

# THE Retailer

Issue 55 - February 2017



## A new reality for retail

### **Amazon's Arrival**

Bezos's behemoth has its sights set on the Australian retail market

### **Employment & Expansion**

Recruitment plays a critical role to managing rapid retail growth

### **Sustainable Success**

The power of ethical operations and socially-conscious retailing

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# From the Executive Director

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Nothing says fresh like the beginning of a new year and 2017 has already kicked off with all guns blazing. I can already feel it's going to be a great year for the industry with many significant changes set to have a positive influence on the retail sector nationally.

Early this year we are hopeful that the Fair Work Commission (FWC) will reduce Sunday penalty rates from double time to time and a half. With retailers currently paying employees double time on Sundays, many retailers are forced to close their doors on Sundays, impeding on retail growth across Australia. Over the last two years the ARA have worked hard to reduce these rates under the General Retail Industry Award 2010 (GRIA). The ARA hope the new year brings this long-awaited amendment as the reduction of Sunday rates will decrease the national unemployment rate and see the retail industry grow strongly.

Another issue coming to a head this year is the Low Value Import Threshold (LVIT) for goods purchased overseas. Currently the LVIT allows consumers to purchase up to \$1000 in goods and services overseas GST free, giving international retail businesses the upper hand in the Australian market. ARA has led the decision to remove the threshold to ensure that Australian retailers are no longer disadvantaged by this loophole. The GST will be collected via mandatory registration of overseas sellers and online platforms on 1 July 2017 under the Government's current proposed timelines. The removal of the LVIT will be necessary in growth and sustainability in the retail sector and beneficial to all Australian retailers.

The new year is upon us and the nature of customer service is changing. Whilst customers may expect good service as a standard, many are looking for retailers that are sustainably conscious. This issue of The Retailer addresses the top key retail trends in 2017 and gives an overview of disruptive technologies that are reshaping the industry and completely transforming how consumers shop today and in the future.

While many people believe that retail is a stepping stone in someone's career path, we explore retail as a career and how the Retail Institute is engaging the young and unemployed into the retail industry and assisting them up the retail management chain.

Christmas is now well and truly behind us with post-Christmas sales a distant memory. We've received positive feedback from members with Christmas spending on par with ARA and Roy Morgan's \$48.1 billion estimation for the pre-Christmas period between November 14 and December 24, 2016. We are slowly but surely gathering last Christmas' actual spend and will notify our members once finalised so definitely keep your eyes peeled.

And finally, a quick update on our new website which we hope will make a new appearance towards the middle of the year.

Best wishes for a robust new year of trade.



**Russell Zimmerman**  
Executive Director  
Australian Retailers Association

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# Retail news from across Australia

## Aussie retailers experience success in the UK

The number of Australian and New Zealand retailers expanding their footprint into the UK is on the rise, with the likes of Mon Purse, Typo, Disrupt Sports and Lorna Jane setting up international stores in 2016.

With over 60 million consumers making 320 million transactions a week and a mature e-commerce market where consumers spend more online per head than anywhere else in the world, it's little wonder that the UK is a prime destination for Australian retailers looking to expand their global footprint.

Not only is London the top retail destination in Europe, the UK is also leading the way when it comes to retail technology. Many stores are adopting innovative technology including augmented reality mirrors, smart change rooms and wearable technology. The UK ecosystem supports innovation in retail tech, with programs such as TrueStart and JLABs, and the BT concept store, which enables retailers to explore how they can transform their physical stores to meet needs of new digital shoppers. In short, it's the place to be for the developers of innovative retail tech to get ahead of the curve.

The UK's Department for International Trade (DIT) has offices in all major Australian cities and a team on hand to provide free and bespoke support to help retailers set up, expand and be successful in the UK. Their free services include market research, access to socio-economic and demographic data, support in finding and comparing locations, plus information on company set up, recruitment and visa advice. They also have a network of specialists providing expert advice on issues such as e-commerce, luxury goods retail, tax and planning.



## Toll launches its first pop-up delivery service in Westfield centres

Toll Group recently launched its new consumer-to-consumer parcel delivery service with the opening of new pop-up delivery hubs in selected Westfield shopping centres. Launching just in time for the 2016 Christmas rush, the service provides shoppers with greater flexibility – allowing them to skip the queues and access competitive pricing for fast domestic parcel deliveries.

Toll's pop-up delivery service has tapped into a market ready for disruption as this initiative offers a convenient delivery alternative that is both consumer and retail friendly. Although retailers have improved their digital shopping experiences at the front end, the limitations of logistics in Australia has constrained e-commerce growth.

Not only has consumer feedback from these pop-up hubs has been overwhelmingly positive, this innovative service also supports Australian retailers, as it provides their customers with greater flexibility and convenience for product delivery.

This year, Toll will look at expanding the pop-up delivery service to additional retail outlets during future peak periods in 2017 such as Christmas and Easter.

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# Recognising Remarkable Retailers

By Benjamin Staley – ARA

The time has come again to celebrate the cream of the retail crop at the 2017 eftpos ARA Australian Retail Awards.



*Thankyou's Daniel Flynn presents at the 2016 eftpos ARA Australian Retail Awards*

The ARA is proud to announce the launch of the industry's pre-eminent awards program, the 2017 eftpos ARA Australian Retail Awards. The prestigious event serves as a national stage to recognise the leaders and disruptors in the retail space, celebrating their contribution to moving retail forward. Employing 10 percent of the working population, retail is a vital part of the Australian economy and passionate retailers are at the heart of this pivotal and prosperous industry. The purpose of the awards is to showcase the vision, innovation and excellence of the best of Australian Retail, and if last year's awards are anything to go by – it's a retail event that is not to be missed.

This year's program encompasses a range of awards representing the breadth of achievement and talent in the ever-changing retail landscape. The awards span twelve categories reflecting the diversity of Australian retail – from independent

owner-operators, to national brands, industry innovators, outstanding staff and exceptional store-fitouts. Proud to acknowledge these deserving retailers at this nationally publicised event, the Australian Retailers Association is predicting the 2017 award entrants to exceed all expectations in terms of quality and quantity.

The coveted 2017 Retailer of the Year Award is set to be one of the hardest on record to judge, with the extraordinary calibre of leading Australian retailers in the field. As the peak retail industry body, the ARA has this year reimagined the selection process and worked with distinguished industry experts to determine what constitutes the 'best in retail' in this evolving sector. The bespoke adjudication matrix considers several essential factors including; company culture, fiscal performance, corporate responsibility, marketing initiatives and customer engagement strategies. Coupled

with mystery shopping initiatives and field agency surveys, the impartial panel of judges will be well-equipped to make the difficult decision of deciding the retailer deserving of the 2017 crown.

Alongside the presentation of the Awards, attendees will enjoy industry insights from inspiring guest speakers and valuable industry sponsors alike. At this stage the speakers are being kept under wraps, but we can confirm that these industry experts will be sharing their profound advice and lessons learned from their incredible success in retail. The 2017 eftpos ARA Australian Retail Awards breakfast is also an opportunity for Australian retailers to come together to celebrate the success of their peers, network, and learn from other's experience.

With entries now open for this year's Awards, the ARA is calling on Australian retailers to put themselves forward and join the running to be recognised by their peers and the broader retail industry. The streamlined entry process is simple and well worth the effort for potentially joining the esteemed ranks of previous award winners. Retailers large and small, as well as individuals, are encouraged to submit or nominate online at [www.retail.org/awards](http://www.retail.org/awards). Early bird tickets are also available for a limited time only. ■

**The eftpos ARA Australian Retail Awards are the retail industry's largest and longest running recognition of success. This year's Awards Breakfast will take place on August 3rd at The National Gallery of Victoria in front of over 500 guests.**



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# Not all eCommerce Platforms are Created Equal

eCommerce platforms come in many shapes and sizes and is why when considering replacing your existing eCommerce platform, it is more than comparing one functionality list against another.

## Other than functionality, there are three important considerations:

- 1 Strategy.** Your retail strategy defines how the eCommerce platform is meant to be treated and what functionality will be required to initially activate.
- 2 Growth and revenue expectations.** Growth expectations impact the size and complexity of a "Phase 1" implementation with a new eCommerce platform vendor.
- 3 Improving customer experiences.** Lifting experiences requires a mix of strategy, customer journey design, content, eCommerce platform treatment, and a long-term partnership with an eCommerce platform vendor.

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# Amazon's Arrival: Prepare or Panic?

By Benjamin Staley – ARA

With one of the world's largest retailers to hit our shores this year – Australian businesses are bracing for battle against the e-commerce juggernaut.

