

2016 Technology Trends for Local Retailers

Much has been written about how advances in retail technology are transforming the retail industry. As expected, forecasters this year have identified a number of retail technology trends to keep an eye on.

New technology generates excitement, but begs the question, which of these trends reflect technologies that are practical and accessible to local retailers, and how can local retailers best use those technologies to their advantage.

Below, you'll find two summarized lists of the technologies expected to have the most impact in 2016 identified by retail industry prognosticators, including Synchrony Financial, technology industry experts and some observers at the National Retail Federation gathering, NRF 2016.

First, a compilation of the technologies getting the most attention and embraced primarily by major retailers:

Major Retail Technology Trends

1. More omni-channel strategies - including stores mirroring the online experience and providing more personalized service.
2. Internet of things (IOT) sensors and devices - including smart shelves, mirrors, intelligent assistants, displays, intelligent lighting, emotion and facial recognition, etc. to enable visibility, boost sales and control costs.
3. Use of location based technologies to track products and buyer behavior
4. Augmented and virtual reality showroaming
5. Social media buy buttons to enhance social commerce
6. Big data informing real-time and future decisions



Also expected for 2016 is the impact of wearable devices and voice technology (for commands and searching) on retail shopping behavior. It's interesting to note that eight of 10 retail industry trends mentioned in Synchrony Financial's most recent report are tech focused.



New technology for retailers dominates retail news, to be sure. But, lacking the resources of the major chains, local retailers are seeking practical and proven technology solutions that they can implement successfully and affordably.

With that in mind, I've compiled a second list of technology trends, those with potentially the greatest impact on local or small business retailers, primarily because these technologies are within their reach.

Technology Trends for Local Retailers

- **Mobile point of sale (POS) solutions** – This popular technology can actually be a cost saver since [mobile POS devices](#) are less expensive than traditional registers.
- **In-store digital displays and video streaming** – Starting with a computer, a large flat-screen and some inexpensive software, almost any retailer can put together an awesome digital menu board or signage featuring product information or entertainment.
- **Mobile payments** – With an investment in newer Europay, MasterCard and Visa (EMV) compliant [payment terminals](#), you can also accept mobile payments and get some positive buzz from shoppers. Some mobile payment apps require NFC capable terminals while others do not.
- **More refined use of apps** – Use your app to engage customers instead of just rewarding them for loyalty.



Retail technology doesn't have to be revolutionary to be effective. In fact, technology for technology's sake is dehumanizing. Local retailers should take care to add [personal touches to enhance the shopping experience](#), and humanize the technology.

Make the Most of Existing Technology

In addition to investing in practical technology improvements, local retailers who take advantage of existing technologies in creative ways generate excitement and increased sales.

Scheduling Apps - Labor is a major cost in most retail operations. Solutions are now available to help retailers cut labor costs and reduce manager time spent on scheduling. Predictive scheduling apps use data pulled from a POS system, even from a smart printer to predict sales volume and staffing requirements.

Data Security - [EMV or chip card](#) adoption is slower than expected. Local retailers might gain an advantage by converting to EMV and advertising their superior data security to shoppers.

Personal Productivity Software – Modern tools such as Office 365 and Windows 10 [increase personal productivity](#) and enhance collaboration and creativity. Having the best tools also improves the image of the company while making data more secure.

Social Media - Millennial shoppers want a fun shopping experience and to be entertained. They are inclined to spend more on experiences than things. Because smaller retailers have a built-in advantage for building community, they can take full advantage of existing technology, such as social media to promote experiential events, like races, hikes, crafts, arts and other activities.

For example, one social media promotion for a local restaurant opening encouraged potential customers to line up in a party atmosphere for the chance to win free food for a year. Millennials also value craftsmanship, originality and ethical sourcing. If these are selling points for your business, then social media is a great way to promote them.

Selfies - Retailers can also capitalize on existing tech behavior, like selfies, by giving something away to the winner of a selfie contest. Creative hashtags to gather responses and promote the event or something unique about the store, along with digital signage to show winning photos, are easily managed.

Local retailers should be encouraged by the fact that the human touch is still what sells. Going above and beyond in personal service is the way to make the most of your technology. eMazzanti's hyper-responsive personalized eCare [IT managed services](#) prove the effectiveness of a customer service emphasis that results in customer loyalty and high satisfaction scores.

Do More of What You Do Best

So, how does a local retailer best take advantage of retail technology trends today? By starting where you are and moving forward, confidently adopting practical solutions that will make a difference, and by capitalizing on existing technology.

Also, take some time to look at technology that you can use now to increase [personal productivity and collaboration](#), security, service and effectiveness, giving you more time to do what you do best.

Retailers have a choice of technology providers. The right technology partner delivers ongoing value by recommending improvements to keep your IT business strategy current. eMazzanti leverages close relationships with major [retail technology](#) companies to enhance your return on investment (ROI) and provide your retail operation with the most up-to-date revenue-enhancing technology.