs.

In today's competitive, ever-evolving retail climate, it's important to make decisions strategically and to make every dime of your investments count. With the right plan and partnerships, your investments in retail technology will provide return now and into the future.

Partnering with Mainstreet, Inc. and Epson to Get the Most Out of Your Retail Technology Investments



If you are ready to make the most out of your retail technology investment, you don't need to look further than Mainstreet and Epson. As partners, Mainstreet and Epson take a customer-centric approach to developing customized retail technology solutions, first understanding the retailer, the store environment, and challenges. Selling devices is not our primary focus, but instead — like retailers — the focus is the long-term value of a delighted customer. It's not about "rip and replace," but rather taking a consultative approach to help make sense of available options and make the most of technology spend with reliable, retail-rugged solutions that ensure investment protection, extended life, and a lower total cost of ownership.

Together Epson and Mainstreet can easily add mobility to retailers' existing infrastructures. Mainstreet has a wealth of mobile options and because they understand in-store POS needs and challenges, can consult with the retailer to help determine whether mobile will completely replace traditional, fixed lanes or determine the optimal mix. Mainstreet also provides best practices for mobility implementations and deployments as well as customized configurations.

For more information, visit www.mainstreetinc.net/epson-printing-solutions.



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