

Frank Mayer and Associates, Inc.

Using Tablets to Transform Retail Experience



Tablets have been touted as “reinventing” and “revolutionizing” retail. Retailers and consumer-facing businesses have been testing the use of tablets to gain operational and marketing advantages, and they are establishing their place in a changing technological landscape. Businesses embracing mobility are incorporating tablets and touchscreens into their customer experience.

Since the iPad was introduced in 2010, tablets have become kiosks, sales tools, concierge devices, POS devices and more. There seems little doubt that they offer the opportunity to transform aspects of shopping and hospitality for the better because of the versatility they offer in helping businesses implement the strategies that will keep them on top.

Tablets fit into retailers’ plans to align their stores with how consumers want to shop. Nielsen reports (*The Digital Consumer, February 2014*) that 65 percent of tablet owners use their devices to research before they shop, while 55 percent use them to read reviews of recent and future purchases.

The use of tablets in store is a natural extension of the purchase journey. That retailers and companies in restaurant and travel businesses are moving from test to rollout should be proof of their revenue enhancing potential.

At the same time, tablet programs can offer more than an immediate sales lift. They can fit into a customer experience strategy that pays dividends over a longer time horizon.

Retail Systems Research Managing Partner Nikki Baird believes that retailers who place engagement technologies in the store with the expectation of facilitating an immediate sale are being unimaginative. Baird states, “Retailers expect to measure the results of in-store technology in terms of immediate sale because they expect that the distance between a call to action and action is zero when the customer is standing at the shelf. But shopping just doesn’t work that way anymore – the store has at least as important a role as online in the early stages of the purchase process, and retailers who focus only on the transaction are missing far too much opportunity there.”



Whatever the motivation for bringing tablets in-store, many retailers seem to have gotten past the question of “should we use them.” Two-thirds of retailers surveyed are testing tablets, and 11 percent of respondents have fully deployed them. (*Tablets on the Rise, RIS, March 2013.*) RIS believes this double-digit acceptance is a significant milestone in an industry that moves in a measured, deliberate fashion.

Many retailers seem secure with their answer to the question of “which tablet should it be?” Despite the existence of commercial grade tablets, Apple iPads or iPad Minis are the overwhelming choice by retailers surveyed by RIS, with 80 percent of retailers having deployed or contemplating deployment saying Apple iOS devices are high on their priority list.



There are instances where alternative tablets are being chosen. Restaurants in particular are choosing specialty tablets for use at tableside.

Businesses are also working through the question of “how should we use them?” Tablet capabilities are broad-based and their use cases are limited only by vision and budget. Retailers are refining the features they want to put in the hands of associates and before consumers, but it is clear that supporting the sales effort is a top priority.

There is also wide latitude on what form a tablet program should take. They can be associate-held devices, self-service kiosks or a combination of both. And the term “kiosk” can mean floor-standing, counter-unit, or wall mounted display.

In this paper we have drawn upon our observations to outline why tablets fit strategically into retail marketing and included some examples of how they are being used tactically. We have also called upon our experience to provide a list of technical considerations behind sound tablet program execution.

Using Tablets to Transform Retail Experience Topics

Tablets and Retail Strategy: A Fit

Tablet Programs Take on a Number of Forms and Functions

Planning Considerations Can Dictate Success

Tablets and Retail Strategy: A Fit

Retailers' early tablet interest was sometimes motivated by fascination with new technology. A few years into the cycle, tablets appearing on the selling floor or in other consumer experiences are there for at least two sound strategic reasons.



1 Tablets are a fit in the age of converged retail. Though more than half of retailers polled by RSR say cross-channel demands by customers outpace their ability to deliver them ([Cross Channel Benchmark Report, RSR, 2013](#)), retailers with the resources to do so are striving to meet customer expectations for a single brand experience all along the purchase journey.

As a tool for channel convergence, the success of tablets may lie in their ability to reduce friction that shoppers encounter at any number of points trying to complete a task. Though not every deployment offers a comprehensive array of customer services, including inventory lookup, purchase history, ordering, loyalty integration and payment acceptance, tablets allow retailers to selectively implement new strategies to bridge the online and in-store realms.

2 Tablets elevate the customer experience. The retail and hospitality sectors are using tablets to differentiate themselves from competitors.

Tablets allow retailers to harness the flexibility and portability of mobile devices to deliver services and information more efficiently and conveniently. When connected to customer data, they also offer the promise of one-to-one clienteling and customization.



Tablets offer retailers the potential for cross-selling and up-selling that ultimately results in improved customer satisfaction and increased transaction size. They offer an additional channel for getting persuasive and helpful content in front of customers and encouraging shoppers to engage with a brand.

