

Retail Technology Innovation Hub

3D PRODUCT VISUALISATION AND THE UNIFIED RETAIL EXPERIENCE

Beck Besecker, CEO and Co-Founder, 3D Cloud by Marxent, looks at why UK retailers are embracing 3D technology to connect online and in-store shopping.



Stores and post-Covid hybrid retail strategies

Return to physical retail shows that consumers want something more than convenience when shopping, they want a connection, an experience.



Q&A: Everseen's Alan O'Herlihy

RTIH gets the lowdown on Everseen, a computer vision AI startup, from Alan O'Herlihy, Founder and CEO.



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ON THE COVER

3D Cloud by Marxent's Beck Besecker looks at why UK retailers are embracing 3D tech to connect online and in-store shopping.



RTIH

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Retail technology news, views and analysis in a fast-changing omnichannel world

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Editor's letter

Welcome to the fifth issue of Retail Technology Innovation Hub magazine.

This edition focuses on physical stores in a post-Covid world. Within these pages, you will find a rundown of the top 'future of bricks and mortar retail' tech launches and deployments from the first six months of the year, including Walmart, Asda, A.S. Watson Group, Amazon, Carrefour, EE, 7-Eleven, and Coach.

In addition, we ask: is checkout-free retail's next to next normal?

Or is the constant drive by retailers to innovate via autonomous technology deployments failing to deliver what their customers want and need?

Be sure to check out an article by Ron Delnevo, Chair of the UK Payment Choice Alliance, who argues that cashless autonomous checkout shopping should not be the way of the future.

"Cash is the only method that always works; every retailer has experienced card and digital downtime – cash never goes down," he states.

Finally, don't miss regular contributor Mike Cadden's latest piece for RTIH, in which he discusses how the store should be at the centre of post-Covid hybrid retail strategies.

"Human beings are intrinsically social animals, as the cliché goes, "people buy from other people" and there has certainly been a desire for customers to return to retail as a personal experience, to get back that experiential element of the consumer journey. We've already seen that many shoppers are not happy with the drive to convenience at all costs in-store," he writes.

"They have the option of uber-convenience online if they want it. What the return to physical retail is showing is that consumers want something more from their (mainly) hedonic shopping experience, they want a connection, an experience."

2023 RTIH Innovation Awards

Physical retail will be a key part of the 2023 RTIH Innovation Awards.

Our Bricks and Mortar Innovation award will go to a retailer enabling physical spaces to thrive via innovative technology, even as online shopping continues to grow.

We're looking for examples of reducing friction in the customer journey, offering improved experiences, and blurring the lines between channels.

Deadline for 2023 submissions is Friday, 27th October, with the winner being revealed at an exclusive event at the Barbican in central London on Wednesday, 29th November.

Further information can be found on pages 30-31, and also on our website (address opposite).

Scott Thompson

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TOO MUCH RETAIL AUTOMATION TOO SOON?

Is the constant drive by retailers to innovate via technology deployments really delivering what their customers want and need?

RTIH Online recently reported that Marks and Spencer had come under fire from disgruntled elderly customers after closing traditional counters in eight digital cafes, including at two of the retailer's megastores.

With orders placed via touchscreens, staff are now focused on making food and drinks rather than taking orders, with customers alerted when their order is ready.

Elderly shoppers have described the move, which ushers in cashless payments, as "abhorrent", The Telegraph reported.

M&S is also testing out self-service belted checkouts alongside manned tills in two food halls.

These can be found at London Colney, near Watford, and White Rose Shopping Centre near Leeds - two of its largest stores which also have the digital cafes installed.

In a LinkedIn post, Ron Delnevo, Chair of the UK Cash Supply Alliance, said: "Really silly, thoughtless stuff from M&S. If you want to find out how to alienate your customers, just read and copy!"

Meanwhile, on Friday, 16th June, a demonstration took place outside Welwyn Garden City railway station as Tesco staff and customers vented spleen about the automation of the grocery giant's stores.

Said station was chosen for



being the place where shuttle buses were taking shareholders to Tesco's annual general meeting.

The latter announced last year that, due to a lack of customer demand, it was to remove a number of traditional checkouts from many of its larger stores to include more self-service tills.

The new additions would be three times longer than standard sizes, allowing up to six bags to be packed at once, it claimed.

The aforementioned demonstration was part of a petition that launched last year and has over 240,000 signatures opposing the shift to automation.

An organiser of the protest said: "Tesco is ploughing ahead with more automation than ever before."

"Sadly, other supermarkets have joined them as we move towards a cashless society and automated checkouts. This new way of shopping is destroying jobs, disenfranchising many and making our shopping trips self-service card only."

We flag up these two stories as they highlight an important issue in the omnichannel retail space, one that arguably is not discussed nearly enough.

In a recent article for RTIH, Mike Cadden, a veteran IT Director and CIO, observed that the retail industry has always been dynamic and innovative, constantly adapting to changing consumer needs and technological advancements.

Covid, he noted, increased this rate of both innovation and adoption, with retailers having to invest heavily in contactless retail systems, kerbside collection and delivery systems. The old cliché "necessity being

the mother of invention" had never been more apt.

"Those in technology were delivering solutions and services that retailers needed to keep trading and consumers wanted to keep buying," Cadden wrote.

He added: "Since then, though, is it time to ask whether the constant drive to innovate, for technological improvements is really delivering what our customers, whether consumer or retailer, want and need?"

"Are we, and this is a difficult question for someone who lauds ongoing innovation, innovating for innovation's sake, rather than to solve real problems. Have we lost sight of what we should be doing?"

"And as a retailer, we need to ask, do consumers want more technology or do they just want the basics, delivered at a price they can afford."

The case for automation

With costs continuing to rise, and labour shortages in some countries, increasing

automation will enable retailers to mitigate these pressures while offering customers a choice of shopping experience.

There is undoubtedly some merit to this argument.

And there are also many examples of innovations that have been embraced by consumers and retailers in recent years. QR codes, anyone?

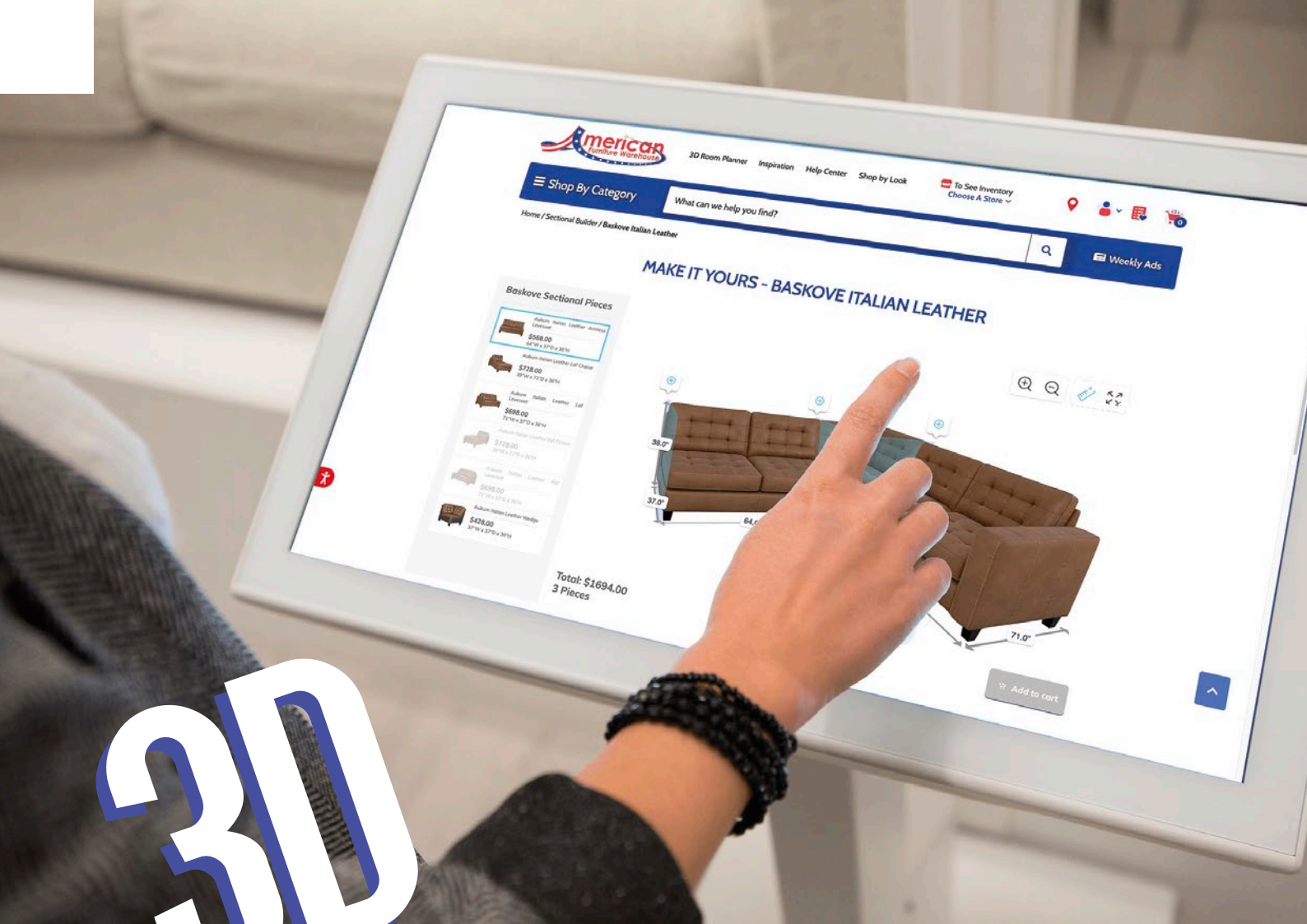
But in the rush to innovate, retailers often risk losing sight of the basics, as is demonstrated by the aforementioned Tesco and M&S controversies.