With retail behemoth Amazon setting its sights on the Australian market, there is an undeniable air of trepidation around the new arrival and the threat it poses after its damage to traditional US retailers. Amazon's grand plans to "destroy the retail environment in Australia" are yet to be officially announced, but there are credible whispers of establishing a physical presence here in September. Starting with distribution centres to support fulfilment for the digital store, there is even speculations of introducing physical stores and an online grocery branch, Amazon Fresh. The e-commerce giant sees enormous potential in Australia to exploit high margins and leverage a world-class logistics system, but for the moment it's all smoke and no fire. Regardless, Amazon is coming – and the first line of defence is assessing the risks and preparing to protect market share and brand value.

The most exposed retailers are those that sell third-party brands and commodified products, particularly online. These segments are primarily dependent on pricing, and thus will be particularly susceptible to Amazon's reported strategy to undercut local retail prices by 30 percent. Amazon's CEO, Jeff Bezos, initially rattled the cage of Australian retailers with his now infamous quote – "Your margin is our opportunity". This philosophy

is at the core of the perceived existential threat to the industry, yet it also provides a valuable insight into where Australian retailers should allocate their resources to meet the impending challenge. Supermarkets and department stores are at the greatest risk due to the nature of their price-based structures and commodified goods, however these retailers and others with their own 'home brand' product lines have a potential shield to minimise the impact.

## PRODUCT EXCLUSIVITY

Retailers with in-house branded products have a distinct advantage through their control of merchandise licensing. The benefit of limiting the sale of these products to selected retailers is as simple as it is powerful – Amazon can't do it. Exclusive distribution of products can remove the ability of online marketplaces like Amazon to sell these third-party items, and in turn remove the potentially detrimental competition on these products. Some of these retailers may also see an opportunity to capitalise on the hype and strength of Amazon itself as a platform to sell these items – though this will remove some product control and shift the role of retailer to supplier. Alongside product exclusivity, product customisation will prove to be another effective method

for differentiating and side-stepping direct competition from Amazon.

## PERSONALISED EXPERIENCE

Innovative Australian retailers will be able to find a competitive advantage in an area where Amazon lacks – personalisation. Amazon may have the upper hand in regards to price point, consumer choice and data-driven recommendations, but customised products and experience are weak points due the sheer size of their operations. It's no secret that personalisation plays a significant role in consumer decision making and fostering engagement, and these effects are enhanced on smaller scales. Australian retailers are already embracing the power of personalisation beyond the traditional online store - allowing shoppers to build custom products online, creating unique in-store environments, and providing seamless omni-channel platforms and mobile shopping experiences. Forward-thinking retailers will be wise to concentrate on their personalisation efforts to retain the attention and allegiance of their customer base.

## CUSTOMER LOYALTY

An invaluable weapon in reducing the potential attrition of customers to Amazon is rigorous effort in building and nurturing



**“The e-commerce giant sees enormous potential in Australia to exploit high margins and leverage a world-class logistics system, but for the moment it’s all smoke and no fire.”**

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customer loyalty. Product exclusivity and personalised shopping experiences will go a long way, but there are other strategies to develop deep connection with customers. The lessons from the most successful retailers centre around this idea; build meaningful relationships with customers, communicate ‘the story’ of the brand, be honest, and genuinely

value the people who choose to buy from you. It’s basic advice, but it’s critical. The fact of the matter is – it’s far easier to retain a customer than it is to potentially try to claw one back from Amazon.

Only the coming months will tell whether the looming cloud over Amazon’s arrival turns out to be an earth-shaking tempest or just a

light drizzle. In either case, the best strategy for Australian retailers is to focus what is in their control. Preparation is vital, and if nothing else Amazon will serve a catalyst to refocus resources and double down on customer-centric strategies. Australian retail is as resilient as it is up for a challenge – if the jungle is coming to us, it’s time to sharpen our machetes.

# Small Stores Creating Big Impact

By **Gary McCartney** – McCartney Design

**It's not how big the store is, it's how you use it.**

We've all heard the term 'less is more' and this will ring true for retailers this year as they opt for smaller store formats, reduce operational costs and creatively capitalise on unconventional retail spaces. Although consumer confidence and purchase intent is rising, shoppers don't want to waste time wandering around enormous stores. They know what they want to buy and don't want to waste time looking for it. This shift in consumer behavior has already seen some retail giants move to downsized retail locations, providing more curated selections and stripping back their inventory and stock lists.

Although smaller stores can be difficult from a design and visual merchandising perspective, this minimised format gives retailers a chance to be innovative about their limited space to attract consumers. ATTIK Clothing has applied this ideology in a unique way, teaming up with McCartney Design for their first venture into the world of major shopping malls. Specialising in creating beautifully simple design solutions for retail stores, the task of the design team was to build a strategic point of difference for ATTIK's newest store.

The space was undoubtedly challenging - a 60 square metre box with a two-storey high shopfront and a huge column almost on the lease line. With the cost of full-height glazing not in the budget, a unique solution was needed to make the most of the space. Combining innovation and elegance, a big idea emerged - combining the shop with the shopfront and the shopfront with the shop.

As mall shopfronts no longer need to have conventional glass windowed elevations, McCartney Design set about realising the vision of a simultaneously secure and

aesthetically appealing store. Promoting such an innovative approach, landlords like Westfield even encourage designers to be highly creative in defining what a shopfront actually is.

McCartney Design decided to use the full volume of the six metre tall retail space and make a visual statement. To create impact and highlight the theme of the ATTIK brand, the team constructed a gable end roof complete with attic and stairs. They defined the rooftop with a welded steel framework and alluded to the stairs in perforated steel. Beyond the shopfront, the attic style continues with a tall ceiling lined with unfinished plywood and rough timber trusses. Some of the back wall is mirrored, giving the appearance of a much bigger space. The store's illuminated sign and its exaggerated depth fill the space that it's in, creating an environment reminiscent of an Escher Sketch.

Design decisions like leaving the column intact and untouched effectively compliment the incomplete look of the store and saved costs for specific features too. For example, the merchandising system is made up of unpolished steel rail, normally used in back of house situations, but appropriate to the unfinished look of the store.

Although McCartney Design achieved the required amount of space for merchandise, we know that space is also required to convert sales. A conscious choice to omit a stock room meant ATTIK could have four oversized dressing rooms, to which McCartney Design added distinctive floor tiling and detailing to create warmth.

Combining exceptional LED lighting with the lofty space and timber finish, the space creates an environment that's welcoming and



shows the merchandise at its best.

The store is performing well above expectations with feedback from customers loving the openness and accessibility - a perfect example for other retailers looking to make big things from small spaces. ■

**Gary McCartney is the owner of McCartney Design. We create beautifully simple design solutions for retail stores everywhere. Find out more at [www.mccartneydesign.com.au](http://www.mccartneydesign.com.au)**



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# Employment Relations Overview 2017

By Nick Tindley – FCB

## Looking to the year ahead in retail employment relations.

The New Year is upon us and once again it's time to prepare for what is shaping up to be another big year for the retail industry. So, what are the key employment issues that ARA members should be aware of in 2017?

### 1

#### CONCLUSION OF THE MODERN AWARD REVIEW PROCESS:

The ARA devoted significant time and resources in 2016 towards the Modern Award Review, fighting the case for an employment

relations framework which enables members to improve efficiency and increase their competitiveness.

The four-yearly Modern Award Review undertaken by the Fair Work Commission is an enormous task and it is fair to say that the process has dragged on far longer than was initially anticipated. While the decision to insert award provisions for the cashing out of annual leave was welcomed, the ARA continues to argue the case for a reduction in weekend penalty rates.

Paid family and domestic violence leave is another key issue being considered by the Fair Work Commission as part of the Modern

Award Review process. The ACTU and others have proposed an additional entitlement of 10 days paid domestic violence leave for those persons experiencing family or domestic violence.

The ARA considers domestic and family violence to be a serious issue for the Australian community. However, the Association also recognises that not all businesses have the capacity to honour a new category of leave. The ARA has therefore decided to support the submissions of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. After seeking feedback from the members of the Association, we have found



that members typically work sensitively with employees who might be experiencing domestic violence, often voluntarily granting time off work, access to leave and other arrangements. Some members even have formal arrangements to support their employees impacted by domestic violence.

It is expected that 2017 will see the conclusion of the Modern Award Review process with the ARA continuing to provide its members with regular updates in relation to any significant developments.



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## 2 UPDATES TO THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (ERMS):

ARA members enjoy free and unlimited access to the Employment Relations Management System (ERMS). The ERMS functions as a virtual Human Resources assistant, providing the tools to make HR administration easy and compliance simple.

The upcoming year will see the beloved ERMS undergo a complete facelift, with members expected to benefit from a cleaner and simpler user-interface.

