

Unified Communications for Retail: Accelerating the Flow of Information to Transform the Store Experience

Every day, thousands of questions are asked in retail stores by Customers and employees searching for information on products, Pricing, and inventory. Being able to quickly find such mission-critical data can make all the difference in maximizing a customer's shopping experience and supporting store operations. At a time when volume discounters and low-cost chains dominate the market, today's retailers are looking for new ways to streamline how they convey key information and offer services to customers, associates, and management to increase sales and differentiate their organization.

MEETING TODAY'S RETAIL CHALLENGES

The retail market has changed dramatically over the past few years, placing new demands on stores of all sizes. Competing successfully is no longer simply a matter of offering a range of products at the lowest price. To create a multidimensional shopping experience for the customer—corporate executives, field managers, and store employees need access to a broad range of product and organizational information. However, achieving that access presents a new set of challenges. According to a recent Gartner study, the majority of customer questions are inventory-related: Do you have this item in my size? In the color I want? With the features I am looking for? When shoppers can't get immediate answers to their questions, stores miss out on a sales opportunity and the customer is far less likely to return. When sales associates must spend too much time searching multiple locations for personnel, product, or training updates—using bulletin boards, e-mails, faxes, phone messages, and word of mouth—stores' payroll investment is being poorly utilized. By minimizing time spent on information searches, retailers allow employees to focus on customers. Assuring an ongoing flow of information between headquarters and associates is another major challenge for today's retailers; disseminating consistent corporate messaging within a specific timeframe plays a major role in keeping store operations effective. Store employees have by far the most contact with customers, yet they often know the least about the corporate mission, goals, promotions, and news. They also often have valuable feedback on how customers respond to certain items, store promotions, and experiences, yet have no way of getting that information to headquarters for analysis. In response to these challenges, retailers are realizing that they must invest in store-level communications technologies to assure a more complete flow of information. However, they are currently limited by store infrastructures that often consist of older, proprietary, disparate systems. This results in limited access to information and a heavy reliance on manual processes, making stores less flexible and resilient.

From Cisco Website: www.cisco.com Transforming the Retail Experience using IP

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STRATEGY NAME: TRANSFORMING THE RETAIL EXPERIENCE

PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES:

To prepare students for future jobs in retail that will rely heavily upon technology.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Hardcopy : Article on the future of retailing (see attachment)

Whiteboard

PPT with Terms to Know: Play knowledge rating game

- **Retail market**
- **Multidimensional shopping experience**
- **Volume discounters**
- **Corporate mission and goals**
- **Store infrastructure**
- **Manual processes**
- **Feedback**

PROCESS:

INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT COMMUNICATION AT A STORE WHEN LOOKING FOR A PARTICULAR PRODUCT. (SIZE, STYLE, COLOR)

WHAT WAS THEIR GOOD EXPERIENCES AND WHAT WERE THE NOT SO GOOD EXPERIENCES.

LIST STORES THAT STUDENTS THINK ARE THE MOST TECH SAVVY.

DISCUSS WHY?

STORES ARE INTERESTED IN CREATING AN EXPERIENCE TO PURCHASE A PRODUCT AND RETURN AGAIN AND AGAIN TO THE STORE.

PASS OUT ARTICLE AND SHEET WITH TERMS TO KNOW

- 1.) PREDICTIONS ABOUT TERMS USING THE WHITE BOARD AND HARD COPY**
- 2.) PASS OUT CUE CARDS 1-2-3 VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE RATING**
 - 1. TERM THEY KNOW**
 - 2. TERM THINK THEY KNOW**
 - 3. TERM THEY DON'T KNOW**

DEFINE TERMS IN NOTEBOOKS FOR HOMEWORK.

STUDENTS READ ARTICLE: PREVIEW ARTICLE: REMIND STUDENTS THIS IS A TECHNICAL ARTICLE. REQUIRES THINKING AND QUESTIONING. USE MARGINS.

- **(CONTINUED)**

- **HIGHLIGHT VOCABULARY WORDS**

ASSESSMENT:

PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH VOCABULARY PRETEST AND GIVE POSTTEST AFTER THEY DEFINE TERMS FOR HOMEWORK

WRITE A JOURNAL REFLECTION

- **BRAINSTORM ABOUT STORES THAT COULD BENEFIT FROM THIS TECHNOLOGY**
- **HOW CAN NEW TECHNOLOGY IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY**

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