



Are you omnichallenged?

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Help

It's the omnichannel invasion. Much like the British Invasion of the 60s, there's no stopping it. It's here to stay.

Are you ready for it? If your answer is no, don't go running helter skelter. You're not alone. According to Forrester Research, Inc., 90% of retailers are having trouble wrapping their heads around the omnichannel concept.

To survive, everything has to come together

From mobile to tablet to laptop, consumers are constantly engaging on a multitude of devices – with high expectations – as they hop from channel to channel. Retailers must connect with consumers on a cohesive, cross-channel level.

What is omnichannel? It's creating an excellent customer experience across all channels. It means engaging your customer throughout the complete shopping experience, whether by online ad, email promotion or in-store experience. Every touch should be seamless, integrated and consistent.

Please, please me

Omnichannel marketing is all about the customers. It's about giving them what they want, when they want it and how they want it. They are driving the bus. If you're not on it, you're under it.

If there's one universal truth in today's retail world, it's that the customers are going to check out the merchandise before they visit the store. They're going to do their homework. They will go online and research the store, the price and the product reviews. It's called webrooming.

Those that visit the store will take out their phones and do more research while inspecting the product. They will compare prices. This is called showrooming. Forrester Research, Inc., says 23% of adults will check prices on their smartphones while in your store. And 41% of them wind up purchasing somewhere else.

Hello, goodbye

This brings up another dynamic of omnichannel that goes beyond the obvious. If the sales associate is clueless about specific content you've served up online or the mobile message that's been texted to the customer's phone, the experience will be disconnected and fragmented. And you will lose the sale. Is it any wonder why more and more customers are doing everything they can to avoid a sales associate?

The long and winding road

The good news is, there's an opportunity here. But it's going to take some work. First off, you have to get to know your customers better. Understand what they are doing, thinking and feeling when interacting with your brand. What is their journey? What drives them to shop online or in-store? Do you understand your customers holistically? Is your data from all sources – POS, loyalty, social, online, CSR, third party, etc. – properly integrated into a unified database? Do you have the CRM tools, the analytics and the dashboards to do your job effectively – and

are you using them? Only 18% of marketers do, according to Teradata.

Here, there, everywhere

Your database rules. Without an integrated customer database and good analytics, you simply cannot give your customers what they crave: instant, relevant information, no matter where they are or what device they're using to interact with you.

Once you have the data, you can begin to see the patterns — how customers react both online and in-store. It will also show you where the customer experience begins and how the overall path to purchase looks. Now you can anticipate their expectations and behavior.

Got to get you into my life

A true omnichannel experience must be individualized and personalized based on who the customers are, where they are, time of day they purchase, past history, what they're currently looking for, and how they're behaving.

A smart marketer will communicate with a prior customer differently from a prospective customer. This is where segmentation comes in. Meticulous data and analytics programs will allow you to build and maintain a deeper relationship with your customers by tailoring your media, your modeling, your offers, and your messaging in a way that resonates, because you acknowledge and respect your relationship with them.

Come together

A strong omnichannel experience builds and strengthens a customer relationship. When you orchestrate your messages across all touch points, both online and in-store, you let the customers know that you understand and respect how, when, where, and which device they prefer for receiving communications. All of your channels and messaging begin to harmonize.

By the way, IDC Retail Insights says omnichannel shoppers spend 50% more than single-channel shoppers.

With a little help from my friends

In order to stay in sync with the customers and their demands, all of your departments must be aware of what's going on in digital, traditional, social, and store-level marketing. This is a crucial element of omnichannel marketing. Without this knowledge, you will have created an

unfulfilling customer experience, which can lead to brand erosion, customer churn, and loss of revenue. Everyone has to work together for your omnichannel strategy to be successful.

And in the end ...

Omnichannel marketing is changing the retail world the way The Beatles changed the world of music. It starts by focusing on what the customer wants vs. what product you want to sell. It leads to sustainable, competitive advantages within merchandising, sales and customer support. And it ends with greater profitability, marketing efficiency and higher customer satisfaction.



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As Catalyst's ECD, Ken translates strategy into creative experiences that move customers from inertia to action. Before working at Catalyst, he's inspired minds at places like Kovel Kresser & Partners (Los Angeles), TBC, Inc. (Baltimore) and Digitas.