The ERMS provides members with basic employment documentation including template policies and contracts, as well as a range of workflows to assist with managing tricky employment situations. Keep an eye out for a range of exciting new developments that are set to go live in 2017!

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## 3 FAIR WORK OMBUDSMAN SET TO RECEIVE INCREASED POWERS:

Wage scandals featured heavily in 2016, with the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) taking significant steps to ensure compliance with Australia's workplace laws. We are again reminding members to get their houses in order before the Ombudsman comes knocking. The ARA Employment Relations team are ready

to assist any members should they have any concerns in relation to their compliance with workplace laws.

In the wake of the 7-Eleven wage scandal, it is likely that the FWO will receive increased powers and additional funding early in 2017. This would significantly assist the organisation to enforce Australia's workplace laws more effectively.

The FWO continues to push the boundaries of the accessorial liability provisions of the Fair Work Act. This comes as no surprise with the Fair Work Ombudsman herself, Ms. Natalie James, having publically expressed her view that such prosecutions are crucial in reinforcing the roles and responsibilities of key personnel within an organisation. HR Advisors, managers, directors, accountants and CFO's have all been caught by the accessorial liability provisions and personally held liable for their involvement in workplace breaches. What does this mean? It means that if you knowingly took part in a breach of workplace laws, you can be found personally liable for such breach, and are prevented from hiding behind the "corporate veil" of the organisation in an attempt to avoid personal liability.

Franchisors have also come under increasing scrutiny over the last year with the master franchisor of Yogurberry being penalised for its involvement in the exploitation of four workers at one of its stores in Sydney. The precedent-setting judgment should put all franchisors on notice that they can no longer turn a blind

eye to worker exploitation within their franchise network.

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## 4 BE PREPARED FOR THE ANNUAL WAGE INCREASE:

Members are reminded to prepare for a wage increase towards the middle of the calendar year.

The Fair Work Commission is currently conducting its annual review of award wages with its decision expected to be handed down around mid-June 2017. As is consistent with past practice, any wage increase is expected to become payable from the first full pay period in July 2017.

The annual wage increase is generally between 2-3 percent, however, an alert will be published notifying ARA members of the decision as soon as it is handed down. Members are advised to contact the ARA Employment Relations team to access the updated pay guides or if they have any questions about the wage increase.

As always, ARA Members will be notified of any employment relations updates throughout the year by the Employment Relations Team. ■

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**For more information regarding Employment Relations issues, please contact the ARA Employment Relations Team on 1300 368 041.**

# New Year Resolutions for the Modern Retailer

By Sheeda Cheng – Temando

Being prepared and self-aware early in the year will not only please your customers but lead you to success.



Whether you've been naughty or nice last year should not blind you from the fact that 2017 can be your best year. With global retail sales projected to continue its upwards trajectory to US\$26.83 trillion this year, how well you plan and execute your retail strategy right now will determine your share of this pie. Let's start with five resolutions to help you achieve your goals:

## 1

### I SHALL SURPRISE MY CUSTOMERS

"Put your customers first" is easier said than done. Dell CIO, Jerry Gregoire, updated this old adage when he said, "The customer experience is the next competitive battleground". This is never truer than now when customer-centricity can mean anything from flying in warm pizzas to your hungry customer by drone, to turning a customer complaint on Twitter into an idea to execution in six days.

However, you don't need drama to make a big statement. Turning your attention to solving common friction points such as overly expensive or slow deliveries, complicated checkout, or inflexible returns will delight your customers, and encourage conversion.





# \$89,000 in energy savings is a lot of dough

Since 2015, Make It Cheaper have been thrilled to find estimated savings of \$89,000\* for Bakers Delight franchisees. And it's not just bakers we're delighting. We've secured better deals for many other retail customers and have already helped many more ARA members lower their energy costs.

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\*Based on 46 business bills between June 2015 and December 2016.

**“With Brexit, Trump, and Pokémon Go defining 2016, you can never be too sure about what will happen, or whether market conditions will sway favourably this year. That’s why it’s important to plan for the unexpected.”**

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## 2 I’LL USE SHIPPING AS A SALES TOOL

Shipping shouldn’t be hard, nor should it take a chunk out of your already narrow profit margins. While delivering orders was quite a novelty a decade ago, it’s now the norm. Nowadays, there’s a trove of technologies to support your shipping and fulfillment objectives, to increase shipping options, lower carrier onboarding costs, or transform retail stores as mini distribution centres.

Shipping has been used by modern ecommerce stars including Amazon and Australia’s very own THE ICONIC, as a tactic to increase conversion and loyalty. For example, over a billion items were delivered by Amazon over the holiday season, and THE ICONIC’s customers continue to gush about the company’s deliveries and returns. With shipping-related woes being the main culprit for 64 percent of abandoned carts, investing in great shipping and fulfillment technology will help pave your way to success.

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## 3 TAKE A SELF-AWARENESS CHALLENGE

Forbes published a great article by John Hall, CEO and Co-Founder of Influence & Co., on how setting yourself a self-awareness challenge can help improve your performance. By increasing your self-awareness - be it through open feedback from your team and customers, or by seeking guidance from subject matter experts on areas of the business that’s underperforming, you’ll be in a better position to make the right decisions for your company.

Being self-aware also gives you a competitive advantage as you’ll be able to flex

towards changing consumer sentiment more deftly. Three Seattle-based retailers, Filson, Eddie Bauer, and Nordstrom, are innovating the retail space to find “new ways to tell their brand story by investing in the in-store experience” as a direct response to the muted experience of online shopping. As a result, they heightened the shopping experience; giving shoppers a strong incentive to engage.

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## 4 BE PREPARED FOR THE UNEXPECTED

With Brexit, Trump, and Pokémon Go defining 2016, you can never be too sure about what will happen, or whether market conditions will sway favourably this year. That’s why it’s important to plan for the unexpected, such as when an aggressive competitor emerges, stock-outs happen, or legislation changes. Instead of reacting when the threat is present, how about being proactive?

To start, you’ll need to assess your level of control over your operations. Could you easily scale your business across borders with your existing infrastructure, or are you stuck in time-consuming practices? How about your customer journey - are you allowing sales to slip away with a difficult checkout process, or outdated shipping options? With 39 out of the world’s top 250 retailers currently operating in Australia, and more expected to hit our shores, local retailers who stand idly will be pushed out of the market.

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## 5 STICK TO S.M.A.R.T GOALS

Lastly, make sure that your initiatives are tied to ‘S.M.A.R.T.’ goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely). While it

may seem easier to proceed into the year with entrenched habits and not challenge the status quo, you’ll never realise your full revenue-earning potential by doing the same-old. By ensuring your objectives are tied to S.M.A.R.T goals, your team will confidently stand behind the new tactics you’ve included in your 2017 strategy.

These resolutions may seem unattainable at first glance, but if you stick to them throughout the year, there’s every chance that you’ll succeed. Your retail business, team mates, and customers are counting on you, so don’t give up! ■

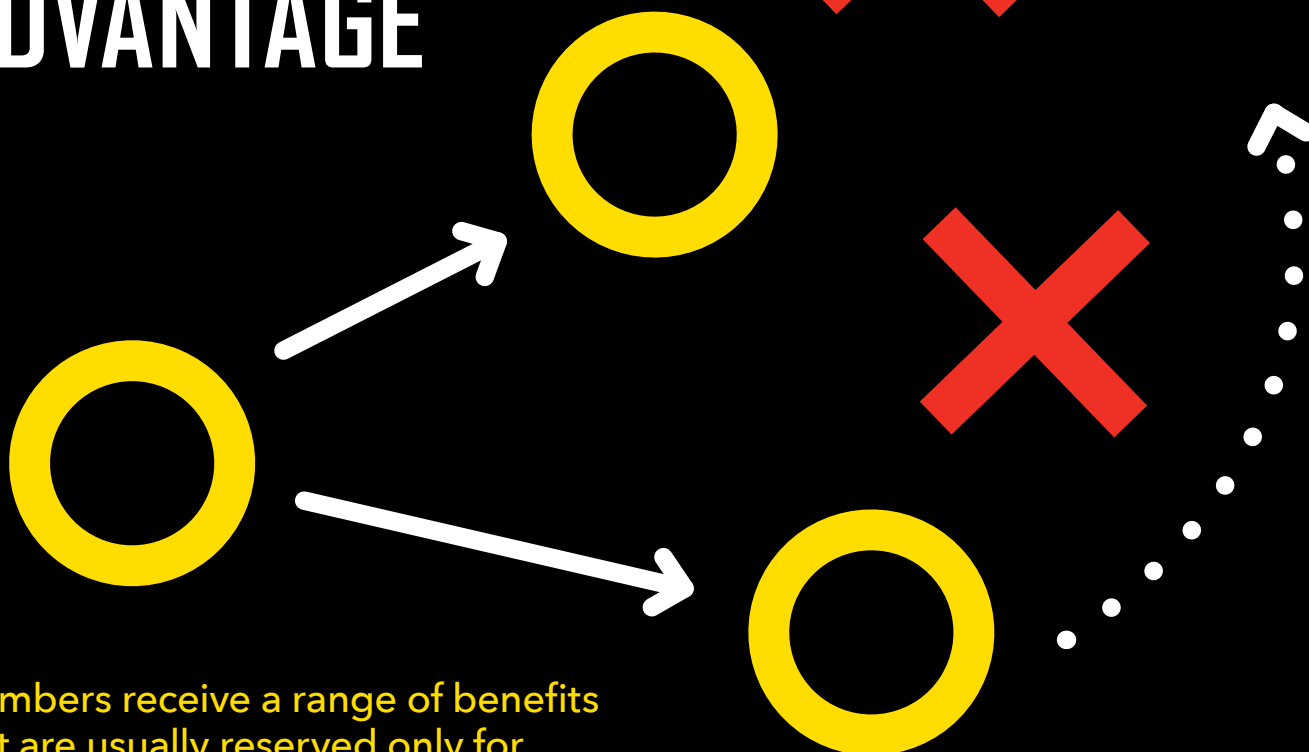
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**Sheeda Cheng is the Marketing Manager of shipping and fulfillment technology company, Temando. For more information head to <http://temando.com.au>**