To quote Cadden's article: "Retail will, and indeed must, keep innovating. Retail execs must look for new ways to place the customer at the heart of their transformations. AI will transform how technology talks to live consumers. But the single, most important thread running through all these innovations has to be the customer."

"Don't pretend you know what they want. Learn what they want and deliver it."

⬇ The retail industry has always been dynamic and innovative, constantly adapting to changing consumer needs and technological advancements.





3D

PRODUCT VISUALISATION AND THE UNIFIED RETAIL EXPERIENCE

Beck Besecker, CEO and Co-Founder, 3D Cloud by Marxent, looks at why UK retailers are embracing 3D technology to connect online and in-store shopping.

We are past the pandemic, and shopping habits are normalising. Over the past two years, it's become clear that a unified retail experience is vital in a post-Covid era. The resurgence of in-store shopping paired with emerging digital technologies that offer new ways to engage with customers makes it clear that a hybrid approach to retail is crucial.

This article explores the symbiotic relationship between stores and e-commerce and the role of 3D technologies in creating consistent and captivating customer experiences at scale.

The e-commerce boom and the resilience of physical stores

During the height of the pandemic, it seemed as though e-commerce would take the lion's share of retail from bricks and mortar stores. However, recent data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reveals that nearly 75% of retail sales in the UK still occur in physical stores, with e-commerce accounting for only about 27% as of January 2023. This signals the enduring significance of in-store experiences, but online shopping isn't going anywhere either.

The distinction between online and offline sales





With 3D tech, retailers can seamlessly integrate their online and offline product experience, erasing the lines that separate them.

3D technology



3D technology can play a pivotal role in creating harmonious retail experiences at scale.

channels is gradually dissipating, giving way to the recognition that the customer experience should be a seamless and unified journey. Retail technology plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between online and offline, enabling retailers to provide a cohesive experience that breaks through traditional boundaries.

One such technology that exemplifies this shift is 3D, which revolutionises the way customers interact with products and enhances the overall retail experience.

With 3D technology, retailers can seamlessly integrate their online and offline product experience, erasing the lines that separate them. Consumers look for information throughout the shopping process and the power of 3D lies in its ability to provide consistent visuals, virtual interactions, portability, and personalised experiences across touchpoints.

Customers can explore products in three dimensions, visualising them from every angle, and even try them out virtually in their own environments. 3D transcends the limitations of both traditional and online shopping, bridging the gap between the digital and physical worlds.

The transformative role of 3D technology

3D technology can play a pivotal role in creating harmonious retail experiences at scale. By offering consistent product visuals and data, it has made shopping for big and bulky items both online and in-store. Across dozens of major retail clients, our data shows that 3D experiences lead to higher conversion rates and larger basket sizes, reinforcing the positive impact of this technology.

Outcomes include:

- 300%+ improvement in conversion rate with 3D Cloud WebAR
- 60% increase in average order value and 25% reduction in returns with 3D Cloud Room Planner
- 50% increase in cart conversion rate and 120% increase in average order value with 3D Cloud Modular Sofa Configurator



Stores are not going away; instead, a balanced harmony between online and in-store experiences is emerging.

Seamlessly navigate between channels

Through various scenarios, it becomes clear how 3D technology can make a difference. Customers seamlessly navigate between channels, combining virtual and physical experiences. For instance, trying on virtual lipstick before visiting a store or checking the fit of a sofa using augmented reality at home following an in-store visit. This fusion of digital and physical engagement enhances the overall customer journey.

Five UK retailers pioneering the unified experience

Five standout UK retailers have excelled in providing unified and cohesive shopping experiences by implementing 3D technology alongside other retail technology investments.

- **B&Q:** B&Q combines helpful online product information and inspiration with in-store support. Their 3D kitchen and storage design services and Click and Collect options make it faster and easier to buy with confidence whether shopping in-store or remotely.
- **John Lewis & Partners:** John Lewis integrates online and offline channels, with Click and Collect, personalised recommendations, 3D room planning and curtain design services, and unified accounts for a consistent customer experience.

3D technology

		WHERE THEY BUY	
		Start in store	Start online
WHERE THEY START	Start in store	Start in store, buy online	Start in store, engage in virtual design consultation
	Start online	Start online, buy in store	Start online, engage in in-store design consultation

- **DFS:** DFS offers effortless furniture shopping where online convenience compliments experiential showrooms. Customers can both use augmented reality to test out a sofa in their space at home and consult with a knowledgeable sales associate in a store.
- **MARKS & SPENCER:** M&S prioritises convenience and consistency for customers with a mobile app that includes a scan-as-you-go product scanner for in-store use, a hybrid loyalty experience, digital receipts, and package tracking.
- **CHARLOTTE TILBURY:** The UK beauty retailer offers virtual try-on technology, a loyalty programme, a constant flow of Instagram inspiration, and 1-2-1 virtual consultations that bring the counter to the customer -- and customers to the counter.



B&Q's 3D kitchen and storage design services and Click and Collect options make it faster and easier to buy with confidence whether shopping in-store or remotely.

The future of retail: harmonious integration

Stores are not going away; instead, a balanced harmony between online and in-store experiences is emerging.

The future belongs to retailers who invest in seamless shopping journeys, bridging online capabilities with the in-store experience. By embracing 3D technology, retailers can provide engaging, consistent, and connected experiences that boost transaction sizes, reduce returns, and foster customer loyalty.

As e-commerce rebounds and physical stores thrive, the focus shifts to ensuring a seamless and valuable shopping experience, regardless of the channel customers choose. The integration of 3D technology offers retailers the means to provide a unified, immersive, and connected experience. By investing in a harmonious blend of online and in-store shopping, retailers can position themselves for success in a rapidly evolving retail landscape.

About 3D Cloud by Marxent

3D Cloud by Marxent is the leader in enterprise 3D product visualisation software for retailers. Deploy WebAR, 3D product configurators, 3D room planners, and more from a single scalable, secure, and proven platform.

Contact Beck Besecker at beck@marxent.com or visit 3DCloud.com to learn more.



Beck Besecker is CEO and Co-Founder at 3D Cloud by Marxent.

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Q&A EVERSEEN'S

ALAN O'HERLIHY

RTIH gets the lowdown on Everseen, a computer vision AI company whose tech is in over 6,000 retail stores, with 80,000+ checkouts, from Alan O'Herlihy, Founder and CEO.

RTIH: Tell us about yourself and Everseen

AOH: As a teenager, I worked in our family grocery store - a modest business that served the heart of our village just outside Cork in Ireland.

My grandfather, and later my dad, also had a full mobile shop on wheels delivering to the local

community. Back then, we had no idea what 'shrink' was, as my parents didn't know what the profits were until they did an end of year stock take. Everything was hidden in the numbers. It was a silent business killer.

Although I was no stranger to the problem, it was only years later when I was working in SAP that I had the 'a-ha'



moment. I realised there was a game-changing approach to fight shrink and the idea for Everseen was born - to apply computer vision to critical business processes to see (and understand) what the human eye couldn't and solve problems as they arose.

I started Everseen in 2007 and today shrink is growing at an alarming rate. It impacts retail businesses of all sizes to the tune of \$100 billion in losses every year, driving store closures and devastating entire communities.

RTIH: What was the inspiration behind setting the company up?

AOH: Everseen was born from my combined passion for invention and my ability to lead massive software installations. From the very beginning we set out to create a computer AI platform with the understanding that technology could see more than the human eye ever could.

Over the last 15 years we have grown by adapting to emerging technologies and learning through the challenges. Retail is a sector that is hugely impacted by loss and has low margins so the threat of closing stores is always lingering. Our obsession at Everseen is designing solutions to give retailers a fighting chance to counteract shrink.

Using computer vision AI effectively and efficiently, they can significantly reduce shrink and, more importantly, recover losses as they happen.

RTIH: What has been the industry reaction thus far?

AOH: Our computer vision AI technology has been very well received. Everseen is trusted by over half of the world's top 15 retailers - deployed in over 6,000 major retail stores and at 80,000+ checkout lanes.

Retailers are turning to AI to address loss prevention and simultaneously deliver a great customer experience. We have stayed true to our original vision, delivering insights that help retailers to see and solve complex challenges in real-time. In doing so, we have helped our customers significantly reduce losses while improving margins by up to 20%.

One of our most successful customers began with a pilot implementation in just a few stores, then expanded to over a thousand. After successfully integrating AI into its operational and shopper experience at the checkout for a few months in 1,800 stores, it is now progressing to have AI-based loss prevention in place in more than 2,600 stores.

This customer started using computer vision AI for loss prevention at the checkout and is now exploring using



“Everseen was born from my combined passion for invention and my ability to lead massive software installations.”

the same technology in the heart of the store for shelf availability and in the backroom for deliveries.

We doubled our store installations in the last year, with growth driven by expansion with grocery retailers in the US, Europe, and Australia. We have expanded our technology partner programme to integrate computer vision AI into existing solutions used by retailers.

Partnerships now include Dell, Lenovo, Nvidia, Qualcomm, and others. Everseen's solutions are tech agnostic, seamlessly integrating with customers' existing camera, computer hardware, Point of Sale, and other business systems.

RTIH: What has been your biggest challenge/setback?

AOH: A great deal of misinformation and hype about what AI can do is a challenge. Every example of AI failing to deliver value to businesses that have been over promised, has a negative effect on those that have proven measurable return on investment for customers.