In the hospitality industry, hand-held tablets or tablet kiosks enhance the concierge experience by replacing the three-ring binder and speeding up the check-in process. Tablet apps also give guests more control over accessing services, and some luxury hotels are even placing tablets in guest rooms.

At this time, the transition into tablets is designed to differentiate on service, convenience and engagement, but as usage expands it begs the question of when it simply becomes table stakes within certain categories.

Tablet Programs Take on a Number of Forms and Functions

Project objectives and the desired consumer experience dictate the physical configuration and content of a tablet program. Whether in kiosk, counter-unit or hand-held form, the versatility of tablets is evident in the variety of strategies and tasks they are being called upon to assist.

Kiosks

For most shoppers, the process of using a touch screen kiosk for exploration or purchase has become intuitive. In-store merchandising companies have created a variety of metal or injection molded floorstands that accommodate different brands of tablets and turn them into self-service solutions. In fact, kiosks offer the flexibility of both self-service and assisted selling experiences.



Their functionality can include:

- Extended inventory
- Complete looks
- Videos and product demonstrations
- Product comparison
- Loyalty interfaces
- Payment card reader

Sephora uses tablet kiosks in partnership with nail salon XpresSpa to showcase services that can be performed in-store and provide access to tutorials for do-it-yourself customers to try at home.

SEPHORA

Counter Units and Assisted Selling

Tablets used for assisted selling can be incorporated into counter displays that allow for collaboration in settings like jewelry or cosmetic departments or can simply be hand-held devices controlled by store associates. They can offer many of the same functions that self-service kiosks provide.

Hand-held tablets liberate store employees to complete a sale

Clinique is placing iPad counter units in a reported 1,300 department stores. Customers can use the brand's skin diagnostic application to assess their personal requirements among 180,000 product combinations. Location at the cosmetics counter allows for collaboration with sales associates.

CLINIQUE

without having to leave the sales floor. With customer integrated data, assisted selling tablets allow

associates to demonstrate knowledge of the customer that can help forge loyalty and increase satisfaction.



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Brand Collaboration

In some cases brands have joined forces with key retailers to test tablet kiosks.

In partnership with Nordstrom, Blue Nile iPad displays allow bridal department customers to see engagement rings and access the jeweler's website to build their own rings.

NORDSTROM

Target is reported to have tested iPads loaded with product content from Johnson and Johnson's BabyCenter parenting website in baby departments of 10 Illinois stores. The test initiated in 2013 also included trained staff members with the aim of providing a more specialty store type of experience for new parents.

TARGET

Engagement Tools

Tablets can be used to increase customer engagement and dwell time. This might take the form of eliciting a social media follow or post, capturing a sweepstakes entry or email sign-up, or inviting a review.

Nordstrom has been reported by a number of sources to be contemplating the installation of iPads in dressing rooms to allow customers to interact with digital content and merchandise.

NORDSTROM

The flagship store of London retailer Karl Lagerfeld has installed iPads in dressing rooms to allow shoppers to take selfie photos with their clothing choices to send to friends.

KARL LAGERFELD

Tablets can also improve the process of trying on clothes either by providing convenient access to inventory for additional sizes, style and color options or virtual mannequin software that let shoppers try a look digitally. They can also be tools for social feedback.

Product Creation Stations

Tablet touchscreens provide a functionality that allows shoppers to try out design options and get creative. A number of athletic shoe brands have incorporated tablet customization into their retail strategies. To add impact to the experience a digital signage connection can allow customers to show their creations to a wider in-store audience.

The Puma in-store "Creative Factory" lets customers design their own athletic shoes.

PUMA

The Converse Customization interactive retail experience in San Francisco uses iPads to enable shoppers to screen-print their own designs or graphics selected from the Converse catalog on various styles of Converse footwear, apparel and accessories.

CONVERSE



Signage

Tablets can replace paper signage. In fast changing categories this means up-to-the-minute product information. They give retailers the ability to cater to sophisticated shoppers who want detailed product

Kate Spade has replaced paper signs throughout the store with iPads placed strategically to display product information and relevant content. Part of that content will be user-generated images designed to increase dwell time.

KATE SPADE

specifications for high-end purchases like electronics, creative content for categories like fashion or pairings and source of origin for food.

Proximity Marketing

Retailers whose mobile strategies have matured to the point of offering targeted in-store engagement have a promising new tool in the form of beacon technology.

Beacons use Bluetooth Low Energy to constantly transmit finely targeted location-based messages that phones or tablets running the right application can intercept.

Tablets with newer operating systems can serve as beacons. A tablet kiosk or counter unit could send a prompt to engage, a purchase incentive, or information that is highly relevant to a shopper's location without a retailer having to deploy a separate beacon. Tablets as beacons may be suitable for small format stores.