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# A New Reality for Retail

By Benjamin Staley – ARA

The potential of Virtual and Augmented Reality has captivated the retail industry, but do these emerging technologies deserve the hype?



Image: Pulse Communications

Virtual reality (VR), along with its sister technology augmented reality (AR), are poised to reshape the retail experience and completely transform how people shop today and in the future. Met with a mixture of excitement and trepidation, each new application of these disruptive technologies holds a budding promise of a new horizon for retailers and customers alike.

From Pokémon GO, to Snapchat filters and the ubiquitous use of mobile devices for almost everything, Australians are undoubtedly

embracing the virtual revolution with open arms. For retailers, the question remains; Is this the beginning of a new reality for retail?

In a time where potential customers are more distracted and bombarded with choice than ever before, VR platforms are rising rapidly as a viable solution to this retail dilemma. Virtual reality can engage users on a previously unattainable level, as viewers are entirely immersed in a simulated, three-dimensional environment. The richness and interactivity of artificial worlds engage the senses in a way

unlike any other platform, opening the door to revolutionary possibilities for shoppers to experience brands and products. Spreading fast through countless industries, the burgeoning VR movement has retail firmly in its sights.

Driven by big players in VR headsets including the Oculus Rift, Samsung Gear and even Google Carboard, this previously inhibitive and expensive technology is rapidly becoming more accessible for both businesses and individuals. At this early stage, VR applications are primarily being trialled in bricks-and-mortar environments due to the required resources of devices and software.

American home-improvement retailers, Lowes, have been innovative pioneers in utilising VR to overcome several buyer challenges through their Holoroom concept. Through transforming customer's visions of remodelling projects into realistic 3D virtual environments, Lowes has empowered shoppers to try out new room designs before they buy. Leveraging VR technology to eliminate consumer concerns and facilitate informed buying decisions has proven to be remarkably successful for the brand.

Closer to home, Myer and eBay collaborated in mid-2016 to create the world's first VR Department Store. Australian consumers can browse Myer's range of over 12,000 products on eBay entirely within the virtual environment, made possible through 'Shopticals' - cardboard VR viewers for use with smartphones. The seamless integration of physical and online shopping provides

an integrated experience for customers to personally engage with brands and to research, explore and purchase products.

Although VR has garnered much of the limelight for the transformative effect on industries including gaming, entertainment and real estate, AR is deservedly carving out its own place as a technological game changer. AR technologies facilitate an immersive experience through the overlaying of virtual objects over the surrounding physical environment, seamlessly blending the physical and digital worlds. Emerging AR platforms utilise current technologies including smartphones and tablets, allowing retailers to experiment and innovate with fewer barriers to entry than Virtual Reality counterparts.

The current and potential applications for AR technology have piqued the interest and investment of many prominent and forward-thinking retailers, enhancing both the in-store and online customer experience. Projections of the virtual world can enable customers to digitally visualise and interact with products before they click 'buy' or head to the counter.

International beauty retailer, Sephora, has recently trailed an Augmented Reality Mirror in-store allowing shoppers to test virtual cosmetics on their faces. The photo-realistic simulations use facial tracking technology to map user features and overlay makeup in real-time and 3D. The ability for customers to experiment with products through this novel application has simultaneously increased in-store foot traffic and conversion rates. The ripples of this digitally-enhanced bricks-and-mortar experience are set to make waves in beauty and fashion in retail.

Early-adopters of this technology are already seeing the benefits of addressing and eliminating barriers to purchase, resulting in enhanced customer interaction and increased sales. The opportunity of these platforms to dissolve consumer pain points, create unique shopping experiences, and set new standards of customer service has deservedly captured the attention and imagination of many Australian retailers.

Now that brings us back to our original question – does VR and AR reflect the future



Image: Phoria

**“In a time where potential customers are more distracted and bombarded with choice than ever before, VR platforms are rising rapidly as a viable solution to this retail dilemma.”**

of the retail space, or is it just a hyped-up fad in need of virtual reality check? With the infancy of this disruptive technology in the retail space, only the coming future will hold that answer. However, it's impossible to ignore the momentum of this digital

revolution. Though it's yet to permeate the mainstream retail market, the billions of innovation dollars invested in this technology can't be ignored. The truth is; the nascent promise of virtual and augmented reality couldn't be any more real. ■

# Is Sustainability the Secret?

By Katherine Mechanicos – ARA

Just like fashion, consumer loyalty blows through phases. Is sustainability just another fad or is this loyalty trend here to stay?

With the new year comes new challenges, retail trends and a shift in consumer needs. Alongside omni-channel retailing and emerging technologies, sustainability is slowly embedding its way into the industry. This trend is building momentum as more shoppers are becoming invested in environmental issues and expect retailers to echo their sentiments. In fact, according to the 2013 Global CSR RepTrack 100 report, 73 percent of consumers are more likely to recommend companies that are sustainably-conscious. Subsequently addressing important social issues, upholding ethical operations and ensuring business transparency are now becoming highly influential factors in retaining loyal consumers.

Implementing sustainable practices in various business models is proving to have a positive effect on retailers, consumers and the broader community. This win-win strategy has deservedly evolved from a risky business idea into a powerful way to make a difference and differentiate in competitive markets. Retailers across the world are seeing the great value of sustainable practices and are making a genuine effort to apply these principles to their business.

## SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

Consumers and regulators are constantly on the lookout for irresponsible and unethical retail management. In fact, in 2014 Ethical Consumers Australia launched their *Good on You* app, which provides consumers with a platform that showcases brands that have

a positive impact on people, the planet and animals while also identifying those that aren't sustainably-conscious. Many retailers have responded to this movement by

reviewing and rebuilding their supply chains to directly align with the ethical values of their customers. They are improving these supply chains by implementing sustainable



