



# Retail Whitepaper

## SALES ENABLEMENT TOOL

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Remember to include a CTA link to your blog, sales request form, or the whitepaper!

A professional photograph of a man and a woman in business attire. They are both wearing glasses and smiling while looking at a tablet device held by the man. The background is blurred, suggesting an office or retail environment.

# The Future of Unified Communications in Retail

Create better customer experiences by streamlining internal communications with UC

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## Executive Summary

The impact of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic forever changed the retail industry, from in-store operations and supply chain to labor and customer engagement. Nearly every aspect of business saw challenges which required retailers to respond with agility, innovation - and in many cases, the right technology.

Now, more than ever, retailers need to consider optimizing communication channels to ensure employees can safely interact with customers while ensuring a positive experiences, whether it be in-store, online, during curbside pickup or delivery services. Unified Communication and Collaboration tools break down communication barriers and provide access to details data that aids retailers can leverage to drive both increased customer satisfaction and revenue opportunities.

Research shows that **98% of Americans switch between devices in the same day<sup>1</sup>**, reflecting the important for retailers to support omnichannel communication in order to interact with customers on their preferred channels. These channels also allow for unprecedented data that can be used to enhance e-commerce, CRM, inventory management or Point of Sale (POS). **How can retailers leverage this data in order to transform it into meaningful customer insights?**

Stay tuned as we examine the retail space and how UC can be leveraged to streamline operations, and increase ROI for retail businesses. At the end of this whitepaper, you will have learned:

- Top tips for effectively leveraging UC in retail stores
- How to improve the omnichannel experience
- How handheld devices can improve retail operations
- How UC solutions transform retail communications

# Top Five Tips for Effectively Leveraging UC in Retail

Harnessing the power of Unified Communications (UC) in retail can be the key to retailers exceeding customer expectations in this digital age. Using a combination of calling, messaging, presence, and video within a single application streamlines communications across stores, warehouses , or even curbside delivery. Read on to discover our five top tips for how your business can leverage UC solutions to support your retail growth.

## Top Omnichannel Retail Capabilities according to Digital Shoppers



Source: invesp The State of Omnichannel Shopping





## 1) Unify Multiple Communication Channels in Your Retail Store

In the retail industry, timing is everything. From apparel to grocery, pharmacy to electronics, it's imperative that new campaigns and changeovers occur seamlessly, without suffering any delay. **Retailers only have experienced a product recall intimately understand the importance of efficient communication**, and the necessity of having integrated tools to efficiently execute the recall. Unifying communication tools allows your business to spend less time worrying about whether your messages are received and tasks are completed by your employees. This way you'll have more time to work on the serious issues affecting your business.

UC allows the integration of multiple communication systems (voice, video and messaging) into one. By selecting a mature provider, it's possible to use your existing infrastructure, which guarantee's an easy transition and a quick up time. In addition, UC allows your employees to manage their day-to-day communications from a single interface, collaborate on assignments seamlessly and allows for vital information flow between departments.

## 2) Provide Easy Access to Internal Retail Store Communications and Retail Documents

In a high-powered environment such as retail, it's not only the flow of information that is vital, but the focus on relevant information for that particular department. For instance, the visual merchandising team doesn't need daily stock inventory updates. Adopting a streamlined, internal retail communications approach, **supports the distributing of relevant information to specific teams** via chat rooms or quick video meetings. By utilizing team messaging solutions, managers can reduce the number of notifications, ensuring that relevant information gets the attention it deserves.

UC tools also enable file sharing and on the go documentation accessibility. Rather than employees filtering through endless emails threads, or shared drives, UC tools can provide mobilized access to such as product guides, training documents, store checklists or procedures. Providing managers and associates with vital information at their fingertips that is needed to properly support customer. To emphasize the need for employees to have information easily at hand, **half of millennial's believe they typically know more about a store than store associates do, and 43% believe robots could effectively replace store associates.**<sup>2</sup> These are worrying numbers in an industry where customer service is rapidly becoming a key competitive differentiator. Consolidating retail communications would alleviate this issue. Accessing information from one centralized application also allows retailers to increase data security as UC tools have standard security protocols that keep valuable corporate data safe and secure.

