Reshaping Communications Retail for the Post-Digital World

Meeting customer expectations and creating a big win for the communications business
Communications retail isn’t dying, it’s changing

Digital transformation has fundamentally changed what it means to “go to the store” – especially for communications service providers (CSPs).

In the past, consumers were willing to submit to transactional, DMV-type experiences in nondescript communications storefronts. Those days are over. Today’s consumers demand a seamless experience built around their needs, which requires a different perspective on the role of communications retail.

Accenture and Salesforce are collaborators with a shared point of view on how to handle this change. Accenture has decades-long global experience in retail strategy and consulting. And the Salesforce platform is setting the standard for managing customer relationships in the modern world.

Together, Salesforce and Accenture have a unique, deeply informed take on how CSPs can use technology to reclaim strategic advantage and give customers the helpful, enjoyable retail experience they crave.

The key trend:
The future is network-centric

In a research study we recently co-authored, Salesforce and Accenture identified key macro trends driving change in retail, and the characteristics of organizations positioned to thrive in the future.

The master trend we observed is the transition to what we call “network-centric organizations” – companies that rely on a flexible network of partners beyond their walls to deliver value to customers.

These networks take advantage of the best support systems available to deliver custom-tailored, successful customer experiences while simultaneously achieving important business outcomes—more sales, greater loyalty and operational efficiencies.

In the words of one interviewee, “Retailers and brands will become stewards of customers, and deliver personalized and relevant experiences wherever they choose to engage.”

Network-centric organizations are built to deliver the exact experience customers are looking for, the moment they need it. And retail has a critical role to play in delivering on that promise.

This is a major challenge. But we see many opportunities for CSPs to deliver personalized and relevant retail experiences using technology available today.

1Retail Organizations: The Next Stage of Transformation, Accenture & Salesforce
Rethinking the role of retail in the communications customer journey

To deliver personalized and relevant experiences, CSPs need to reorient retail around a changing customer. While 85% of customers start their shopping journey online, nearly 70% of customers complete their purchases in stores².

CSP customers also go to retail stores for other purposes than making a purchase—and those visits are still important. Each one is an opportunity to deepen a relationship, or cause frustration that leads to customer attrition.

In total, we’ve found three basic reasons customers visit communications retail stores:

1. Instant gratification: to make a purchase or pick up a device purchased online
2. To try devices before committing to buy
3. To get face-to-face customer service and ask questions as part of the purchase decision-making process

A new definition of success: giving customers what they want

Rather than focusing on bare-knuckle sales objectives, CSPs should focus their efforts on shaping retail into a platform experience that consumers trust, enjoy and gladly return to again and again.

That doesn’t mean abandoning sales—but it does require a more nuanced set of objectives. We recommend three areas of focus:

Anticipating needs
Whenever customers walk into communications retail stores, the reps they engage with should be primed and ready to get them what they want.

Delivering a seamless experience
It should be simple and effortless for customers to transition from online channels to the in-store experience. Things like locating nearby stores, checking inventory and booking appointments should all be fast and easy.

Extracting value from every interaction
Every customer visit is an opportunity to create success. Reps should be empowered to structure each customer engagement to yield the best result. That could be a direct sale, cross-sell, upsell or simply a positive moment that deepens the customer relationship.

²J.D. Power 2016 U.S. Wireless Purchase Experience Full-Service Performance StudySM – Volume 1
An ideal communications retail journey, shaped by technology

At every key step along the customer journey, technology has a critical role in helping CSPs reach our recommended objectives. This map is a high-level illustration of what a successful approach looks like.

ENTER STORE

Customer checks in via a kiosk

Customer has time to explore and shop (but not too much)

Customer’s name on digital display

Rep retrieves next customer from queue and easily accesses customer info

Rep knows what the customer wants and what their recent interactions are

Rep can resume a saved shopping cart that was started in another channel (e.g., online)

Rep is able to spend more time upselling and cross-selling products and services that the customer wants

INTERACT WITH REP

Rep walks the store with customer, using mobile technology to develop transaction, and can readily provide answers by using his tablet app

Interaction is time-efficient, handling time is drastically reduced

Rep is made aware of all checked-in customers in the store

Easily finds store that has the product of interest in stock, and books an appointment

Customer receives a thank you email

Customer watches a tutorial video

Customer receives an email explaining the first bill

TRANSACTION

Transaction happens at end of visit or later via digital technology

Customer receives a satisfaction survey

LOYALTY

Customer goes online using device of choice or calls call center and...

Shops for something they want (device, plan, accessory)

Or sets up a service interaction

Decides to make a store visit

Easily finds store that has the product of interest in stock, and books an appointment
How technology makes personalized retail possible

Extensible CRM technology is allowing CSPs to truly know their customers' preferences, past experiences, and context, enabling a seamless retail experience in three important ways.

Making channel hopping effortless
Customer interactions are captured across channels and mapped to processes guiding sales, service, and marketing engagements, allowing customers to start their journey in one channel and fulfill it in another without ever losing the thread.

Using analytics to translate data into clear directive for action
Analytics technologies help businesses understand and tune customer journeys, surfacing the most valuable courses of action for their customers, and translating a deluge of data into predictive actions and relevant sales offers.

Testing, proving, and scaling up what works
Once personalized experiences are enabled, businesses should rapidly A/B test sales, service, and marketing tactics in order to optimize the experiences of their customers – leveraging the power and flexibility of configurable cloud CRM software to unlock value faster than ever before.

The payoff: short-term improvements, long-term stability

The benefits of a technology-enabled approach to communications retail are both immediate and long-lasting. Some of the most impactful successes we’re seeing include:

• **Increased revenue per customer** from more successful cross-selling and upselling
• **Reduced customer attrition** due to deeper customer relationships and stronger loyalty
• **Reduced transaction time and customer wait times** due to efficiencies in the sales process
• **Stronger brand metrics** such as net promoter score, customer effort score or employee promoter score, resulting from an improved overall experience

Interested in redefining your retail experience?
Let’s talk.

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