Image: H&M



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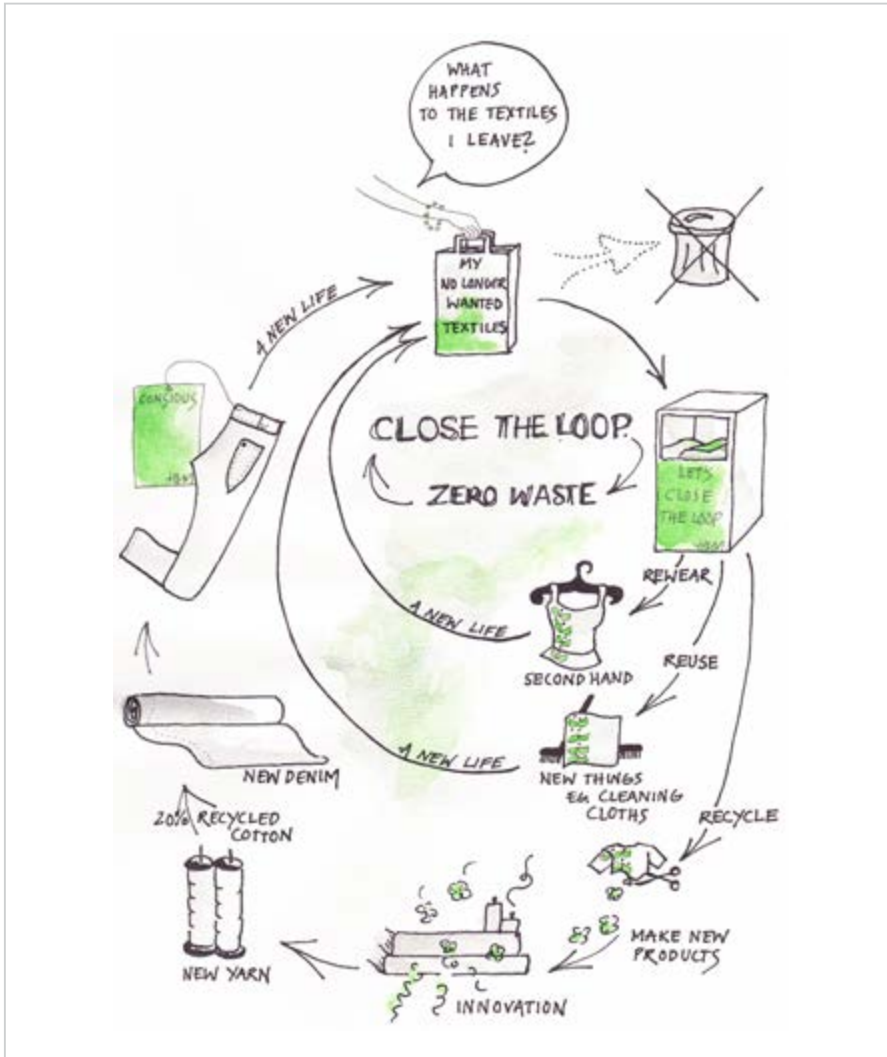


Image: H&M

strategies into their business operations, from sourcing to manufacturing, packaging and distribution.

Logistics is a key area of focus for sustainability efforts and, as a result, we are seeing conscious retailers opting for transportation methods that minimise environmental harm. Conscious retailers are optimising their business models by sharing warehouse and distribution operations to reduce environmental impact and cut operational costs.

### REUSE, RECYCLE AND RECREATE

With almost 80 percent of consumer products thrown away in six months

and only 13 percent of global electronic waste undergoing some form of recycling, consumers are particularly concerned about the creation and treatment of waste. Drastically increased demand for eco-conscious products, made from biodegradable and non-toxic materials, is driving retailers to consider these factors when sourcing, stocking and selling goods.

Providing additional recycling services is another growing practice within the retail sector. A prime example of this is H&M's garment collection program. This sustainable initiative, launched in 2013, evolved H&M's retail business to an eco-friendly service by reselling, reusing

and recycling old garments. The first products made from these recycled textile fibres from unwanted garments were manufactured and sold in the following year. This 'Close the Loop' concept identifies strongly with the environmental values of millennial shoppers and serves as crucial consumer loyalty tool for the brand.

### SOCIAL IMPACT AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Retailers are recognising their potential in this space and are updating their traditional business models to meet community and social needs. According to the Retail Industry Leaders Associations' Retail Sustainability Report, consumers are now more appreciative of companies that are authentically investing in making the world a better social and environmentally friendly place.

TOMS corporate responsibility programs are great examples of delivering sustainable programs for community and social needs. TOMS shoes are made of sustainable and vegan materials including natural hemp, organic cotton, and recycled polyester. Their One-for-One model matches every product purchased (shoes, bags, eyewear or coffee) with a new pair of shoes, clean water or medical treatment for those in need. The brands sustainability initiatives provide health, education and community development programs to help improve the future of children, their families and communities in need.

As sustainability develops as a key brand identifier and a priority for consumers, it's obvious retailers who implement sustainable strategies gain and retain loyal customers. Retailers with strong sustainability programs that directly align with consumer and employee values not only experience the substantial business benefits, but also harness a powerful tool to positively influence society. So will this sustainable trend keep consumers loyal? Or will they too put this movement in the recycling bin, already anticipating the new trend to hit the loyalty shelves soon? ■





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# Social Media: Using the Sea of Social Opportunity

By Adele Pellizzari – GMG Digital

A deep dive into social media’s emerging influence in the buying decision process.

The last thing I bought online was an NBA basketball jersey for my boss’ German Shepard. Now, I know what you’re thinking: what possessed me to make such a specific purchase? Is there such a thing for dogs and if so, where can I get one?

There’s really only one answer to these questions: social media.

## SOCIAL MEDIA FORMS A GLOBAL CUSTOMER BASE

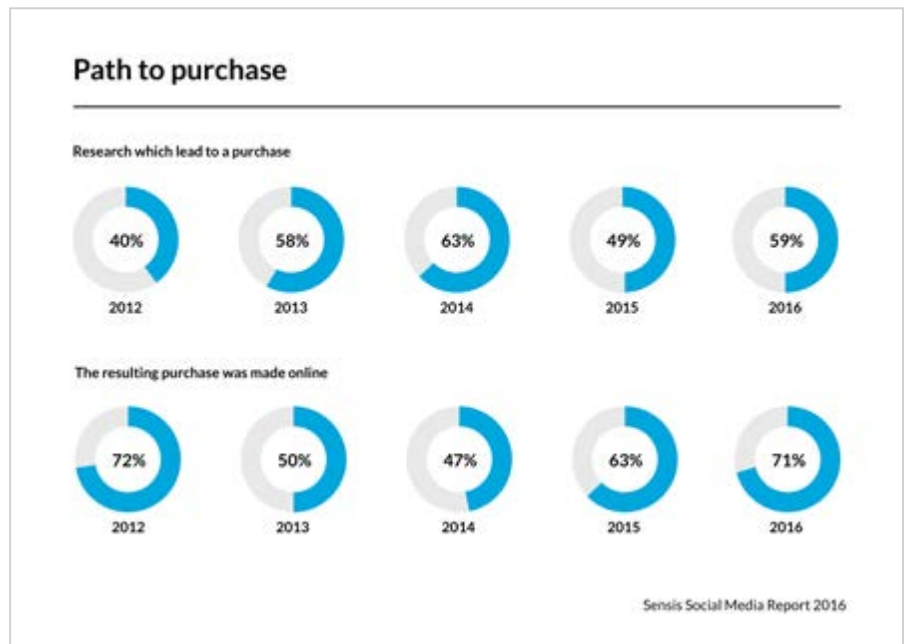
You would be correct in stereotyping ‘millennials’ as the predominant perpetrators of the social media movement. However, recent trends have shown we are no longer the only group succumbing to this addictive outlet. The likes of Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Snapchat have cast their nets vast and wide, and as a result have experienced significant usage growth among those aged between 30–49. Not only this, but these social media platforms have over two billion active users worldwide – that’s more than 29 percent of the world’s population, including over half of Australia’s population. So, what are the implications of this for established or emerging retailers? And how can conventional millennial behaviour – like purchasing a basketball jersey for a dog – be a testament to social media’s influence in the buying decision process?

## FISHING WHERE THE FISH ARE

Social media plays a huge role in revolutionising the customer lifecycle. The saying goes that in order to capture the most fish, you need to be where most of the fish are swimming. Continuing the metaphor, it’s obvious that Facebook and other networks are somewhat trout farms when it comes to social media. They give retailers the opportunity to drop a line into a densely-populated sea of demanding consumers and capture a market proven to

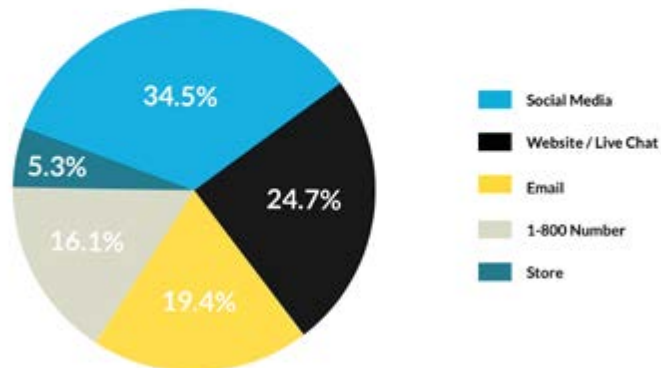
be hungrier than ever. And I don’t just mean for instant self-gratification (although this has surged tremendously).

Sensis’ most recent Social Media Report (2016) revealed that over four in ten customers will review a retailer’s social media presence before committing to a purchase if they have not previously purchased from that retailer’s website. While 59 percent of those that used social networks for product research went on to make the purchase online (see figure below).



## People's Top Choice for Customer Care

Q1 2016



Sensis Social Media Report 2016

This demonstrates a number of notable shifts in the marketing landscape.