There is a huge difference between going from a 'good idea' to being properly scaled and able to deliver real value, and many AI providers are claiming more than they actually have, which undermines the credibility of the



I started Everseen in 2007 and today shrink is growing at an alarming rate. It impacts retail businesses of all sizes to the tune of \$100 billion in losses every year, driving store closures and devastating entire communities

Q&A

whole industry. We know how to scale an installation as the needs of a business grow, and this is probably where most of our competitors fall behind.

The pandemic really shined a light on new shopping behaviours that retailers had to adjust to. Suddenly self-checkouts that were made for 10 items or less were being used to check-out 50+ items. With this change came more challenges, but now there was an even bigger need to fulfil our vision and allow retailers to “see everything” happening in their store so they could identify where loss was happening.

RTIH: What are the biggest challenges facing retailers right now?

AOH: Retailers are grappling with the impact of multiple challenges caused by inflation and the rising cost-of-



“A great deal of misinformation and hype about what AI can do is a challenge.”



Our longer-term vision is to use our computer vision AI platform for any process and in any industry

living. From declining customer spending and rising operational losses (including shrink), to labour shortages and labour cost inflation, these issues can be addressed with technology.

The retail industry’s shrink problem is estimated to grow at 20% every year and computer vision AI can tackle that as well as improve customer service and optimise productivity. We achieve that by processing and analysing video in real-time, while monitoring 220 million products and 22 million customer interactions per day.

This type of monitoring also allows us to tackle the rising concern around organised retail crime (ORC). While adding convenience for shoppers, self-checkouts have created a pathway for ORC and this is where we see a healthy chunk of loss is happening.

Many eyes are needed to spot all of these behaviours simultaneously and computer vision AI can do that better than any human. But just solving the problem at the self-checkout isn’t enough because it will only push theft to other parts of the store.

This is why a holistic solution that can see what is happening at the shelves, in the aisles, at the backdoor and elsewhere, is needed to be able to see everywhere that theft could be happening and furthermore, contextualise how it is being done. This is another advantage of artificial intelligence that can learn over time and be adapted to other parts of the store and beyond.

RTIH: What can we expect to see from Everseen during 2023 and beyond?

AOH: Most computer vision solutions are currently very siloed and targeted at solving specific problems.

We are seeing increased demand for our Visual AI platform as customers are seeking to solve other problems (beyond shrink) across the retail store estate. Our recent investment will enable us to respond to that growing demand with a targeted product roadmap.

Our longer-term vision is to use our computer vision AI platform for any process and in any industry. Starting with retail allowed us to develop both a foundation and library of computer vision AI use cases that are relevant for other (adjacent) industries (e.g. supply chain, manufacturing, etc.).



RETAIL TECHNOLOGY SHOW

24-25 April 2024
Olympia, London

RETAIL'S GOLDEN TICKET

SAVE THE DATE 24-25 April 2024

The Retail Technology Show will bring together the world's most innovative solution providers with leading retailers and brands from across the UK and Europe.

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- Step into the Discovery Zone to find solutions you have never seen before
- View the Innovation Awards to reveal the best tech innovation at the show
- Explore the Start-up Safari to see innovative tech start-ups that are giving retailers the edge
- Join the BIG Retail Party to celebrate with the industry



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5

RETAIL QUESTIONS FOR...

Emma Sahota

RTIH asks major players in the retail technology space for their thoughts on the sector, and throws in a random question to keep them on their toes. This time around, our five questions go to Emma Sahota, Managing Director at Astound Commerce UK.



real everyday positive impact of these two technologies in grocery and FMCG at Shoptalk in Barcelona in May. Marks and Spencer showcased the power of marketing automation to harness the goldmine of customer insights from its Sparks loyalty card data to interpret the most valuable personalised service it should offer to each customer.

Similarly, another recent application has seen retail outlier and innovator, Amazon, deploy 750,000 mobile robots across 300 of its US sites to improve the customer and employee experience, and it has also launched a Mechatronics and Robotics Apprenticeship Programme to re-train people in these high demand fields. And, let's face it, where Amazon leads, most retailers eventually follow.

2

RTIH: Which retail technology trend is overrated in your opinion?

ES: The metaverse has a loud chorus of sceptics as of late, with many already coining it the 'Meh'-taverse. I wouldn't characterise it as an overrated technology trend, but I would urge brands to take a measured and strategic approach.

Whilst digital is foremost in crafting compelling shopping journeys, anything that dehumanises retail experiences is not truly a viable vision of the future, so a strong focus on personalisation and the human element is needed.

3

RTIH: What are the top five retail tech Twitter/LinkedIn accounts you can't do without, and why?

ES: Deborah Weinswig, the powerhouse CEO and Founder of Coresight Research, who has her eye firmly on the intersection of retail and technology.

The Future Laboratory for its unique blend of trend forecasting, consumer insight, brand strategy and innovation. >

1

RTIH: Looking at the hottest retail technologies right now, checkout free stores, rapid delivery services, the metaverse and NFTs, automation and robotics, which ones stand out to you, and for what reason?

ES: Automation and robotics are not a fad. Rather they are impactful and represent the future of business. I saw the

5 questions

Helen Dickinson, CEO of the British Retail Consortium, who is (unsurprisingly) a passionate advocate for the industry and whose LinkedIn provides a constant stream of fantastic content for retailers and technology providers alike.

Theo Paphitis, whose Retail Group brands Astound Commerce has partnered with extensively. He writes a monthly newsletter via LinkedIn and, as you might expect from a successful retail magnate, is never shy of sharing his opinions and words of wisdom.

Mary Portas, a woman who isn't afraid of stepping into the limelight and is no stranger to transformative change herself. Her mission to combine commercial smarts with social progress, beauty and joy resonates with me because who wouldn't want more of that in their lives.

4

RTIH: If you could have a dinner party with any five retail pioneers, dead or alive, who would they be and why?

ES: Jaqueline Gold, the female founder of Ann Summers. On taking a male dominated sector and not only making it accessible for women, but also creating a groundbreaking offering for female financial independence.

Margaret Thatcher, to share learnings from her early beginnings as a Grantham grocer's daughter and rise to Prime Minister, who controversially lifted Sunday trading restrictions which transformed retailers' operations.

Performer, entrepreneur and founder of Fenty Skin, Fenty Beauty & Savage x Fenty, Rhianna. She embodies next level inclusivity across body types, sexual orientation and degrees of ableness.

Anita Roddick, the Bodyshop founder and pioneer of social responsibility, with whose products I grew up on and led the way for cruelty free cosmetics.

Lastly, Dame Vivienne Westwood, who used her platform for positive activism and was just an all-round disruptive innovator.

5

RTIH: What was your very first job – and how has it impacted how you approach your role today?

ES: My very first job was a paper round at 12 years old and I'm grateful for that experience every single day.

It taught me discipline - to plan my evenings, getting homework done, clothes laid out and ready etc, to accommodate my early starts - and tenacity - to show up no matter the weather, because you had a job to do that other people were depending on you for.

And finally, it taught me to appreciate and enjoy my own company and solo work because, other than the milkman and a few cats, it was just me up and out, mapping my route and finding shortcuts and soaking up the sunrise every single day.



Marks and Spencer has showcased the power of marketing automation to harness the goldmine of customer insights from its Sparks loyalty card data to interpret the most valuable personalised service it should offer.

“

I wouldn't characterise the metaverse as an overrated technology trend, but I would urge brands to take a measured and strategic approach.





INTERVIEW

STAR MICRONICS' DAVID PEARCE

RTIH talks omnichannel retail challenges, successes and opportunities with David Pearce, Technical Director, Star Micronics EMEA.

RTIH: Tell us about Star Micronics

DP: With over 75 years in the PoS industry and a global presence, Star's strength and success is built upon product innovation alongside established relationships with leading software partners.

We offer in-depth technical knowledge and integration expertise to provide unique tailored solutions for an evolving retail industry. Without a doubt, flexibility is key and Star offers the versatility required to integrate traditional, tablet and cloud-based PoS systems, which has ensured successful installation of our products into major retailers as well as smaller retail outlets worldwide.

As a complete PoS solutions provider, Star offers a wealth of options including a wide range of unique desktop PoS, mobile and self-service terminal printers for printing receipts, tickets and labels from traditional systems, tablets and mobile devices as well as from web and cloud-based apps.

In particular, our compact and versatile cloud solutions are ideal for a variety of applications including Click & Collect in-store orders, event ticketing, home delivery, online or at table food ordering, transport ticketing etc. Additionally, Star provides tablet stands, display stands and cash management solutions to complete the hardware offering.

RTIH: Consumers are alternating between online and offline worlds, but, in a post-Covid world, the store remains a hugely important part of the omnichannel landscape. How are you working with retailers looking to address store challenges and opportunities with innovative tech?

DP: Hybrid shopping is certainly challenging the retail industry to find ways to successfully combine online and offline worlds.

In recent years, we have seen self-service terminals become part of a retailer's in-store omnichannel customer engagement strategy, whether it's Click & Collect kiosks offering labelling and receipt printing for online collections and returns or in-store kiosk ordering applications and linerless labelling technology for food Click & Collect and delivery.

Flexible and innovative cloud technology allows retailers to successfully address store challenges and opportunities in an omnichannel landscape. The ability to print remote orders as well as local print jobs via USB, LAN or Bluetooth connectivity for both mobile and fixed PoS is key.

For example, Star's mC-Print™ series and TSP100IV series with built-in CloudPRNT™ technology enable remote order printing directly from web and cloud-based apps and, at the same time, can handle local print jobs from the Point of Sale. For in-store labelling applications, the Star mC-Label printer can print from web-based apps or local store services.

Star solutions enable retailers to use fixed infrastructure, such as USB scanners with mobile devices, whilst our range of tablet stands allow easy removal of the tablet for mobile transactions and clienteling.

