

## ***Digital transformation is crucial for retailers. It's not a question of if you should invest, but when and how to implement innovative technology that meets your customers' needs and expectations***

*By Liz Goodgold*

### **Creating An Omnichannel Experience**

Omnichannel retail is key; it's about creating consistent experiences across apps, websites, social media, ads, and in-store visits. Put simply: customers want to purchase effortlessly and seamlessly across every platform. As the following Forrester report, *Design Your Digital Store Blueprint For Customer Impact*, highlights: "Among global purchase influencers in the retail industry, 38% say their firm plans to invest externally and 37% say it plans to invest internally in omnichannel projects in 2021." Taking it a step further, the following report concludes, "Any digital experience, including those that connect to or enhance a physical experience in-store, must reduce friction between a customer and their objectives."

### **Keeping Physical Stores Relevant**

Ironically, the shift to digital shopping is keeping physical stores relevant. Shoppers want to research a product and confirm that it's in stock before they head to the store. Also, "personalized logistics" is emerging: shoppers want what they want, when they want it, and where they want it, and where they want it. Delivery options, thanks to technological advances, include same-day delivery, home or office delivery, curbside pickup, store retrieval, or pickup in lockers. Brick and mortar stores are not going away anytime soon. "We forecast that nearly three-quarters of retail sales in the US and Western Europe will still occur in stores by 2024," emphasizes the Forrester report.



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*- Scott Compton, Design Your Digital Store Blueprint For Customer Impact*

## Driving Differentiation & Simplicity With Technology

Technology is driving the convergence of differentiation with simplicity. Consumers want easy apps, navigations, and experiences that create differentiation while cementing loyalty. Lowe's Home Improvement, for example, installed smart pickup lockers at all of its 1,700 stores to elevate the customer experience<sup>1</sup> and Meijer uses easy-to-understand interactive displays to assist with shopper queries. Following in the footsteps of Amazon's successful cashierless payment system, Go, the brand is now rolling out the renamed "Just Walk Out" to its Fresh stores.

## Creating A Digital Roadmap For Success

Every retailer is at a different stage of technological innovation and implementation. With the rapid-fire pace of technology and vendor innovation, retail

management must create the best roadmap for their company, culture, and customers. Retail giants such as Walmart and Target have recognized that their digital transformation begins with their people. They each have created practical and focused programs that assist with career enrichment and advancement, which in turn is helping them with retention and engagement. A key takeaway here is that digital transformation is a process of continual investment and improvement. To stay ahead of the competition, retailers must rethink the way they invest to ensure the long-term success of both their associate and customer experience. Operational digital store technologies will deliver the most important benefits for retailers: faster return on investment and an improved in-store experience. As the following report concludes, "This tech will help associates deliver the best engagement for customers in the store – whether it's making a sale, servicing a request, or scheduling an appointment."