1. Consumers are becoming savvier social scavengers. They're harnessing relevant social platforms at various points of their path to purchase to help make more informed buying decisions.
2. Rather than playing a passive role in the discovery phase of a brand, social media's pervasiveness on all touch points – from initial awareness through to direct purchase – is indicative of its weight in determining a consumer's perception and trust for a brand. This is particularly the case for first time buyers who are approximately 50 percent more likely to turn to social media than a repeat buyer.
3. Attention is inevitably shifting from traditional forms of advertising such as out-of-home and television to channels where brands have to work for a customer's trust and where they are in full control of the content they interact with.

Established or emerging retailers should drop a line into this sea of opportunity. Becoming a trusted resource early on through the means of social proof will not only appeal to a customer, but go on to retain them.

### PEOPLE USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO CONNECT

Imperative to that trust, and something too many retailers fail to exercise, is the sole purpose of social media. Businesses still think of it as purely a marketing tool used to constantly push out messages, as if it's the middle of Times Square in New York City. This is something I like to call 'spraying and praying'. The reality is that social media was built on the concept of connecting with friends. This foundation implies that retailers need to interact with consumers, form a relationship with them and be, well... social.

### CUSTOMERS EXPECT IMMEDIATE ACTION ONLINE

It's not just a coincidence that the ability to review a company page, comment, Tweet, Snap and direct message on such chat apps as Facebook Messenger are quickly becoming the predominant means of communication with businesses. The sheer convenience, personalisation and decision support of 'conversational commerce' means consumers can completely bypass the need to call, email and even visit a brands website. The results speak for themselves in the Sprout Social Q2 2016 Index where 34.5 percent of people appointed social media as their number one choice for customer care - go figure.

Going back to my 'millennial' purchase, four weeks after committing to a dog jersey from the NBA Store, there was no sign of a package or a confirmation email; the NBA had officially disgruntled a customer. So I did what any logical customer would do, I turned to Twitter to express my concern. To my pleasant surprise, the NBA Store Support tweeted back within 24 hours, alleviating four weeks of built up anxiety and a potential PR disaster. How? Have a look at how they addressed my concerns in the tweet trail below.



The moral of this social saga is that social media is increasingly cementing itself as one of the biggest disrupters of the path to purchase. By infiltrating the customer lifecycle, it has the ability to influence the buying decision at any point. Businesses now have the opportunity to tap into a new and ever-evolving audience who they can interact with directly in order to sell like never before. But in order to avoid being a fish out of water, the right decisions need to be made now.

As for the basketball jersey, I received it in the end, which made for one happy customer, German Shepard and boss. I can confidently walk away from this experience with #noregrets. ■

**Adele Pellizzari from digital marketing agency, GMG Digital. For more information contact 1300 058 520, or visit <http://gmgdigital.com.au/discover/>**

# Predicting the 2017 Economic Climate

By **Heath Michael** – ARA

The forecast for Australian retailers this year is fair, with patches of opportunity and international stimulus on the radar.

Following another solid retail spending result in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2016 November trade figures, there are good indications the economy is on solid ground leading in this year.

Annual retail sales are running above inflation at around 3.5 percent, although not as strong as historical trends, it is positive as it sees off ructions and uncertainties across the economy. Although we are seeing fluctuations across various retail categories, any data interpretation needs to be analysed in specific periods i.e. quarterly results or year-on-year results. The departure of some major retail player has seen increased price and volume growth, and there is little question that discounting in some sectors is keeping growth at, or below the rate of inflation. We continue to see retail services flourish with new technologies driving large scale growth throughout the sector via new delivery and service systems.

On a state by state basis, we continue to see an outstanding performance by New South Wales, driven by strong housing demand. This leading state is closely followed by Victoria, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and South Australia. Western Australia and the Northern Territory are expectedly trailing as they remain effected by the downturn in mining investment.

While 2016 ended with a series of mixed consumer confidence figures, it appears indexes reflecting disposable consumer

income remained quite stable. Wages growth is minimal in the private sector, however a strengthening in government payrolls appears to be keeping wages ahead of inflation. While Government spending is not a long-term solution to wages growth we have seen employment figures remain relatively strong, albeit mainly in part-time work.

The retail industry will see many global challenges and opportunities moving forward, with the caveat on issues such as trade wars being a possible disrupter. We see China and India driving growth as they become increasingly consumer driven and their economies continue to demand our resources and services, whilst providing retailers further trading opportunities through tourism and specialty retail.

This year we could see positive stimulus in some of our older trading partners with changes in the United States economic policy through tax rates, along with similar policies in the United Kingdom, likely exacerbated through Brexit as they break free of the European Union. There is also the potential of significant infrastructure spend in both these international economies given their respective relatively strong economic growth which will put additional demand on our resources and services.

It appears there will be limited growth through economic reform within Australia this year, unless the Government can drive real changes in personal and company tax rates along with greater employment



flexibility. There remains the solid argument, given the restraint within wage growth, that the best way to increase consumer spending is to undertake personal tax cuts. Hopefully some of the upside in trade, along with the Government's very conservative Mid-Year Economic Forecast (MYFO), will allow a new financial year personal tax cut stimulus to be announced during the Federal Budget.

In the Australian context, we are seeing major infrastructure developments along the eastern seaboard driving the economy forward, as both Sydney and Melbourne are undertaking massive decade-long transport and logistic programs. The sums involved in these investments are staggering by Australian and global standards, and the private sector investment which will follow some of these major road, port and rail projects, will further stimulate the broader economy.

One area where Government policy could negatively affect growth is around immigration. One of the key drivers to Australia's historical growth has been due to population growth and access to specific skills. Many Australian business (including retailers) have already reported growth restraints because of skills requirements and the difficulties to meet those skills needs. With the political scene possibly reducing overall immigration rates, including in those skilled areas, retailers need to be aware of the implications for economic growth and demand if these changes were implemented.

The fact of the matter is - economists have a reputation akin to weather forecasters in getting it right. For now, the year looks fair to good with a diminishing chance of showers. ■

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# The Importance of Small Pretty Things

By **Paul Farina** – Fresh Eye Solutions

## Retail is detail – what sets your business apart from the rest?

**B**ooking a hotel room throws up many different variables. I find it very difficult. Especially when you have never visited a holiday destination before. Recommendations from friends and using online social proof sites (Trip Advisor and the like) are the usual starting points. However, to make a final decision means making many calculations and assumptions with the perilous question of “what are we willing to compromise?” Then after some in-house power struggles, you throw-the-dice hoping for everything to work out well.

The dream is that you arrive with a pleasant surprise where the booked hotel destination over delivers, or at the very least, that you have booked something that you can categorise as good value, i.e. it is worth what you paid. On our last holiday where we had a mix of bad experiences balanced by delightful ones, I was left asking myself the question: what actually makes the difference as a consumer?

Good service makes the biggest impact. Right? But what about the food? The spaciousness? The cleanliness? The ease of making plans? The location? The noise (or lack of it)? They are all a part of the overall picture. For me, I came to the realisation that there is a very small detail that drives value in a customer experience. In fact, the smallest of details is crucial. I am referring to the small details. All of them!

Keeping with the theme of travel, my wife and I recently went to Indonesia. Like many Southern Asian cultures, I feel that they absolutely nail the small details with aplomb. The authenticity and beauty of

their daily spiritual rituals where tiny palm-sized leaf trays are filled with flowers and complemented with burning incense is a wonderful example. These arrangements are placed in their mini shrines around their premises and are blessed as they go. This is also performed on the front step of retail outlets and cafes as everyday people walk past. I found it beautiful and engaging. When I looked at these arrangements closer, they were so intricate and beautiful. The scent also became infused with the memories that I still associate with that trip.

Another example of small details making a big impact is when we ate at a traditional Indonesian Café on the same trip. Here we witnessed the making and use of these beautiful miniature banana leaf cups which are secured in shape with a small toothpick. These cups are used to hold a small portion of rice, or condiments that come with your dish. In one small warung (a small family run café that houses the family room, kitchen, and guest dining room all in the one space with a BBQ on the front foot path) we had a magnificent dining experience. The family had three generations working in the business, with a toddler causing her mother all sorts of headaches as she tried to feed her while the grandparents played with the baby. It was an intimate, traditional Indonesian food experience. The thing that stood out for me (other than the amazing food) was the preparation. These small handmade cups were meticulously formed with ingredients carefully put together, expertly cooked, and then portioned with a loving feel and touch being put into each of

the small vessels. It was such a pleasure to watch. Almost therapeutic. It is this magical customer experience that we strive to create in our retail experiences – theatre, ascetic beauty, and a stimulating one-off customer experience. It is obvious to me that this family would not have known what you were talking about if you had mentioned any of these key retail customer experience terms to them.