Perhaps the most widespread use of proximity marketing with beacons is in Apple's own retail stores, where shoppers are greeted with a message upon entering and at least one other message while in store. Apple stores deploy multiple beacons, and reportedly some of them are iPhones and iPads.

APPLE

POS Devices



Retailers who are using tablets for checkout appreciate their multi-functionality. They can accommodate inventory checking, ordering, product information and sales associate training.

The IHL Group reports ([Mobile POS: Hype to Reality, May 2013](#)) that tablets have been most popular as POS devices with independent retailers and mall-based specialty chains. Its report

Mobile POS: Hype to Reality revealed that 45% of all tablets shipped to retail for POS are being used by specialty retailers.

Belk stores are working to better integrate customer data with online and in-store sales. A new store-wide POS system will include wireless tablets for sales staff that give access to customers' purchase history.

BELK

Whole Foods Market plans to expand checkout locations in several of its stores by testing tablet checkout stands at fresh sandwich and coffee stations.

WHOLE FOODS

While not all mobile payment systems are tablet based, A Yankee Group survey of IT decision-makers ([Revolutionizing Retail with mPOS](#)) from March 2013 found that 32 percent of U.S. merchants with more than 500 employees have already deployed mobile POS, while 29 percent plan to do so within the next 12 months.

Small Footprint or Big Impact

The compact nature of tablets makes them ideal for constricted areas or portable hand-held uses, but they can also be a hardware component of a large, impactful display that incorporates branded graphics and even digital signage. They may be a particularly appealing display component when retailers want to introduce a consumer application or capitalize on the familiarity that customers have with an existing application.

The Lowe's Canada light bulb education center integrated a tablet into a larger category display so customers could access an application explaining the many options in the category. The display included static signage, digital signage, and a recycling center.

LOWE'S

Customer Experience Beyond Retail

Traditional retailers are not the only consumer businesses finding value in using tablets. Examples of effective tablet programs can be seen in the travel and restaurant industries. There are clear instances in the restaurant industry where tablet deployments have led to measureable increases in satisfaction and sales.

Applebee's plans to deploy 100,000 Presto tablets in its restaurants starting in 2014 for payment transactions, entertainment and social interaction.

APPLEBEE'S

Chili's Bar and Grill will install Ziosk tablets in most of their U.S. restaurants in 2014. They will be used for payment and the promotion of incidental orders like coffee and dessert.

CHILI'S

Hertz has added iPad stations to some of its revamped car rental centers. Customers with wait time can pull up a stool to a table equipped with multiple iPads where they can entertain themselves, check in to flights or search for travel information.

HERTZ

Planning Considerations Can Dictate Success

Tablet kiosks are attractive because of their compact footprint, but there are alternatives. Those contemplating a tablet program that will be housed in a kiosk or counter unit should consider whether they specifically need a tablet or just a compact screen.

A tablet-like touchscreen experience can also be delivered by a unit similar to the compact kiosk pictured here. This kiosk, employed by a leading department store, uses a 22-inch commercial grade touchscreen to deliver a tablet-like experience. Commercial grade touchscreens that can be integrated into a compact kiosk come in sizes as small as 15 inches.

Once the decision has been made to proceed with a tablet, there are a number of factors to consider that can impact success. Choices made during the initial planning phase impact the viability of a program and the consumer or retail associate experience.

- ✓ Tablet Choice
- ✓ Mounting
- ✓ Connectivity
- ✓ Peripheral Support
- ✓ Movability/Removability
- ✓ Security
- ✓ Remote Management
- ✓ Durability/Longevity
- ✓ ADA Compliance
- ✓ Brand Messaging

PLANNING CHECKLIST



Tablet Choice

Which tablet is right for your project?

- If a program involves an existing consumer facing application configured for a particular operating system, that legacy consideration may dictate tablet choice.
- Integration with back-end services and compatibility with existing systems will inform tablet selection.
- Needed peripherals will also weigh into the decision.
- Issues of cost, durability, and longevity are also factors to consider.

Mounting

Will the tablet be mounted to a wall, a counter unit, floor stand or larger display?

- Mounting brackets allow for the least amount of alteration to the look of the tablet.
- A bezel can completely enclose the tablet but must allow for unimpeded access to Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and radio frequencies.
- An enclosure that is customized to a particular tablet, can best maintain the sleek look that attracts consumers to tablets.

- Given short life cycles for consumer tablets, a change in tablet thickness or dimension can impact the fit within a bracket or bezel.
- For tablets not continuously connected to a power source, ease of accessibility is desirable so it can be removed frequently from the display.

Connectivity

Will the tablet be removed and charged daily or continuously connected to a power source?