In order to deliver a seamless shopping experience, in-store technology has to be flexible and scalable as well as operate efficiently to avoid unwanted downtime. Recognising this, we have developed a managed cloud service, StarPrinter. Online that allows the receipt, label or order printer to be connected to the online ordering system within minutes and receive orders from any location as well as from customers using any kind of device.

A central point to receive orders enables retailers worldwide to print receipts, tickets and labels as well as manage orders anywhere with Internet access. And, for better online visibility of connectivity and print jobs over an entire printer estate, the service offers device management via an online dashboard to provide retailers with an overview of all devices and activity including reliable tracking of print jobs with notification of device

status changes, barcode scans, new device connections to a group, etc.

Additional printers and peripherals can simply be added without the need for server upgrades, further enhancing the versatility of the service.

RTIH: How is the growth in online retail driving demand for your in-store technology?

DP: We are seeing consumers adopting pre-pandemic purchasing habits with stores experiencing something of a resurgence, especially as customers increasingly move towards experiential shopping.

Moreover, consumers want convenience and choice in terms of how they discover and purchase products and with omnichannel consumers shopping more often than single channel, retailers cannot afford to ignore the opportunities these consumers present. Offering a truly seamless journey from online to in-store provides an optimal shopping experience and encourages loyalty.

This trend is driving increased demand for in-store cloud technologies and, in particular, the requirement for local and cloud printing in a single device. Star is partnering with a number of innovative PoS software companies providing omnichannel platforms that allow retailers to offer flawless shopping experiences to customers located in-store, online or on mobile.

Whether combining store and endless aisle purchases in a single transaction, streamlining checkout or enhancing customer engagement, innovative and reliable in-store cloud technology is pivotal to success.

RTIH: You were recently out in force at the 2023 Retail Technology Show in London. How was the show for you?

DP: The show was excellent for us as it was a great opportunity to catch up with existing retail contacts as well as generate new business.

Both major retailers and smaller outlets visited the stand and consulted with a number of our PoS, payment and kiosk partners demonstrating their innovative technology with Star solutions.

RTS also provided a retail focused platform to launch our latest label printer, mC-Label which was particularly well received for quick change promotional and reduction labels, variable length nutrition information and food and product labelling in one easy to use device, designed specifically for retail and hospitality.

**For further information on Star,
visit: www.Star-EMEA.com**



UNLEASHING THE POWER OF IN-STORE SOLUTIONS

In the fast-paced world of retail, staying ahead of the competition requires strategic investments and innovative approaches to enhance the customer experience and generate revenues. Technology has emerged as a driving force behind this transformation, enabling retailers to unlock new opportunities, maximise their return on investment, and even save on overheads.

What are the critical considerations for retail investments in H2 2023, and what is the potential for in-store solutions to elevate the customer experience, generate sales and save on costs?

Unravelling the key retail investment questions

To succeed, retailers must address crucial questions when making investment decisions. The first question is on the impact of the customer journey. Retailers should carefully consider how new technologies and solutions can simplify and optimise in-store processes, personalise shopper interactions, and ensure a seamless omnichannel experience by connecting the store with other channels, such as e-commerce.

To effectively prioritise where they focus their attention, retailers should ask themselves not only how much an in-store solution will take to deploy but also

how soon they will experience an increase in sales, cost savings, or better customer experience for in-store shoppers. Additionally, it's important to consider how confident they are in delivering these returns presented at the beginning of the project.

To ensure the success, you need to ask your vendor how they help to mitigate the risk. While this presents difficulties for certain projects like ERP for example, store associate enablement and self-service projects for the store can be quick win projects, such as assisted selling or next gen PoS, where pilots can be deployed in a matter of weeks.

Choosing the right technology and vendor

To ensure success in the near-term, retailers should scrutinise the following:

- Will (or can) your vendor work with you to pilot their offering in a few stores and effectively measure the impact on sales compared to other similar "control stores" in your estate?





In-store solutions

- Will your vendor agree to meet key milestones or KPIs as part of the pilot? In other words, they won't get your full commitment unless these are met.

In-store solutions can be a transformative step for retailers seeking growth and operational efficiency. By prioritising the financial impact, return on investment timeframe, and project success assurance, you can make informed decisions and maximise the benefits derived from these investments.

Amplifying customer loyalty and LTV through in-store solutions

While e-commerce has thrived in previous years, the physical retail store still remains an indispensable touchpoint for customers, and in most cases, is still where the majority of revenues are derived for the retailer. Those retailers that are taking big steps in transforming the store to attract more customers, and improve conversion rates, are subsequently collecting a bigger share of the wallet from the competition.

In simple terms; if a customer is offered a hyper-personalised experience, can quickly and easily find the products they need in your stores (or from another channel), can access a wish list or basket they created online earlier in the week to continue with in-store, and is able to checkout without the need to join a queue, then they will be coming back time and time again.

Personalise the in-store (and remote) experience with clienteling

One powerful tool that enhances customer loyalty and lifetime value is clienteling. It provides store associates with a single 360° view of the customer from the retailer's CRM/CDP so they can provide a tailored shopping experience based on their omnichannel purchase and engagement history. Furthermore, it also sends valuable in-store behavioural data back to the CRM/CDP, allowing the rest of the business to use it in ongoing re-marketing and sales activities.

The benefits of clienteling can also extend beyond the walls of the store by connecting remote selling capabilities. This allows store associates to create tailored talking tracks from the insights revealed in clienteling to begin WhatsApp, SMS, or email conversations with customers, such as recommending complementary items for a purchase they made in-store earlier in the week, or informing them about new collections the customer has shown interest in previously.

Nowadays, customers want brands that know them. Whether it's through remote selling conversations or

in-person, being informed of what your customer wants will help bridge the personal connection and allow store associates to up-sell and cross-sell with relative ease.

Give customers what they want from the endless aisle with assisted selling

With less disposable income available to shoppers, retailers really need to capitalise on every customer that enters the store and convert them into a sale.

Assisted selling tools allow store associates to easily scan barcodes or search for items to check for availability from the endless aisle, offer recommendations for complementary products (increasing the basket size), and inspire them by displaying rich content alongside the products such as recent photoshoots, or celebrity endorsements. All of this contributes towards better in-store and omnichannel conversion.

To see greater returns in today's uncertain climate, retailers need to focus on projects that are low investment, quick to deploy, and can provide near instant payback. This year is all about survival, maximising sales, and coming out strong when the economy rebounds.

By opting for an in-store platform that allows retailers to deploy different solutions independently at their own pace, going live in a matter of weeks rather than months or years, retailers can enjoy the greatest agility when it comes to meeting customer expectations and getting their share of the customer wallet.

With Mercaux, all of this can be achieved through a single app for store associates, where retailers can connect store associates and shoppers to the endless aisle, enable clienteling and remote selling, or process omnichannel orders through next-gen PoS. Additionally, customers can enjoy serving themselves in-store with progressive web apps (assisted selling in the hands of shoppers), digital fitting rooms, product discovery kiosks, and crucially, self-checkout using their own smartphone or self-checkout kiosks.

The possibilities are vast, but most importantly, by choosing the right in-store transformation partner, retailers can consolidate the many solutions they may already have into one singular app, unlock true omnichannel benefits between their in-store and online estates (such as frictionless omnichannel experiences and flexible fulfilment like BOPIS and ROPO), by using a fully composable modular platform that gives full autonomy and control over the transformation of the store.

FURTHER INFORMATION AT:

mercaux.com

Stores and post-Covid

HYBRID

RETAIL STRATEGIES

When online retail sales hit over 40% compared to offline, in 2020, many were predicting that one long-term impact of the pandemic would be the end of the physical store, maybe not immediately but certainly an acceleration of its demise would occur.

What we have seen though is a return to physical stores, if not quite at the same levels as pre-pandemic, then at least to similar.

Human beings are intrinsically social animals, as the cliché goes, “people buy from other people” and there has certainly been a desire for customers to return to retail as a personal experience, to get back that experiential element of the

consumer journey. We’ve already seen that many shoppers are not happy with the drive to convenience at all costs in-store.

They have the option of uber convenience online if they want it. What the return to physical retail is showing is



In-store experiences

that consumers want something more from their (mainly) hedonic shopping experience, they want a connection, an experience.

But the move back to the store is not just driven by customer desire for some normality, for some social contact. There are also solid, strategic reasons for brands to re-invest in high streets. There are significant online headwinds that are now making physical retail more attractive, when once e-commerce was seen as the golden goose in retail.

Returns have always been an issue for brands. For online pureplay retailers, focused on grabbing as large a slice of the consumer pie as possible, offering a customer centric returns policy was critical. Online players had to ensure that their customers could order with confidence around size and style. But the cost of handling an increasing volume of returns is now a significant anchor dragging online down.

Whilst there is no one silver bullet to the return's conundrum, physical retail offers multiple solutions. Especially when used in conjunction with, not against, online. Don't use the store as a mini warehouse, use it as a showroom. Use it to engage with your customers, to show off your products.

Allow your sales associates to discuss with the customer their needs, discuss sizing, let them touch and feel the product, getting a sense of quality. All these factors play into reducing the blanket "order as many as I need to make a decision" returns behaviours. But more than that, such interactions build a relationship between your brand



and your consumer, building trust and loyalty.

In using the physical store to drive greater engagement with the consumer, don't ignore the power of your online store and indeed the growing relevance of curated marketplaces. Whilst some online marketplaces will talk about AI curated marketplaces and "personalisation", the physical store can offer a truly curated experience.

Knowledgeable staff, provided with the right tools such as magic mirrors or VR headsets and with access to the full product range can discuss in real-time a truly personalised offer. Personal in a truly interactive way. But with access to the long tail of products without using up valuable in-store space.