These were only a few of the constant examples I saw on my trip that highlighted the source of where value is perceived by the consumer. The little touches, the smallest of small details. The details displaying our culture. Our values. Our mission. It is not a new idea for a business to get their small details right (even though many fail on this front).

To go a step further, make the small features a key element of the customer benefit. Many retailers can gain sales traction by embracing these small opportunities. They make the difference in that infinite calculation that our consumer brains are constantly balancing up to answer the question – was this purchase of good value and am I going to rave about it to my friends?

I observe shoppers on a daily basis, and seeing people engage with the intricate details that display your brand’s DNA is a powerful way to impact your business and be memorable for all the right reasons. ■

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**Paul Farina is a trainer for ARA Retail Institute and runs Fresh Eye Solutions as a leading retail business coach. To challenge, motivate and innovate your business visit [www.fresheyesolutions.com](http://www.fresheyesolutions.com) or contact Paul on 03 9972 5287.**



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FEATURE

# Hill Street Climbing Mountains in Tasmania

By Katherine Mechanicos – ARA







Image: Hill Street

## How can retailers alleviate some of the growing pains during business expansion?

As the retail industry continues to adjust to various challenges, including a tightening in consumer spending, higher costs and online competition, retail businesses are under considerable pressure. Being in a highly competitive sector, the focus for growing retailers this year will be towards reducing costs, reinforcing brand value and improving customer service.

Hill Street are an Australian born family business, owned and run by brothers Marco, Nick and Nektarios Nikitaras and their families. This local grocery business has built their success on a passion for fresh produce, delicious food and a flair for retail. Hill Street has quickly become one of Tasmania's leading food retailers with stores in West Hobart, New Town, Blackmans Bay, Dodges Ferry, South Hobart, Latrobe, Devonport, Strahan and Lauderdale. The stores are stocked with staple grocery items including fresh produce, meat, fish, wine, cheese and baked goods, with the Devonport and West Hobart stores encompassing a florist and homewares section.

The Hill Street business has been growing rapidly over the last 18 months, opening two new stores in the last two years. This sharp growth over such a short period created a dire need for good quality retail staff to manage and serve their new stores across Tasmania.

One of the frustrations Hill Street management encountered in the recruitment process was coordinating the sheer volume of candidates required for their stores in extremely limited timeframes. This problem is a common occurrence in many fast-growing businesses, and if it's not addressed early, can have a detrimental effect on any retailer.

Due to the rapid expansion of the business, Hill Street began to work with the Australian Retailers Association (ARA), joining the ARA Retail Institute's Retail Ready Jobs Program. The ARA Retail Institute worked with Hill Street in developing an employment program that could streamline the recruitment process and provide a high-quality pool of candidates for their stores.

The ARA Retail Institute employment program, supported by a team of program managers, trainers and administrators, worked with various Federal Government contracted job-active agencies to source appropriate Hill Street candidates, and ran their first pilot program in May 2016. The team developed a selection criteria specifically for Hill Street, which focussed on the candidates' interest and passion in wanting to work for the business.

ARA Program Manager, Susanne Rose, worked on the Hill Street employment program and says finding job-ready applicants that are committed to a fast-paced



career in retail is no small challenge.

“Hiring right for entry positions in retail is a critical first step in building talent for future growth,” Ms Rose said.

“The Retail Ready program streamlines the recruitment process, matching jobseekers with retailers, and providing employers an easy way to find talent.”

The five-week program is an intensive education and job placement service, upskilling talented people and preparing them for the diversity of roles in retail across Australia.

“The program starts with understanding the employer needs, and identifying their ideal employee,” Ms Rose said, “While the end of the course focuses on building skills to ensure candidates are equipped to meet the demands of the business.”

The collaboration between the ARA Retail Institute, employment service providers and retailers through the Retail Ready Jobs Program has generated long term and meaningful employment for thousands of participants nationally, while deepening the industry’s talent pool.

One of the many successful applicants, twenty-two-year-old Danyul Gandini, heard about the Retail Ready Jobs Program through his job recruitment agency and

enthusiastically embraced the hands-on program.

“The pro-active course was able to prepare us for the skills needed for the fast-paced retail industry. It improved my confidence in communicating and interacting with customers in a retail environment,” Danyul said.

Loving his new job at Hill Street, Danyul prides himself on his customer service and looks forward to a future in retail.

“Once I acquire my Cert III, I’ll see if I can eventually work myself up the retail management chain,” he added.

Danyul’s story is similar to many Retail Ready participants, with 70 percent of candidates acquiring employment opportunities after the program.

Since the pilot program launched in late May, Hill Street have since run an additional five programs across Hobart, Latrobe and Devonport. Due to the success of the program and ongoing management of the volume of candidates, Hill Street have made the Retail Ready Jobs Program their primary business recruitment strategy for entry level and sales associate positions.

Keith Scott, HR Manager at Hill Street says the business looks at the ARA Retail Ready Jobs Program as a strategic and effective

channel to market for candidates, with 80 percent of new staff sourced through the program.

“We were looking for a program that gave us the opportunity to have an input at all levels; from screening to final selection of successful candidates,” Mr Scott said.

“The program also provided us with opportunity to have an input into what we need from our employees so that trainers have an appreciation of the Hill Street culture.”

Mr Scott said the onsite work placements proved to be invaluable both for the candidates and for their supervisors, as it gave them the opportunity to see the potential recruits operating in all areas of their business operations.

“The two-week placements allowed trainees to become more informed about the business and areas they might like to specialise in, and some of the graduates have already been targeted for senior roles,” he said.

Hill Street will look to the ARA Retail Institute to assist them with their future recruitment with multiple programs already scheduled for the first nine months of 2017.

“At this stage, we are committed to using the ARA Retail Ready model for our initial recruitment as we continue to grow. Our philosophical position is that we want to recruit staff who look at Hill Street as a career, not just to fill-in,” Mr Scott said.

Although, business expansion is an exciting experience for any retailer, the rising costs and dwindling staff morale can be detrimental to the whole process. Having employment services like the Retail Ready Jobs Program on hand can alleviate some of the growing pains that many retailers feel when in a state of growth. ■

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**This training is subsidised by the Department of State Growth, Tasmania. The ARA would like to acknowledge the Tasmanian Government’s Skills Fund job seeking program for supporting these jobs seekers into training and employment.**

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# Retail Trends Set to Shape 2017

By Katherine Mechanicos – ARA

We explore the key trends reshaping retail this year, with customer experience set to be the most influential.

With the Australian Retailers Association predicting \$310 billion in total retail sales in 2017, it's the retailers who adapt and act fast that will get the biggest slice of the pie this year. Keeping up with the rapidly changing

environment is difficult to say the least, but successful Australian retailers understand the importance of pivoting to suit the ever-changing needs and desires of their customers. Continuing the trend of previous years, customer experience will be the focus

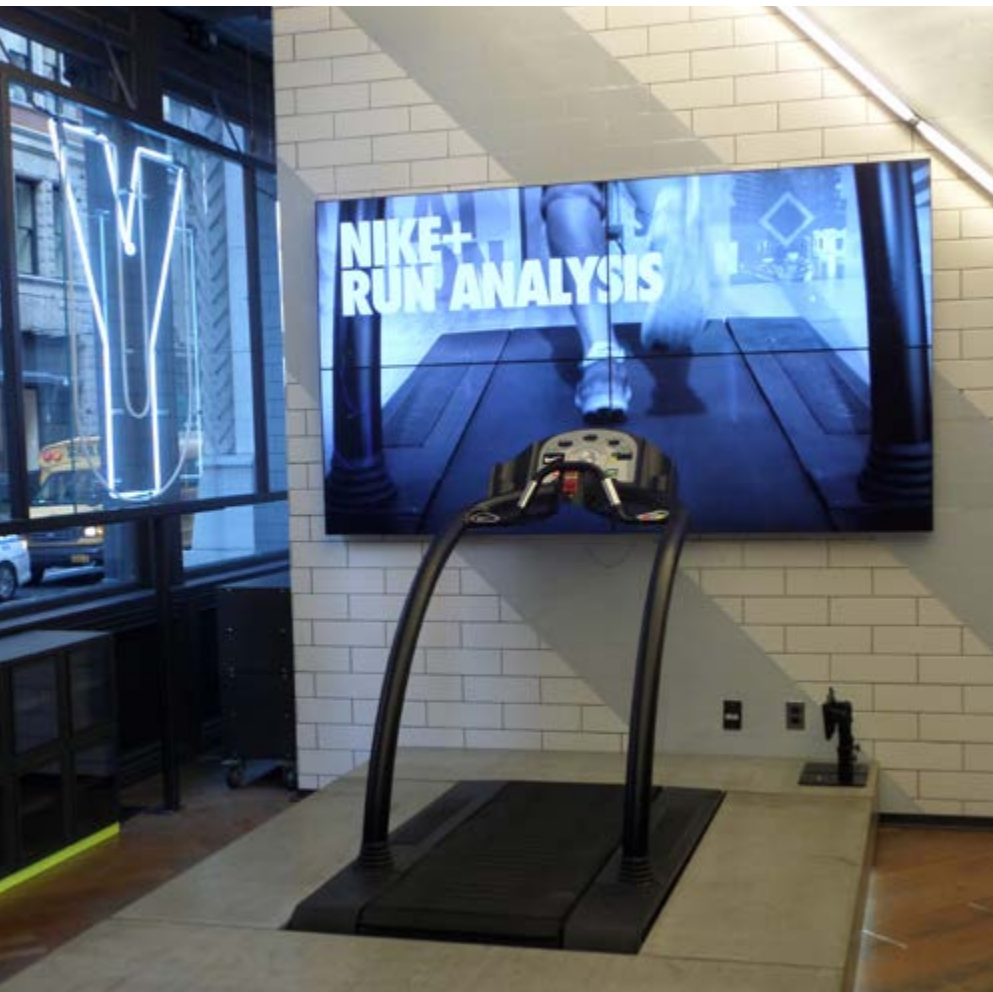
of innovation and implementation in 2017. We will see traditional customer experience become increasingly tangible and memorable – through personalisation, integration, innovative technologies and the rise of social shopping. Don't get left behind - here's the key trends for Australian retailers this year.