### **3) Add Communication Tools to the Devices Your Associates Already Use**

Your workforce likely already uses a range of devices to facilitate their jobs, including barcode scanners, mobile handheld computers, and potentially radios or wall phones to communicate. **What if you could combine the devices for a more productive and streamlined solution?** That's what UC can do! Enabled with wireless connectivity, UC gives employees access to HD voice and video calling and messaging features to stay connected – with other customers, coworkers, or supervisors, whether they are in-store or on-the-road. By integrating communications with devices employees already use, adoption issues and training are significantly reduced. In addition, it provides your workforce with access to inventory data, enabling upsell opportunities, fosters a more cohesive retail environment and boosts employee productivity.

### **4) Deliver Proper Training and Onboarding With Advanced Collaboration Tools**

How can you ensure that your store associates, new recruits or field teams are getting proper, brand consistent, training? The larger the retail organization, the more difficult it is to function without a streamlined internal communications process. With the right retail communication systems in place, onboarding and training sessions can be conducted regardless of dispersed retail locations and different time zones. **This ensures that all global employees are kept up-to-date through consistent messaging.** It also facilitates easy exchange of information, sharing documents or collaborating over crucial projects, driving employee productivity across departments.

### **5) Create a Communication System That Supports a Centralized Feedback Loop System**

Imagine you have broadcasted an important announcement and assigned tasks across multiple stores, but there's no way for your teams to send confirmation messages or clarify directives. **Employees are often forced to rely on various different communication channels to manage their tasks.**

By offering a two-way communication platform, UC systems help ensure retailers' messages are read and responded to by their employees. Centralizing communications on **one platform helps close the feedback loop and reduces any uncertainties when it comes to executing store tasks.**

Today's customers want an elevated shopping experience and easy access to accurate, consistent information on items or services. UC enables omnichannel retail communications and an enhanced management system to control internal communications, which ultimately helps deliver more engaging customer experiences.

## Three-Step Guide to an Omnichannel Experience

Omnichannel shoppers have a 30% higher lifetime value than those who shop using only one channel.<sup>3</sup> Every shopper has experienced this scenario before: while talking to a retail assistant, you are given vague, incomplete information about when the next shipment of X product is due, or what the next version of Y product might look like. So what is the best way to make concrete information easily obtainable from whomever you ask? We've created a three-step guide to getting retail right.

**70% of US online shoppers** said that they have used buy online , pick up in-store services. **Smartphones now influence more than 28%** of US retail sales.

Companies with omnichannel customer engagement strategies **retain on average 89% of their customers**, compared to 33% for companies with weak customer engagement.

**71% of in-store shoppers** who use smartphones for research say their device has become more important to their in-store experience.

Source: invesp The State of Omnichannel Shopping



## Step 1. Deploying a UC Infrastructure That Empowers Associates

Customers have unpredictable communication preferences and triggers. Retailers of all sizes operating in today's omnichannel world can benefit from advances in Unified Communications (UC) enables retailers to create valuable, meaningful customer engagements and deliver a better experience while converting more sales. But it doesn't have to stop there. Advancing the adoption of UC shouldn't just be limited to your customers. While customers are the core focus of all retail organizations, **employees who increase productivity, streamline costs and ultimately promote the brand cannot be ignored.** UC is having a broader impact on work practices, especially with IT and business professionals.

## Step 2. Embracing an Omnichannel Experience

Across a retail network of multiple sites, how do you encourage retail associates or store assistants who have never been to the head office to become in-store brand ambassadors? When each employee is empowered with a mobile communications device, any sense of isolation is removed, wherever they may be in the store. **Recent studies show that 90% of customers expect consistent interactions across channels.<sup>4</sup>** Additionally, 71% of shoppers who use smartphones for research in-store say that it's become an important part of the experience.<sup>5</sup> UC technology can enable retailers to provide valuable knowledge to their employees; ranging from the latest insights on how to support a certain product, to information about new products, or promotion details & eligibility. With UC tools, employees have easy access to a broader range of colleagues, product information and transaction processing, but also to the 'corporate mothership'. This then trickles down to customers being helped with their purchases, providing them more value. By bringing retail communications together into one UC platform, retailers can install a true sense of ownership and loyalty among employees that goes beyond their store.