The challenge now is putting the right tools in the right hands. The failure of contactless stores in recent years shows us that technology for technology's sake will fail, regardless of how good the tech is.

Technology for the customer's sake though will succeed. The likes of RFID have been around forever but are now finding powerful use cases in-store. Linked to AR or magic mirrors

they offer huge benefits to your in-store team and more importantly your customer. Bluetooth and in-store WiFi can help map your customer's journey but also help link up critical data to form a rounded view of your customer.

Over recent years most retailers have moved from short-term metrics to longer-term, more meaningful KPIs such as "Customer LifeTime Value" and whilst CLV is much harder to measure in a true omnichannel environment, again the store will play a key role; not just in measuring this critical KPI, but in creating the relationships that will drive success over the lifetime of a customer.

Online loyalty is famously transient, when customers value convenience and price sensitivity they will follow the cheapest, most convenient offering. To drive community and true loyalty, you need to engage with the customer at a different level, and this needs engagement at the human level.

In creating strong customer engagement, and focusing on lifetime value rather than other, more transient, KPI's, retailers can mitigate against another current online headwind; the cost of paid search and



Knowledgeable staff, provided with the right tools such as magic mirrors or VR headsets and with access to the full product range can discuss in real-time a truly personalised offer.

In-store experiences

remarketing. These are a significant overhead and when taken in conjunction with the costs involved in returns handling, it's not surprising pureplays are struggling, and indeed many are looking to physical stores to move to profitability.

The high street store, when done correctly, can be a physical embodiment of your brand and as mentioned already, create a strong enough link with your customer that paid search becomes less important and your customers will engage directly with you, in whichever channel they choose.

But of course, capturing data about a customer in-store is not as simple as online. In-store, customers are less willing to offer up personally identifiable information. This is where strong brand engagement, a powerful

message and excellent customer service from your in-store teams brings real benefits.

You cannot just expect to receive such information, even if they're already online with your brand. You must make it compelling for your customer. There are excellent customer facing startups doing great things, such as those delivering digital receipts and offering extensive benefits to both consumers and retailers post-sale.

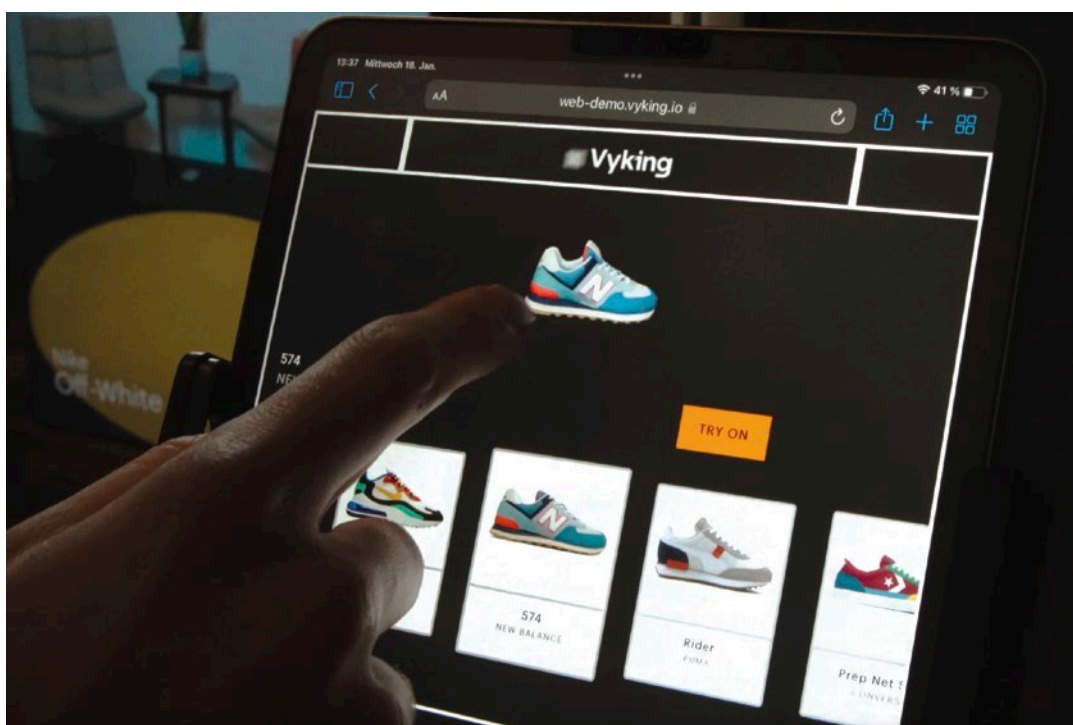
Well thought out mobile apps, when combined with the right in-store technology, can bridge the data gap as well. There is significant research showing that proximity is a key driver, even for value conscious consumers. The closer the consumer is to your location, the smaller the promotion required. Remember, analytics are not just for websites.

The reality is that customers today have so many ways to interact with your brand, but by giving them a truly "personalised" in-store experience, utilising all the technologies we, as retailers, have access to today, you can build a level of loyalty and commitment that will stretch into all other channels where your customer shops.

And more importantly, a happy customer will tell other potential customers and in doing so, not only are you reducing your paid search costs, but organic search will improve.

About the author:

Mike Cadden is an IT director and CIO with 25 years' experience running technology teams and strategic delivery for many leading UK and international retailers.



Technology for the customer's sake will succeed.



There is undoubtedly a lot going on in this this space,

Checkout-free stores Retail's next normal or overhyped?

Checkout-free is retail's next to next normal, says Krishna Motukuri, CEO and Co-founder at Zippin.

In a recent tweet, he observed: "This is unfolding rapidly across stadiums and airports in the US and spreading to the rest of the world. Self-checkout and scan and go have too much friction to survive in the long run."

There is undoubtedly a lot going on in this space, with various high profile store openings involving hot startups like AiFi, Trigo, Standard AI, and Grabango.

REWE, for instance, recently opened its fourth Trigo powered store, situated in Cologne, Germany's fourth largest city.

Located in the Sülz neighbourhood, this is, at 564 sqm, Trigo's largest store to date.

At the same time, however, autonomous stores have been on the

scene for a few years now and yet live in the high street we're not really seeing the penetration that, if they're being brutally honest, investors and retailers trialling the technology would admit they want.

By way of example, in January, Amazon Fresh UK closed its Dalston, London location, less than 18 months after opening it in a blaze of glory.

It is also understood to have walked away from talks on dozens of sites, and stopped its search for more locations.

According to media reports, Amazon has slammed on the brakes due to sales falling short of expectations and fit out costs being multiple times higher than with a standard location.

We at RTIH have certainly been hearing that Amazon is not alone here. Across the board the price point is too high and therefore limiting adoption.

Until both consumer demand drives it and the ROI shows a real win, then this will continue to be a cool technology but of limited value in the high street.

The key win is to eliminate queuing at the checkout and that's where the consumer will see significant advantages.

But in 2023, amidst major economic turmoil, the focus is on cost consciousness, and, in our humble opinion, without the ability to drive down costs this space is two or three years away from truly going mainstream.

REPAIRS, SERVICE AND COFFEE
ALL IN ONE PLACE

THE COOLEST PHYSICAL RETAIL PLAYS OF

2023

RTIH brings you its top 'future of bricks and mortar retail' tech launches and deployments from the first six months of the year.

EE

EE has opened a new flagship store, The EE Studio, located in Westfield London, White City.

Focused on connectivity and technology solutions, the 4,230-square-foot location will also serve as a hub for the local community to work, learn and play.

The launch forms part of EE's new strategy, which, the company says, "seeks to reinvent the role of retail in the telco industry, putting innovation, personal experience, and community front and centre".

The Studio leads the way for the roll-out of EE's new Experience stores, the first of which are due to open in Manchester Trafford Centre, Cardiff, and Bluewater in the coming months.

It features a changeable digital window canvas that lets

customers see the latest product launches and in-store events before they step inside.

Shoppers can also scan a QR code on the shopfront to bring to life an AR experience that will welcome them to the Studio and encourage them to head inside and explore.

People will also get the opportunity to build and visualise their own personalised connected home through a 'connected home digital tool' and real life 'room sets'.

This includes a living room with superfast broadband and connected home technology, a smart kitchen that features a range of smart cooking appliances, a kid's bedroom that showcases products and services to help with children's learning and keep them safe online, and a home office with technology to support with online security and working from home.

Amazon

May saw the launch of Market Express at London ExCeL, pitched as the first checkout-free store within an events space in the UK.

ExCeL worked with catering partner, Levy UK + Ireland, on the store, which is powered by Amazon's Just Walk Out technology.

Visitors tap their payment card or mobile wallet upon entry and then said tech detects what is picked up from or returned to its shelves.

When they are finished, they are able to leave the store and their payment method will be charged for their items.

Developed for ExCeL by Levy UK+I's service solution – BUILT by Levy – the

Market Express retail offer includes hot beverages, grab-n-go hot meals, sweet and savoury bakery items, salads, sandwiches, soft drinks and fruit juices.

A snack range including fruit, granola bars, cereals and biscuits are also available, along with essential convenience items from medical supplies and toiletries to reading glasses and umbrellas.

Astratech

Astra Tech, a UAE-based technology investment and development group, has launched its first fully autonomous store in Abu Dhabi's Sky Tower.

Powered by AiFl computer vision technology, B Store also enables shoppers to pay for their purchases by using their faces.

Astra Tech acquired UAE FinTech PayBy last year, and this location uses the firm's FacePay PoS technology for biometric payment authentication.

Upon approaching the entry gates, the customer is greeted with an ELO screen displaying a message, "Tap or

Scan to Enter." They have the option to pay using the PoS machine by tapping their card or utilising FacePay.

