



Engaging Retail Customers Through Technology

The retail landscape is changing. Not only has the economy been in flux, but the rise of e-commerce has drastically altered the shopping habits of today's consumers. The promise of lower online prices has begun to steer customers away from the traditional brick and mortar store. When they do visit a retailer's physical location, they're armed with smartphones, tablets and an arsenal of comparison shopping "ammunition." They expect to get what they want at the best price — and they expect immediate gratification.

With these evolving shopping habits, retailers have had to transform marketing approaches to create a more engaging experience that seamlessly integrates the customers' online and offline experiences. If they don't, they risk losing sales to a store that will.

Serving the self-service generation

A batch data collection device stores data directly on the device. As the data is scanned or keyed in, it stays in the memory of the device until such time it can be connected to a computer and uploaded. Afterwards the data can be erased, freeing the memory of the device for its next use.

Consumers are becoming very independent. Ever since the arrival of self-checkout lanes at the local grocery store, today's generation of consumers are just used to the "do-it-yourself" concept. Not to downplay the importance of human interaction, but many customers now shy away from asking an employee for help. Face it — it's no secret that retail has a high turnover rate, and new employees may not

know all of the answers to customer questions. At a larger department store, a men's apparel employee may not be familiar with pricing of items in the kids' department.

Customers want convenience and quick service, not the run around.

As mentioned earlier, the connected customer has ready access to product information and expects that same capability when she enters your store.

Bottom line: As a retailer, customer satisfaction should top your list. So you need to know how to cost-effectively integrate ease and convenience into your operations. This will create happy customers who turn into repeat customers, helping to boost your revenue.

What's a store to do?

In a perfect world, a retailer would have stellar customer service with a smiling well-educated sales associate at every customer's beck and call. However, we know the reality — more employees mean mounting payroll costs that could drive a retailer out of business.

A growing number of retail companies have turned to omnichannel retailing (using online tactics like e-commerce and social media to enhance offline shopping experiences) as well as personalized marketing methods. However, these strategies are not yet widespread, especially within small to medium-sized businesses.

In the meantime, the answer could lie in a simple, yet powerful tool — **the mini kiosk**.

Using technology to empower your customers



Mini kiosk stations are small devices that can be discreetly nestled in your store's departments to provide a wealth of information at your customers' fingertips. Not to mention, they can be just as effective as additional staff – without the overhead.

And mini kiosks aren't just "price checkers" anymore. They are versatile, multi-tasking devices used by customers and store personnel alike to make the shopping experience less frustrating, more efficient and ultimately more enjoyable.

Turning knowledge into sales

Through the information found on a mini kiosk, customers become more informed about their purchase and are empowered to make a buying decision on the spot. This happens in the following ways:

- ▶ **Price Verification:** Yes, a mini kiosk can still be used as a price checker. With a simple UPC scan, a customer can find out the actual price of their item immediately.

This can eliminate frustration, especially if an item has been either hung on the wrong rack or placed on the wrong shelf. There's nothing worse for shoppers than thinking an item is on

sale for a great low price, then finding out it isn't when they check out. The solution? Install a mini kiosk displaying a message that encourages customers to verify their items prior to checking out.

- ▶ **Gift Cards:** If a customer wants to make a purchase with a gift card, but is not sure of the balance, they can swipe the gift card at the mini kiosk and easily find out. Another idea is to place a mini kiosk in the gift card section, so it can display special promotions to entice gift card purchases.
- ▶ **Inventory Check:** Perhaps there is only one item on the shelf, but a customer needs two. A mini kiosk makes it easy to perform a stock inquiry to find out if there might be more in the back of the store or possibly at another location. This knowledge decreases the likelihood that the customer will go elsewhere to find what they want.
- ▶ **SKU searches:** This is especially convenient for customers who need automotive information such as the correct windshield wiper size or tail light model for their vehicles. A mini kiosk makes it simple with its on-screen look-up feature. Users not only find the right SKU number but also the product's location within the store. It gives the necessary data and cuts the hassle of tracking the item down.
- ▶ **Special promotions:** Shoppers can swipe a loyalty card to discover what discount they will receive, and scan a coupon to find out exactly what aisle to find that particular item.

After customers find the product data they need, the mini kiosk goes into slideshow mode, displaying bright, colorful advertisements, seasonal promotions or suggestions for complementary products – which can translate into more money spent.

All of these features help create more sales. But this technology also cuts costs through decreased staffing needs and gained efficiency through the ease of use. Rather than wasting time running all over the store, looking for a product or for someone who knows about the product, strategically placed mini kiosks help to effectively guide customers to the information they seek.

But what is the cost?

The best kept secret about mini kiosks is the investment. In small volumes, the average price for a mini kiosk with a standard feature set can be less than \$1,000. Larger volumes can drive that price much lower. However, in order to be completely fair, there are also costs associated with deploying the devices, such as connecting them to store networks and developing the application software to match your unique business needs.

At the end of the day, the investment is likely proportionate to the size of the store and the relevant customer traffic, and will always be far less than the cost of additional headcount. A small fleet of mini kiosks is a one-time investment. If properly deployed, they will work every hour the store is open, helping to maximize the marketing dollars spent to get customers through your doors and spending money.



AML is a Dallas-based manufacturer of handheld, vehicle mounted, and stationary data collection devices and kiosks, including the KDT series of mini-kiosks that feature barcode scanning, superior visual images, network connectivity, and a variety of user interface options for enhancing the in-store customer experience. All AML products are engineered, manufactured, and serviced in Dallas, Texas.

To speak with a sales representative, call **800-648-4452**, or contact us at [**sales@amltd.com**](mailto:sales@amltd.com).

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