## Step 3. Using UC to Deliver Unique Value to Your Customers as Well as Employees

With the right UC infrastructure facilitating an omnichannel experience for your employees, all that data can easily be cataloged and developed into reusable content. An evolving latest knowledge resource center accessible by all employees can be created, which can help develop a competitive edge. When retailers embrace this approach, they find employees:

- Return with useful questions      • Establish new templates for success
- Contribute insights                • Create their own dynamic networks of internal contacts, thus improving productivity

This effectively makes retailers – and their online/offline retail environments – more attractive to customers. And more so, it makes their organizations a place for employees to thrive. When communications are fortified with UC technology, it ultimately results in a big win for retailers.

# How Do Handheld Devices Improve Retail Operations?

The retail industry has been experiencing friction between online and offline shopping environments. Can mobile technology bridge the gap between these two worlds and assist retailers in delivering a fluid shopper experience? While more and more retailers are open to adapting new technologies, their biggest doubts lie in overcoming day-to-day management struggles – from improving warehouse communications to securing robust functionalities that can boost sales operations. **Smart retailers have now found the most viable solution to these difficulties – mobile handheld computers.**

By abandoning their limited-purpose, traditional devices for modern touch-centric handhelds, retailers have freed themselves from the constraints of unreliable and inflexible technologies and are moving towards a more seamless mobile experience. Handheld computers leverage the convenience and utility of mobile, while enhancing both offline and online shopping experiences. Here's why innovative retailers are relying on handheld computers to unlock the true strength of omnichannel retail and turbocharge their business operations;

**82 percent of store associates agree** that improving in-store communication between staff and managers positively impacts the consumer shopping experience.

Today, no fewer than **73 percent of customers believe they are more informed than sales associates.**

Why? Because they can jump online at any time—including while in the store, using their cell network if you do not provide free wireless—and look up product information, promotions, discounts, and comparative pricing. By not allowing your employees access to the same data your customers have, you lessen their efficiency, lower your reputation, and diminish the chance of a sale.



## Modern Retail Communications Improve Operational Efficiencies

Smartphone-savvy, connected customers are longing for faster in-store satisfaction today. They are well-informed, review-seeking and in need of in-store shopping tools that can help enrich their shopping experience.

**Retailers need to quickly jump on the mobile technology bandwagon to minimize chronic shopping hassles.**

Whether it's in a warehouse, in the stockroom or on the sales floor, by empowering your sales staff with mobile devices, you enable them to streamline communications whenever and wherever they are.

When front-line associates are enabled with mobile computers or tablets, it allows them to conduct inventory and price checks, scan coupons and communicate across the sales floor or stockroom without ever having to leave the customer's side. It allows them to locate merchandise with ease, boost inventory accuracy and reduce products becoming out-of-stock.

**Worried about device management hassles?** Simple and low-cost centralized device management is possible with customized retail solutions. This drives down the massive cost associated with mobility solutions – that of day-to-day management. Choose a mobile device management solutions that allow you to remotely manage, monitor and troubleshoot mobile computers from a single location. This makes management less complex and more cost-efficient.

**"On average, 61% of employers report mobile access improves productivity, according to a Citrix study."**

Source: Repsly - The Mobile Workforce Trend That Can Improve Productivity By 10%

## **Feature-Rich Voice Technology Can Help Maximize ROI on Hardware Investment**

By embracing advanced voice technology, it turns mobile devices into powerful tools with HD voice and video calling capabilities. Enabled with wireless connectivity, you can access all the features you need for your workers to stay connected – with their customers, coworkers, supervisors or any other peripherals needed, in-store or on-the-road.