The ELO screen will then initiate a question about their receipt. When selecting their preferred option, the gates open, granting access to the store.

Inside the store, customers can choose their items. Upon leaving, they receive a text message on the provided phone number, expressing gratitude for their trip and informing them that their receipt is being processed.

A subsequent message contains a hyperlink, allowing customers to click and view their receipt.

Bestway Retail

Central Convenience Store in Southampton has installed AI driven biometric technology from Innovative Technology (ITL) to help with checks for age restricted goods.

It is the latest store in the Bestway Retail chain to implement the tech following a UK government trial and previous deployments in Costcutter and Bargain Booze.

Chris Wright, UK Business Development Manager, says: "We are delighted to extend our technology into Central Convenience Store in Southampton which is assisting staff with the age check process."

"MyCheckr is a standalone device, complete with screen that clearly shows if a customer attempting to purchase age restricted goods such as alcohol or cigarettes is deemed underage."

"The LED above the screen turns green if the customer passes the age

check, and red if they appear underage - providing a useful aid to help reduce any potential confrontation when challenging customers for ID."

"The store, located in a predominantly student area, has a young customer base so having MyCheckr acting as a backup for staff has been really helpful when indicating to the server if a manual ID check is recommended. We do not charge per age check, so it makes our age estimation technology affordable at a one off cost."

Walmart

Walmart has opened a Market Fulfilment Centre (MFC) in Arkansas at Store 100 located at 406 S Walton Blvd in Bentonville.

This is built within the store and is powered by a proprietary storage and retrieval system, named Alphabot.

Walmart says that fulfilment through digitisation and connecting its store

and supply chain assets end to end will "transform fulfilment. And along with it, customer satisfaction and associate opportunity".

"This new order fulfilment system is truly game changing," says Ryan Simpson, the store manager at Store 100.

"Not only does it enhance the customer experience through quicker, more accurate online order fulfilment, it also provides us the runway to continue growing our business now and in the future."

SpartanNash

Food solutions company SpartanNash has announced plans for the use of Simbe's autonomous inventory robot, Tally, in 15 grocery stores in Michigan and Indiana, USA.

After a pilot in select D&W Fresh Market stores, SpartanNash is implementing the solution in additional Family Fare and Martin's Super Market locations.



ZERO10

ZERO10 has unveiled a prototype AR store.

The introduction of the firm's AR Mirror offering as a standalone store follows ZERO10's recent collaborations with fashion big hitters Tommy Hilfiger and Coach, which deployed the AR Mirror and Storefront respectively.

Unlike those cases, where AR Mirror served as an additional element to existing bricks and mortar stores, the AR Store prototype presents the solution as the standalone focus, pitched as an autonomous retail agent.

ZERO10 says that its new concept tackles some of the most pressing issues within the retail industry, including cost effectiveness of space.

Sitting at no more than two square metres, AR Store's proposed construction requires the AR Mirror, an iPad stand, a statistics screen and storage space. These features would allow it to carry out all the functions and operations seen in a traditional store with an average of 100 sq metres, providing significant economies of scale, ZERO10 claims.

Tally traverses store aisles throughout the day, leveraging 3D computer vision technology to collect shelf data. It can capture 15,000 to 30,000 products an hour, ensuring products remain in-stock, in the correct location, and accurately priced.

7-Eleven

Ant Group has announced the expansion of Alipay+ coverage to all 2,400+ 7-Eleven stores in Malaysia, enabled by Razer Merchant Services.

Users of AlipayHK (Hong Kong SAR), GCash (Philippines), Kakao Pay (South Korea) and TrueMoney (Thailand), can now pay in 7-Eleven using their home mobile wallets.

Alipay, also an Alipay+ partner mobile wallet, has been accepted by Malaysian merchants since 2016.

"7-Eleven Malaysia is thrilled to enhance the traveller experience as tourists return to our beautiful country. By expanding Alipay+ coverage to all our stores, we are providing a seamless and convenient digital payment solution for visitors from around the world," says Chan Chee Weng, Assistant General Manager In-Store Services.

"As a key use case for tourism, our stores

serve as a one stop destination for travellers, offering a wide range of products, snacks, and essentials. We understand the importance of a seamless, digital in-store experience, and through this expansion, we aim to make every visit to 7-Eleven Malaysia a delightful and hassle free experience for both local customers and international tourists."

GoodNews Coffee

Spanish startup, GoodNews Coffee, has boosted 20 of its in-store Point of Sale systems in Madrid, Barcelona and Paris with nsign.tv's digital signage platform.

"Our target audience is mainly young people, who have grown up with new technologies and their adaptations, so it was clear to us that digitising our stores had to be one of our big changes," says Jan Barthe, CEO at GoodNews.

The company, which has converted traditional newsstands into Grab&Go coffee outlets, was looking to replace illuminated menu signs with a more interactive and visual system.

"We chose nsign.tv because it met all the requirements we had according to our needs and, from the beginning, the communication was very simple and easy, so we saw that

the match between the two brands was perfect," says Barthe.

GoodNews has installed in its Points of Sale several LCD monitors managed by nsign.tv software, which allows the company to broadcast both the menu boards and new creatives and campaigns.

Carrefour

A2Z Smart Technologies Corp.'s Cust2Mate subsidiary has announced completion of a pilot phase at Carrefour.

Since March, its smart carts have undergone testing at Carrefour's flagship hypermarket store in Ste Genevieve Des Bois, near Paris.

As part of the roll-out phase, Carrefour and Cust2Mate are looking to initially deploy smart carts in two of the former's hypermarket stores in Q4 of this year.

Guillaume Cocovi, Director Strategy Transformation of the Carrefour Group, says: "We are seeing very, very positive feedback from customers at this store. Before launching this project, like any large company, we issued a call for proposals."

"We looked at what was happening in the market, and Cust2Mate was the company that offered us the product that best matched our expectations and put the most effort into supporting us in the deployment. We felt it right away."

"The relationship with the founders was very smooth, and the project started at full speed since the carts were already there. In just three months, the test could begin."

Ikea

Meta and Ikea have partnered with Stockholm-based immersive tech company Warpin Reality to put on an interactive augmented reality experience for families visiting Ikea stores across Sweden.

Called The Little Adventure ("Lilla Äventyret" in Swedish), the AR game can be opened as a filter on Instagram and aims to increase interest and



knowledge about life in the ocean, with children able to (virtually) swim with various sea creatures and learn about them.

It also encourages players to engage with themes like littering and pollution prevention, with all three companies involved committed to increasing plastic recycling (for instance, Ikea's Blåvingad collection from last year).

Ikea Retail Sweden has become the first retailer globally to explore the Meta SPARK AR solution on such a large scale, with the campaign opening across 21 stores in February.

River Island

Mercaux is delivering RFID self-checkout into stores of River Island, the British high street retailer, alongside key strategic partners.

Shoppers will be encouraged to use self-service devices to speed up the last step in their path to purchase.

After dropping the items into the "RFID Bucket", said items appear instantly in a digital basket on Mercaux's self-service kiosk where the customer completes the transaction.

This is made possible, in part, with Mercaux's composable platform,

Asda

Groceries from Asda's Gillingham Pier, Old Kent Road and Sheffield Chaucer stores will now be fulfilled by electric vehicles, giving over 345,000 households in the store catchment areas access to a greener delivery choice.

The vehicles can run for up to 120 miles per charge, requiring seven

hours recharge time.

Asda, which was named UK Retailer of the Year at the 2021 RTIH Innovation Awards, says that using these electric vehicles will save over 400,000 CO₂ (kg) per year.

Customers in Cardiff Bay and Leith will also soon be able to have their groceries delivered by a fully electric fleet as the retailer has

committed to turning a further two stores electric by the end of the year.

The move represents the first stage of Asda's ambition to completely remove diesel vehicles from its grocery home delivery fleet by 2028.

These plans are part of its wider strategy to half its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 as part of its Courtauld commitments.



2023 so far

Auchan Retail Poland

Auchan Retail Poland has launched the first fully autonomous store within its Auchan Go concept.

Located in Warsaw, the cashier free location is open 24/7 and features an AI powered solution from Trigo.

Poland becomes the first market where the Auchan Go store is fully operational for shoppers, following tests of the frictionless concept in France.

"The Auchan Go concept is the latest of our solutions that we're introducing to provide our customers with unparalleled comfort and a highly personalised shopping experience," says Katarzyna Tokarewicz, Director of Transformation and Projects at Auchan Polska.

"We are constantly observing how the needs of today's consumers change dynamically, hence the large variety of shopping paths we offer and our focus on combining digital solutions with new concepts of bricks and mortar stores."

Tokarewicz adds: "In the case of the Trigo platform introduced in Auchan Go, we particularly appreciate its exceptional accuracy and reliability, as well as the flexibility and scalability of the solution."

"This advanced system provides the technological capability to efficiently digitise and automate both small and larger store formats, with more shoppers and more product diversity."

"This approach fits in with our plans, as we treat the newly opened shop as a kind of laboratory. We assume that the Auchan Go concept will constantly evolve to meet the changing expectations of our customers. Ultimately, we plan to open approximately 40 outlets of this type over the next few years."

The Auchan Go in Warsaw is the smallest of the retailer's physical formats. Occupying an area of 75 sqm, up to 30 customers can do their shopping at one time.

More than 1,000 products are available, including drinks and snacks, bread, dairy products, frozen food, BIO products, delicatessen, and industrial products.

allowing retailers to surface the checkout process on any device in-store (store associate or customer), eliminating the need for customers to join a line to be served by a store associate at the traditional cash register.

Mercaux's technology was deployed and integrated with River Island's existing omnichannel commerce platform with the support of system integrator, Cabiri.