- If the average battery life of the tablet you choose does not fit the length of your retail day, provision must be made for changing out and charging tablets during business hours.
- Backroom charging may require the addition of a security feature, like carded or keyed access, that can add cost to a charging unit.
- For continuous connectivity, cord management must be factored into the design in such a way that the cord is obscured to ensure the sleek appearance of the tablet is maintained.
- To achieve the optimal appearance the bracket or bezel should be designed to obscure where the charging cord connects to the tablet's port.

Peripheral support

If peripheral support is needed is it offered directly on the tablet or does it need to be satisfied with additional accessories to a kiosk or counter unit enclosure?

- It is important to ensure that the selected peripheral component is compatible with the chosen tablet.
- Commercial grade tablets generally offer more peripheral support options than consumer tablets. iPads, for example, don't contain a USB or microSD card slot, yet an optional accessory can offer an HDMI output.
- Devices like magnetic stripe readers and bar code scanners can be built into a floorstand or counter unit tablet enclosure.

Movability and Removability

Does lighting or use occasion dictate the need to be able to move the tablet within the configuration of the static display or remove the tablet altogether?

- For movement, an articulating bracket that allows the tablet to tilt can be incorporated into the design.
- A tether may be used to allow a tablet to be removed for more flexible viewing or even passed back and forth between associate and customer.
- The easier the tablet is to secure and remove, when not plugged into a power source, the more likely it is to be maintained and used.
- Separation from the display may entail the loosening of security screws for brackets or bezels or keyed entry to a bezel's lock.

Security

How much security is required for content and the tablet itself?

- Security includes locking down the software so the user stays on the desired content and physically blocking access to the home button and camera so users cannot access settings

and unnecessary apps. At the same time, pinhole access to the power button is necessary for operation by retail associates.

- Options such as tethers, retractable cables, bolts and strong adhesive pads may be considered if there are concerns about the entire kiosk or display being removed in a self-service environment.
- Businesses using associate-held tablets will need to decide whether a security and docking station is needed when the device is not in use and whether access to the security and docking station will be restricted.

Remote Management

How will the tablet be monitored and software and updates be installed?

- Deployers of any type of tablet will want to become familiar with remote mobile device management systems. There is value in being able to remotely change content and monitor settings, power, connectivity and location to minimize downtime.

Durability and Longevity

What are the tradeoffs between commercial and consumer grade tablets?

- If a consumer tablet is chosen, it may be less expensive than a commercial grade choice and desirable from a marketing perspective, but it may not hold up as well and keep running continuously in a rugged retail environment.
- Commercial-grade devices tend to have longer warranties than consumer-grade devices. If a consumer device is used in a commercial setting, the warranty may not be honored or the length of the warranty may be shortened.
- Constant battery depletion in a retail setting where electricity is turned off at closing or a battery is allowed to run down completely before charging may shorten the life of a tablet.

ADA Compliance

Is your in-store merchandising provider well versed in ADA requirements?

- In order to accommodate disabled individuals, tablet display solutions should comply with the ADA Standards for Accessible Design.
- Enclosures can have a fixed angle or tilt option. Kiosks should be positioned so that the highest touch point does not exceed 48 inches and the lowest is not below 15 inches. The height requirements will also impact the tilt of the screen.
- In addition to height requirements, there are guidelines governing reach and obstructions.
- For wall-mounted kiosks, there are limits to how far a structure can protrude into a circulation path.

Brand Messaging

How prominent do you want brand messaging to be?

- In addition to hardware choices, any fixed tablet solution should include space for branding.
- Branding can go beyond the choice of color or logo through the attachment of frames or panels that can evolve with new messaging and promotions.

- A mechanism for easily changing graphics is a desirable feature for a unit that will be in the field for a long period of time.
- For a self-service solution, incorporating graphics that promote the use of the tablet and serve as a call-to-action to interact can contribute to the success of the program.

Conclusion

Tablets are being used in some exciting ways at retail and beyond. The expansion of tablets in consumer settings is likely to continue because they are a strategic fit and a useful tool in achieving the ultimate objective of driving sales and customer experience. Businesses are using them to address head-on aspects of their operations that are essential to preservation and growth.

As retailers, hospitality segments and other consumer facing businesses add tablet programs to their in-store technology mix, a thorough weighing of options and attention to detail can pave a path to successful deployment.

About Frank Mayer and Associates, Inc.

Frank Mayer and Associates, Inc. is an in-store merchandising company with vast experience in designing and manufacturing branded permanent displays for virtually every retail format. Our clients are a wide range of Fortune 500 brands and retailers. We have been recognized by industry peers for creating and producing award-winning point of purchase displays, interactive merchandisers and kiosks. We offer promotional marketing capabilities that allow us to provide our customers with an unmatched depth of service.

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