If armed with superior battery management, it preserves power for full shift operation, thus allowing workers to interact smoothly, without interruptions, sustainable throughout the buyer's journey.

**Cost-effective mobile solutions can also be made secure with standard security and encryption protocols that keeps your data safe.** With voice solutions enabled on their mobile devices, retail associates can connect with their coworkers, meet and help shoppers anywhere in the store, with product information available at their fingertips.

From boosting employee productivity to streamlining inventory data to powering up-sell capabilities, mobile handheld devices allow for a more cohesive retail environment. Moreover, by leveraging the cutting-edge technology of mobile, retailers are able to provide an exceptional customer experience that can help fuel sales.

**"Educated and engaged store associates able to meet consumers' demands can generate a 123% uptick in sales revenue."**

Source: MicroStrategy - 5 Ways Mobile Apps are Driving the Store of the Future

# UC Solutions for Retail

## Enhance the Shopping Experience

60 percent of shoppers say store associates who use mobile devices for customer assistance improve their shopping experience. By adding communication tools to devices associates already carry, staff become more reachable no matter where they are in the store. Companies with extremely strong omnichannel customer engagement see a **9.5% year-over-year increase in annual revenue, compared to 3.4% for weak omnichannel companies.** Similarly, strong omnichannel companies see a 7.5% year-over-year decrease in cost per contact, compared to a 0.2% year-over-year decrease for weak companies.<sup>6</sup>

How do you keep today's digitally-savvy shoppers happy? In this age of instant gratification, shoppers want to make instant, well-informed choices. This presents a huge challenge to retailers – how do they make store information accessible to their employees, sales staff and executives in order to enhance the store experience? Handheld computers or mobile computers are increasingly being used as in-store communication devices as they offer access to a broad range of product and organizational information. **56% of consumers have used their mobile device to research products at home** with 38% having used their mobile device to check inventory availability while on their way to a store and 34% who have used their mobile device to research products while in a store.<sup>7</sup>

However, this presents another challenge as sales associates carry or utilize multiple devices during the day – wall phones, two-way radios, handheld computers. **Streamlining this flow of information between these various devices is essential** as it helps employees to focus on customers. More and more retailers are leaning towards unified communications (UC) technology to drive omnichannel communications and empower store employees with easy-to-use communication tools. UC allows integration of multiple communication systems (voice, video and messaging) into one and by deploying it on existing handheld devices, allows an easy flow of information between departments.





## Leverage Existing Investment in Handheld Computers

If retailers already have a plethora of devices in place, and a significant investment in handheld devices, customized UC solutions can help.

**Customized softphone clients turn these handheld devices into a full-fledged team communications device** by empowering them with additional UC features such as voice and video calling, messaging and more. They help streamline in-store communications and offer employees with all the tools necessary to accelerate the flow of information within the store environment.

For instance, it facilitates store associates to take outbound calls while "on the floor" or transfer calls between departments. And all this **without incurring additional costs to change or update existing infrastructure** and without endpoints being deployed on legacy devices.

With these customization options, you can create a specialized solution that speaks to your customer needs and includes value-adding features and functions.

## Who do we work with?

<INSERT DETAILS ABOUT YOUR CUSTOMER BASE/WHO YOU SERVICE>

## Want to get started on deploying a mobile UC solution?

For more information on <INSERT YOUR COMPANY NAME> remote work solution UC solutions visit <INSERT YOUR URL/SALES FORM URL>

<INSERT YOUR COMPANY LOGO TO CO-BRAND>



## Conclusion

To summarize, deploying a mobile UC solution for handheld devices enables retailers to lower their expenses by reducing the amount of operations, resources and time needed to support the solution. These solutions also enable flexibility and efficient use of employee resources.

They help enhance customer service as store associates become faster and more efficient at answering customer inquiries and streamlining calls between departments. Ultimately, these solutions enable an elevated customer experience by accelerating purchase decisions and leading to a substantial increase in retail revenue.

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