Albert

Ahold Delhaize owned retailer Albert has announced, in partnership with Brain Corp and Tennant Co., that its fleet of autonomous mobile robots (AMRs) deployed across its Czech Republic hypermarkets and two distribution centres have officially cleaned over 20 million square metres (215 million square feet), completing over 92,000 cleaning routes.

During 2023, it will almost double the number of stores with robot deployments.

"Last year we put a number of autonomous scrubbers into operation and this year we plan to continue to scale up their use. Altogether, almost double the number of robots will be operating in our stores by the end of March," says Pavel Klemera, Operations Support Manager at Albert.

"Robots clean precisely, don't skip any space and help our employees to save their effort, so they can use the time to elevate our customers' experience."

TikTok

TikTok recently hit London's Oxford Street, working with Sook to open a pop-up shop.

In a LinkedIn post, Lin Chen, Electronics Category Lead, Social E-Commerce, TikTok Shop, said: "For a span of seven days, we unveiled the world's first physical TikTok shop on London's bustling Oxford Street. We showcased a revolutionary shopping experience that seamlessly merged offline and online social commerce in a delightful and interactive manner."

She added: "Throughout these seven days, we focused on three primary product categories: technology, home and living, and books. We invited existing merchants who have gained popularity in trending TikTok communities such as #Coffeetok, #TechTok, #FoodTok, #HairTok, and #HomeTok"

In addition, TikTok showcased products from the likes of Swan Products, RKW, Beauty Works, Cookology, and Nothing. Creators were able to scan a QR code to directly buy or sell products on TikTok Shop.

Chen added: "We had the pleasure of welcoming some prominent brands. They visited our shop to learn about the operation of TikTok Shop, how to engage with creators, and unlock the enormous potential of social selling using their existing physical infrastructure."

"We were also thrilled to host top TikTok creators and have the esteemed Gadget Show host, Jason Bradbury, interact with merchants and their latest products."

She concluded: "Social commerce is indeed a thriving reality, and we are here to support businesses navigate this exciting frontier."



A.S. Watson Group

Watsons, the flagship health and beauty brand of A.S. Watson Group, opened over 1,400 new stores across Asia amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, and in June Watsons Malaysia went live with its 700th store in the market.

Dominic Lai, Group Managing Director at A.S. Watson Group, says: "The pandemic has been very challenging for us and retailers around the world."

"The passion and dedication in our 130,000 employees around the world to continue to care for our customers made a difference to enable us weather the storm and transform the crisis into opportunities."

"We didn't stop our network expansion during challenging times because we have a solid O+O strategy which is relevant to customers' needs. We continue to identify strategic locations across Asia and opened over 1,400 new stores in the last three years."

He adds: "We are delighted to announce the opening of Watsons' 700th store in Malaysia, one of our fastest growing markets in Asia. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Watsons Malaysia has grown from 535 stores in 2019 to 700 stores now."

"Loyalty members have also risen from 5.7 million in 2019 to 7.2 million members to date, signalling 1.5 million new members in a short period of time. So far this year, Watsons Malaysia also experienced high double digit sales growth, continuing to be the market leader."

New Balance

New Balance recently opened a concept store in Singapore, featuring a Volumental 3D foot scanner in the fitting area.

Since partnering with Volumental in 2017, the retailer says that it has scanned the feet of more than one million shoppers worldwide.

The scan, which takes less than five seconds, provides employees with detailed information about a customer's feet, helping them find a shoe that's sure to fit.



RTIH Innovation Awards 2023

OPEN FOR ENTRIES

2023 RTIH INNOVATION AWARDS GOES LIVE

The fifth edition of the RTIH Innovation Awards is now open for entries.

The awards, sponsored by CADS, 3D Cloud by Marxent, and Goodays, celebrate global tech innovation in a fast moving omnichannel world.

Deadline for 2023 submissions is Friday, 27th October, with winners being revealed at an awards ceremony at the Barbican in central London on Wednesday, 29th November.

Entries are free and it is possible to submit in multiple categories.

Scott Thompson, Editor and Founder of RTIH, says:

“Innovation and technology play a critical role in the success of the retail sector, so it is great to recognise standout examples through our awards.”

“We received a record number of submissions in 2022 and many fantastic examples of the continued resilience and dynamism of the retail space during hugely challenging times.”

“I’m excited to launch the fifth edition of the awards. The 2023 event will be the biggest and best yet.”

Who will be judging the 2023 RTIH Innovation awards?

Mike Cadden

Experienced Retail IT Director and CIO

Peter Waugh

Director, International Digital (EMEA, LAC & AP), Starbucks

Paula Bobbett

Chief Digital Officer, Boots

Warren Richmond

Founder and CEO, Situ Live

Scott Thompson

Editor and Founder, Retail Technology Innovation Hub

Toby Pickard

Global Insight Leader, IGD

Matt Taylor

Technology Transformation Leader at EY, Retail and Consumer Products

Carole Kingsbury

Former Director of IT, Ted Baker

Amodini Chhabra

Investor, Compass Digital Ventures

Gary Newbury

Supply Chain Advisor and Delivery Executive

Nadine Neatrou

Marketing Director, Selfridges

David Polinchock

Co-Founder/President, Unified Brand Experience Lab



FAQS

Is there a fee to enter the awards?: No, it is free of charge.

Can I enter across multiple categories: Yes.

Do I need to complete all the sections in the entry form? No, but the more information you provide, the better chance you have of producing a successful submission.

Do you only accept entries from UK-based companies? No, we accept entries from all parts of the world.

When is the deadline for 2023 submissions? Friday, 27th October.

When will the winners be revealed? Wednesday, 29th November at an event at the Barbican in central London. This will kick off with a drinks reception in the stunning Conservatory, followed by a three course meal, and awards ceremony in the Garden Room.

Further information on the
2023 RTIH Innovation Awards can be found at:
<https://retailtechinnovationhub.com/rtih-innovation-awards>



PAYMENT CHOICE WORKS FOR EVERYONE

except the banks

Amazon launched its Amazon Go concept, with a fanfare of trumpets, in 2016. These stores were supposed to offer benefits for both customers and the all conquering parent company.

Customers could shop for the items they wanted, walking past scanners which registered their purchases without any kind of checkout or scanning of items required – the ultimate in convenience shopping for the public, whilst delivering much lower staffing costs for Amazon.

And, of course, the stores were “cashless”.

In March 2023, with no fanfare of trumpets, Amazon announced it was closing eight of its 29 Amazon Go locations in the United States, along with shelving plans for expansion in markets such as the UK.

Currently, Jeff Bezos has more chance of landing on





Starbucks in the US was recently forced to admit its card acceptance systems were down. It was either your app or cash, if you wanted to both smell and drink the coffee.

Payment choice



Many Brits want a Payment Choice Act passed, banning retailers like Amazon Go from imposing cashless.

Cash is the only method that always works; every retailer has experienced card and digital downtime – cash never goes down.



Mars before Elon Musk than Amazon Go has of opening the 3,000 stores apparently originally envisaged.

There are a variety of reasons why Amazon Go has not been a planet engulfing success – and one was the restriction imposed on how those using the stores could pay.

In 2019, Amazon was forced to announce that the new Amazon Go in Manhattan would be the first to accept cash. The company had no choice. New York had passed a law compelling all retail stores to offer customers the option to pay using their cash.

With many cities and states following New York's example of banning "cashless" – and a Federal Payment Choice Act doing the rounds in Washington – there clearly isn't much of a future for Amazon Go or, indeed, any other retailer looking to restrict payment choice.

Bezos should really have done a bit more research on public payment preferences before launching a "cashless" retail chain - or at the very least asked himself a fundamental question: is retail innovation which limits choice ever a good idea?

Here in the UK, a recent survey (June 2023) conducted by YouGov on behalf of the Payment Choice Alliance revealed that only 3% of the UK adults never use cash; only 12% of the British public in any way support a "cashless" society; and 71% of adults - 40 million people – want a Payment Choice Act passed, banning retailers like Amazon Go from imposing "cashless".

A Payment Choice Act would give the British public the right to use their notes and coins, when and where they choose.

The views of the UK public are mirrored in many other countries in Europe and further afield. Which explains why a number of individual countries have already introduced payment choice legislation and the European Union has recently announced plans to bring in rules

compelling "essential" retailers to accept cash.

It is not just the public who will not accept "cashless"; many retailers and other businesses fear that without cash being an available option, the fees imposed by card and digital payment schemes would simply go through the roof, along with the incidence of expensive chargebacks.

They are also well aware that cash is the only method that always works; every retailer has experienced card and digital downtime – cash never goes down.

As I was writing this article, on 26th June, Starbucks in the US was forced to admit its card acceptance systems were down. It was either your app or cash, if you wanted to both smell and drink the coffee.

Starbucks had already announced that it had no intention of making its corporate stores "cashless". The good customer service and business sense of that approach was underlined by the events of 26th June.

So, let's look at who is pushing the "cashless" agenda, if not the majority of the public or retailers?

The Mastercard "War on Cash", announced in 2010, continues, but the real problem in the UK is the antics of high street banks, at least some of which apparently decided a long time ago that killing off cash was their preferred route to even higher profits.

Actually, it is hardly appropriate to call the UK's Big 5 – Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds, NatWest and Santander – high street banks now. They only have around 3,000 branches between them in 2023, down from 6,000 plus five years ago – and they are reportedly aiming to reduce the total to around 1,500 by 2026.

Put another way, by 2026 it is unlikely that any town with fewer than 35,000 residents will have a bank branch.

Even when a bank branch can be found, businesses in many cases face arbitrarily expensive cash deposit charges. Some banks are seemingly determined to make

Payment choice

the cost of cash artificially high, as part of their push towards making the UK a “cashless” society.

