

# Mobility: A Key Enabler for Connected Commerce

Retail is being disrupted on multiple fronts: While trying to meet demanding consumer expectations, retailers need to simultaneously transform their IT landscape, ensure high availability, align well-orchestrated staff processes, offer the ultimate consumer experience across channels and at the same time be profitable. Retailers are investing in mobility solutions to ensure satisfying and safe consumer and staff journeys. We talked to mobility expert Mark Thomson and our own Philippe Dauphin about how mobility will shape the emerging retail landscape from consumer and staff perspectives.



**Philippe Dauphin**  
VP Global Retail Solutions  
Diebold Nixdorf



**Mark Thomson**  
Director, Retail & Hospitality EMEA  
Zebra Technologies Europe Limited



## WHAT ARE THE LATEST TRENDS YOU SEE HAPPENING IN THE RETAIL INDUSTRY?

We see three clear trends materializing; they've been looming for several years, but they have been amplified by COVID-19. First, there's the need to adapt to new consumer journeys. Second, there's the necessity of combining online and offline worlds, and stop the silo approach by sharing business logic to stay consumer centric. Finally, there's a huge necessity and potential to digitalize staff journeys to reimagine store operations and improve the efficiency of staff.

I think the single biggest trend or shift for retail has been the realization that the customer is the one driving change. To some extent this is caused by customer experiences in other channels or even other industries, but there is such transparency now that retailers have to meet a new set of customer expectations around availability, delivery, product information and customer experience generally. Shoppers are also choosing self-service options far more than ever before.

## DO YOU THINK THAT RETAILERS ARE POSITIONED TO EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY?

Yes and no. On the one hand, retailers typically have strong IT departments capable of understanding and evaluating core technologies. However, we strongly believe technology is a necessity, not a goal. Retailers need to focus on designing the right journeys for their consumers and staff.

In a word, yes. Those who did not have mostly fallen by the wayside in recent years. The challenge for retailers is the breadth of technologies available to them and the number of suppliers in the ecosystem, therefore it's more important than ever to select strategic suppliers who have deep industry knowledge and a broad range of potential solutions.

## HOW DO YOU SEE RETAILERS EMBRACING TRANSFORMATION?

Many retailers have already around 50,000 mobile devices and plan to increase that number to 200,000 or 300,000 in the next 2-3 years. Given the level of investment, the growing complexity and strong usage by consumers and staff, mobility becomes a mission-critical enablement. Mobility has to be managed, both from a technical and business standpoint.

What I am seeing is a growing number of retailers who set a clear vision and realize that transformation is a cross-functional challenge rather than an IT project. Operations, Loss Prevention, HR, Merchandising, and Inventory teams are now more regularly involved in innovation projects which means technology vendors must be able to understand the perspectives of all these stakeholders as well as the IT implications.

## HOW DO YOU THINK THE INDUSTRY WILL BE DISRUPTED BY MOBILITY TECHNOLOGY?

Mobility has been adopted by individuals from day one, since the smartphone was introduced. Mobility is already there for consumer journeys and all surveys indicates that this is the preferred touchpoint for interacting with consumers. The need for staff productivity for better interactions between staff and consumer (assisted sales, queue busting, etc.) will lead to massive use and exponential growth in mobile use for staff.

Mobility is a transformational technology. Think of how it has changed our personal lives: do any of us go anywhere without our smart phones? And often our phone is a higher priority than our wallet. Armed with a smart mobile device, a store worker can now answer customer questions, take payments, view important tasks, report incidents or gaps and see schedules, etc.

## DO YOU FEEL THAT DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION HAS BEEN ACCELERATED BY THE PANDEMIC?

Absolutely. Our self-service sales grew by 70% in 2020 and COVID-19 has been an accelerator of the transformation. In this context, we identified an opportunity for an extended usage of mobility. Connecting the consumer's smartphone with the SCO enables a "no touch" journey and allows the store staff to manage remote interventions on SCO via their mobile device. Those tangible benefits are available with our new DN Series™ EASY portfolio, launched in January 2021.

In our recent Shopper Study, which covered retail executives across the US and EMEA regions, we found that over 60% of retailers have accelerated technology spending plans as a result of the pandemic. Digital is a broad term, however, and so these investments cover a wide variety of technologies. We see two areas where spend has certainly increased: self-service technologies and improving inventory accuracy in the store to support shopper satisfaction and omnichannel fulfilment efforts.

### THE TAKEAWAY

Retailers are at a critical reflection point; evolve consumer and staff journeys including store infrastructure or risk being outperformed by more agile retailers. We encourage retailers to do an assessment across their IT & business teams to find ways to improve the customer experience and staff journeys with mobile technology.