



Mobile in Retail - whose responsibility?

Managing Director (EMEA) of DigiPoS Store Solutions Comment Ian Patterson predicts that mobile technology could have a similar impact on retail that ATM machines had years ago.

It was predicted that 2011 would be the year that m-commerce achieved scale: consumers will use their mobile device on a substantial scale to engage with retailers and brands for selecting purchases and completing transactions.

As I have said before, mobile will be a game changer for the retail sector. I believe it will have the same impact as the ATM once had.

When we meet with clients, the mobile channel is taken as read – they are all interested (without exception) in the potential that m-commerce has to offer. And, in the majority of cases, they are being moved in that direction by their boards. There is no doubting that the UK retail community wants to go mobile.

Many are faced with the challenge of not knowing exactly which route to take, and it seems – for now – the majority are taking the easiest path – an optimised web browser, making their websites 'm-commerce ready'. These 'browse and buy' solutions are also proving popular with today's savvy consumer – who can shop at and locate stores through their mobile handset.

But I'd argue that this is a self-defeating strategy. Retailers are – in effect – competing with their own store offering, when in fact they should be bringing the two strategies under the same banner.

Today, we are seeing the emergence of a new data-enabled shopper; ready to take this one step further – who would be ready to use their mobile to scan and add items to their shopping cart. If retailers want to keep ahead, they need to begin thinking about bringing their bricks and mortar offering in line with the web/e-commerce tools. A true multichannel approach will focus on the customer and the core aspect of CRM. After all, isn't that what the shopping or retail experience should be about?

I also believe many retailers are holding back when it comes to adopting a m-commerce strategy; instead they are choosing to see what the competition does before making their mobile move.

One key question we ask when contacting existing and potential new clients in relation to their m-commerce strategy is whose responsibility is mobile? We find it tends to fall into the area of marketing and customer services, and – more recently – we are beginning to meet with staff with the job title: 'Head of Mobile'. These are people from e-commerce backgrounds, who have an understanding of marketing and brand awareness. Their sole aim through mobile will be to improve the customer experience.

Where once we would have pitched our MobileShopper offering to the IT department, we have seen a paradigm shift – the decision making process now clearly rests with marketing. Mobile is no longer considered in silo from a technology point of view, but the IT department hasn't been side-lined either; it still seems to be the part of the business enabling mobile.

In response to this, we have also changed our focus. Today much of our work with clients is around addressing how the solution works, and then ensuring the technology ties in with this.

One thing is certain, mobile is here and retailers cannot afford to ignore its importance. This isn't a case of if, but when, and retailers need to find new ways to work in order to optimise the potential. The success of their m-commerce strategy will boil down to how well it is embedded into their existing environment.

M-commerce has huge convenience benefits for the consumer, and will support the retailer in retaining its client base, through leveraging loyalty programmes. The mobile phone will drive access to retailers' information, making the shopping experience faster and more efficient. And, where the consumer sees value, they will drive the retailer.

With its hardware and software solutions, DigiPoS is redefining technology for retailers, bringing much-needed focus, value and reliability to a competitive market. Today, clients include: House of Fraser, Selfridges, Aurora Fashions, Harrods, Superdry, Next and Game.

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