In any event, the absence of bank branches gives businesses a headache both in relation to getting cash for their floats and depositing their cash takings.

Post Offices – and there are still around 11,500 of them in the UK – thankfully offer one solution for cash withdrawals and deposits, but more cash friendly infrastructure is required to support both businesses and the public.

Bank hubs – facilities jointly staffed by all the significant UK banks – have been suggested as a solution, but their deployment has been painfully slow, even by Amazon Go standards.

What is required to ensure cash continues to work for both businesses and the public is cooperative action between major retail groups – including Tesco and Sainsbury’s; cash management organisations, such as Brinks, G4S and Loomis; the Post Office; and non-bank ATM operators.

Working together, these parties can ensure that convenient 24-hour cash withdrawal and deposit facilities are available in every significant community around the UK.

As for the former high street banks, they will have to pay fair prices for the cash services their customers continue to want to use, prices regularly set under the auspices of an entirely independent cash regulator. The Financial Conduct Authority would support the regulator as necessary to ensure banks meet their newly established obligations.

An organisation called the UK Cash Supply Alliance has been set up to promote the structural changes needed to guarantee both the public and businesses get the cash services they want and deserve.

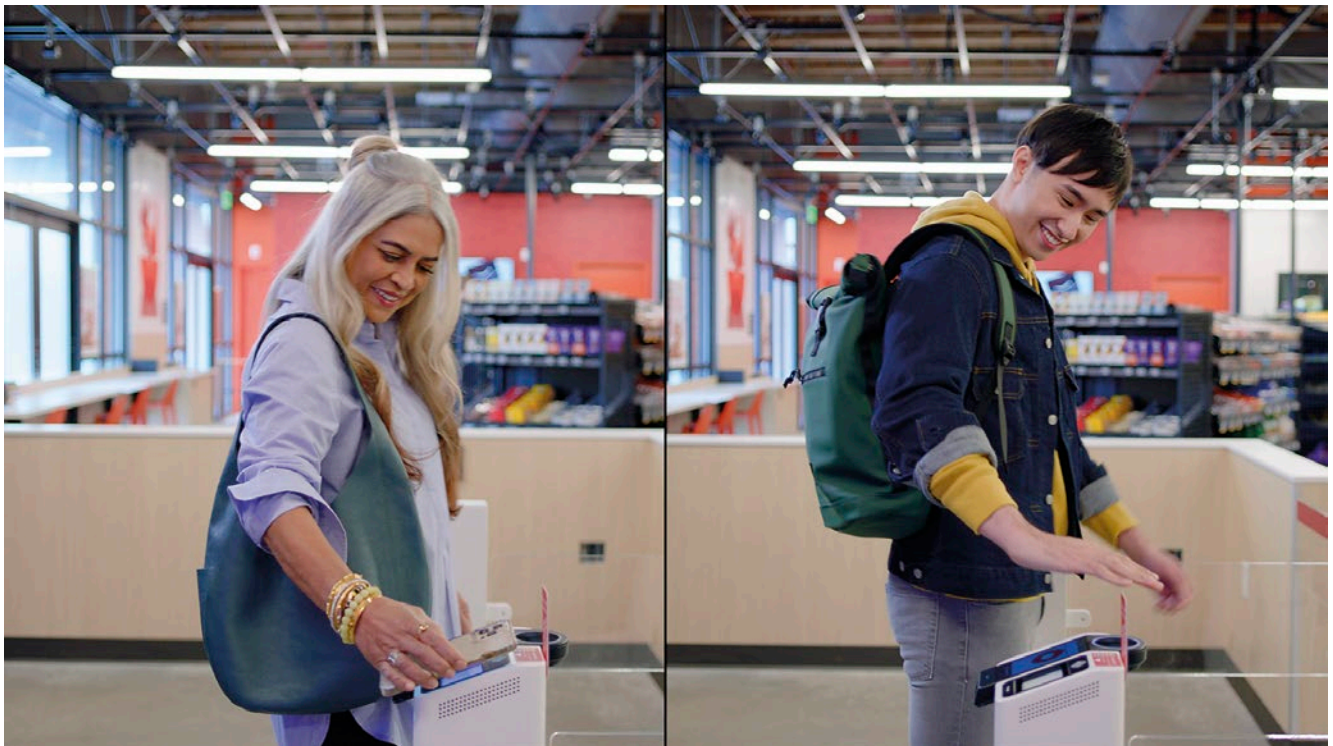
Meantime, the UK Payment Choice Alliance is working to help ensure the UK gets a Payment Choice Act, either under this government or the next.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak should be aware that the YouGov research revealed Conservative voters are even stronger supporters of payment choice than those favouring other parties. Introducing a Payment Choice Act, therefore, surely makes sense for someone hoping to govern beyond 2025.

About the author

Ron Delnevo is Chair of the UK Payment Choice Alliance.

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RTIH



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LEADING PUBLICATION FOR THE GLOBAL
OMNICHANNEL RETAIL TECHNOLOGY COMMUNITY

PROMOTE YOUR COMPANY VIA RTIH

Retail Technology Innovation Hub was launched in 2017 by Scott Thompson, former Editor of Retail Systems. It is now the leading website for the global omnichannel retail technology community.

Our retailer visitors come from a wide range of companies, across tiers one, two, three and four.

Our readership includes IT directors, e-commerce directors, the heads of multi-channel, mobile, loss prevention, supply chain, payments and operations, and those with responsibility for the likes of loyalty initiatives, customer experience, social media and marketing.

The UK is RTIH's biggest demographic, followed by the rest of Europe and then North America and the Middle East. We also have a number of visitors from the likes of India, China, Japan, Korea, and Australia.

Via our website, printed edition and digital campaigns, we can provide powerful advertising and sponsorship opportunities to reach key retail technology decision makers.

We have one of the most engaged audiences in the retail technology space, and are committed to helping our clients achieve tangible results, which is why the

vast majority of them return on a regular basis.

Advertising and sponsorship opportunities include:

- Promotional articles (company profiles, interviews, thought leadership pieces etc)
- Advertising banners, available both on our website and daily e-newsletter
- Bespoke events, roundtables, webinars, podcasts etc
- E-newsletter sponsorship (advertise in our daily newsletter)
- E-blasts to our database of requested newsletter subscribers
- Reports, whitepapers and online surveys



For further information, please email:
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The ET40/45 Enterprise Tablet for Retail

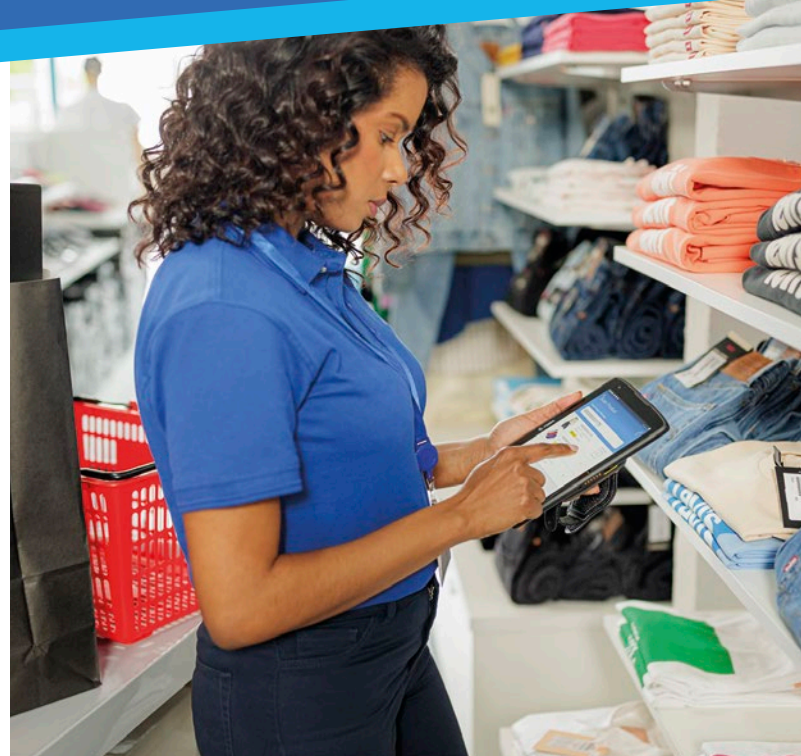


Looking to empower your retail workforce with technology?

In retail, devices such as tablets, mobile computers and scanners will improve store operations and enhance customer experience with faster, easier and more flexible checkouts.

You can drive efficiencies in price and stock checks, introduce kiosks, and mobile or hybrid POS hubs.

You might consider consumer-grade devices believing they can fulfil your operational needs at the most affordable price. But here's why you should think again.



Why consumer-grade devices might not be your best option

You may experience almost 2.5 times more lost productivity due to device failure and your TCO could be up to double of that of an enterprise grade device over five years due to:

- Lost productivity of up to **74 minutes per incident** of device failure
- Up to **54 minutes of lost productivity** per incident due to battery failure
- Lost productivity due to **failed network connections** at around 23 minutes per disruption
- **More hard costs** due to the need to purchase additional devices such as handheld scanners
- **Higher device costs** due to replacements required typically every 18 months



How the ET40/45 Enterprise Tablet compares

When you invest in the ET40/45, you get a device that:

- **Eliminates downtime** with replaceable batteries for round-the-clock performance
- **Provides faster and more reliable connections** including Wi-Fi 6 and 5G
- Includes an **integrated enterprise-grade scanner** from a world leader in barcode scanning
- **Maximises uptime** leading to lower costs
- Incorporates **exceptional security support** and collaboration tools
- Is **compatible with everything** you need for your mobile or hybrid POS



Take advantage of flexible installations and connect all the peripherals you need for a complete checkout experience.

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