## PERSONALISATION

With consumers craving a personalised and unique shopping experience, this year we will see retailers take shoppers on a journey, providing customer-centric shopping experiences from in-store activities to virtual reality. An increasing number of retailers are already reshaping their physical stores to create immersive environments, encouraging consumers to step away from online shopping, and step into physical stores instead. This year consumers will seek entertaining and engaging shopping experiences, forcing retailers to incorporate these features into their business to build and strengthen relationships beyond a single transaction, and retain loyal customers.

## SUSTAINABILITY

As consumer values have changed overtime, retailers must keep up and look for alternative ways to engage customers. Every year, consumers are becoming increasingly more interested in how products are sourced and produced, gravitating them towards retailers that are transparent in their business operations and sustainability conscious. This year, successful retailers will strive to align their businesses with the ethical values of their customers. While new retail entrants



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will look to differentiate themselves through social and environmental issues to gain market share and solidify brand image.

### CROSS-CHANNEL RETAILING

In 2016 we saw consumers gain significant purchasing power, compelling retailers to become agile and adapt to consumers' demands in the ever-evolving industry. In fact, many retailers have started to restructure their organisation to suit omni-channel retailing. This year we will see retailers allocate more resources to re-designing their business to integrate their physical and digital channels. Instead of marketing each shopping platform as a separate entity, retailers will begin to utilise each platform as complementary elements to the consumer's entire shopping experience. Understanding how consumers engage with each platform and leveraging these channels cohesively will be critical for retailers in 2017.

### CONVENIENCE THROUGH FRICTIONLESS SHOPPING

Last year the retail industry saw a

significant shift in consumer behaviour and buying patterns. Customers increasingly want to shop at their own convenience, requiring retailers to alter their services and re-market products in a way that is relevant to consumers' current situation and specific needs. The evolution of payment systems including technologies such as Apple Pay and Samsung Pay, removes the need for the physical card to be present, adding to the seamless shopping experience customers have come to expect. Further, 'click and collect' has shown considerable traction with many retailers offering pick-up services from a physical store in a nearby location. UberEats is a prime example of a retailer understanding consumers' needs and transforming their service accordingly, creating a seamless integrated experience, where the transaction is not the main event.

### STORYTELLING VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

According to a 2015 Google report, mobile devices have become the number one choice for retail purchases, and 2017 will be no different. In fact, social media

giants like Snapchat and Instagram have implemented a storytelling marketing approach, engaging consumers in an immersive environment. This strategy allows shoppers to explore transparency in a completely different way, offering consumers an un-edited, behind-the-scenes brand experience. Both these social media platforms have dominated the retail industry by strengthening brand awareness and increasing community engagement. In fact, this year we will see Instagram launch their 'Shop Now' button allowing consumers to make purchases without having to leave its smartphone app. This Instagram update integrates online platforms in order to convert sales, delivering a streamlined shopping experience for customers.

This year will be full of exciting opportunities for retailers to embrace change and discover new ways to attract customers and grow market share. The retailers who will see the greatest success in 2017 will be those willing to reshape and reimagine their retail businesses around evolving expectations of the customer. ■

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# Stepping Up from a Stepping Stone

By Benjamin Staley – ARA

Australian businesses are busting the myth of retail employment and sowing the soil for worthwhile careers in the sector.



**“Retailers are beginning to understand the critical importance of ‘retail as a career’ in acquiring, developing and retaining the brightest retail talent.”**

An alternate perspective on retail employment is gaining momentum in Australia, eroding the well-established perception of retail as a ‘job’ not a ‘career’. The traditional (and out-dated) view of working in retail as a temporary means-to-an-end, a stepping stone to long-term employment in another field, has deservedly had its day. The movement at the heart of this paradigm-shift flies in the face of misguided stigma, an undertaking fuelled by passionate retail staff and industry leaders. Australian retailers are paving the path for diverse and progressive careers in retail, and attracting the people who will shape future of the industry.

The fundamental misconceptions around employment in retail are understandable, forming from most people’s original experiences from working behind a counter, in a store or at restaurant. Retail is often the starting-point of many peoples’ entrance into the workforce, with the sector employing 10 percent of the Australian working population and lower barriers to entry than other industries. However, the preceding reputation of retail work as a ‘less prestigious’ occupation than many professions and lacking worthwhile career prospects, is undeserved. With educational and promotional opportunities more accessible than ever, forward thinking retailers are beginning to understand the critical importance of ‘retail as a career’ in acquiring, developing and retaining the brightest retail talent.

The retail industry is rapidly evolving and these sweeping changes are creating a myriad of specialised roles in the space. Far





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## HUMAN RESOURCES

beyond just customer-facing 'selling', the plethora of options for employment in retail include management, administration, buying, merchandising, design, I.T, and logistics. The expansion of these fields has opened avenues for fulfilling and financially lucrative retail careers, and dynamic pathways for professional and personal growth. With around half of the retail workforce in these areas, career-minded staff are seeing the potential to compliment studies, utilise prior expertise and experience, and cultivate in-demand skills to progress in retail or even apply to entirely different industries. Retailers who understand this are steering retail from work that people 'fall into', to work they trip over each other to be a part of.

In the past, many of these promising retail career opportunities have been overlooked - not due to their validity and value - but due to a lack of communication. Historically, the promotion of employment in Australian retail has lacked the magnetic narrative presented on the international stage. Countries including Malaysia, the US and Brazil lead the world in creating

and endorsing a fertile culture of careers in retail; reflected in their innovative training programs, recruitment initiatives and facilitation of internal advancement. Encouragingly, Australian retailers have acknowledged this evident PR problem and are enthusiastically following suit.

CottonOn is a model example of an organisation embracing this concept and reshaping the narrative around work in retail. Aimed primarily at young people, CottonOn's careers initiative centres around engaging digital content, captivating storytelling, and vibrant events to entice and educate potential team members. The compelling messaging paints a picture of retail as fertile ground for aspiring staff, presenting real possibilities for career progression, and even overseas opportunities and volunteering projects. A robust structure for promotion and cross-training between departments adds to the appeal of beginning a personally and professionally fulfilling career in retail.

McDonald's Australia are also leading the charge with the recently-launched 'Appetite Needs Opportunity' digital campaign.

Focussing on the budding careers of five ambitious Australian crewmembers, the short videos showcase their individual paths to success and shed the unglamorous reputation often synonymous with fast-food retail. These inspiring stories aim to empower young people to set lofty goals within the business and advance through work ethic, determination, and a zest for learning. It is also worth noting that former McDonald's Australia CEO, Catriona Noble, rose through the ranks from making burgers to leading the national team beneath the Golden Arches.

The value of this cultural shift is obvious for retail businesses and aspiring staff alike. The retail industry employs more Australians than any other, is vitally important to the prosperity of the economy and justly deserves this new-found recognition and respect. People are everything in retail, and it's no secret that nurturing passionate and motivated staff is imperative to the success of Australian retailers. It's looks like the long-standing myth will have to start looking for a real career, maybe in retail? ■

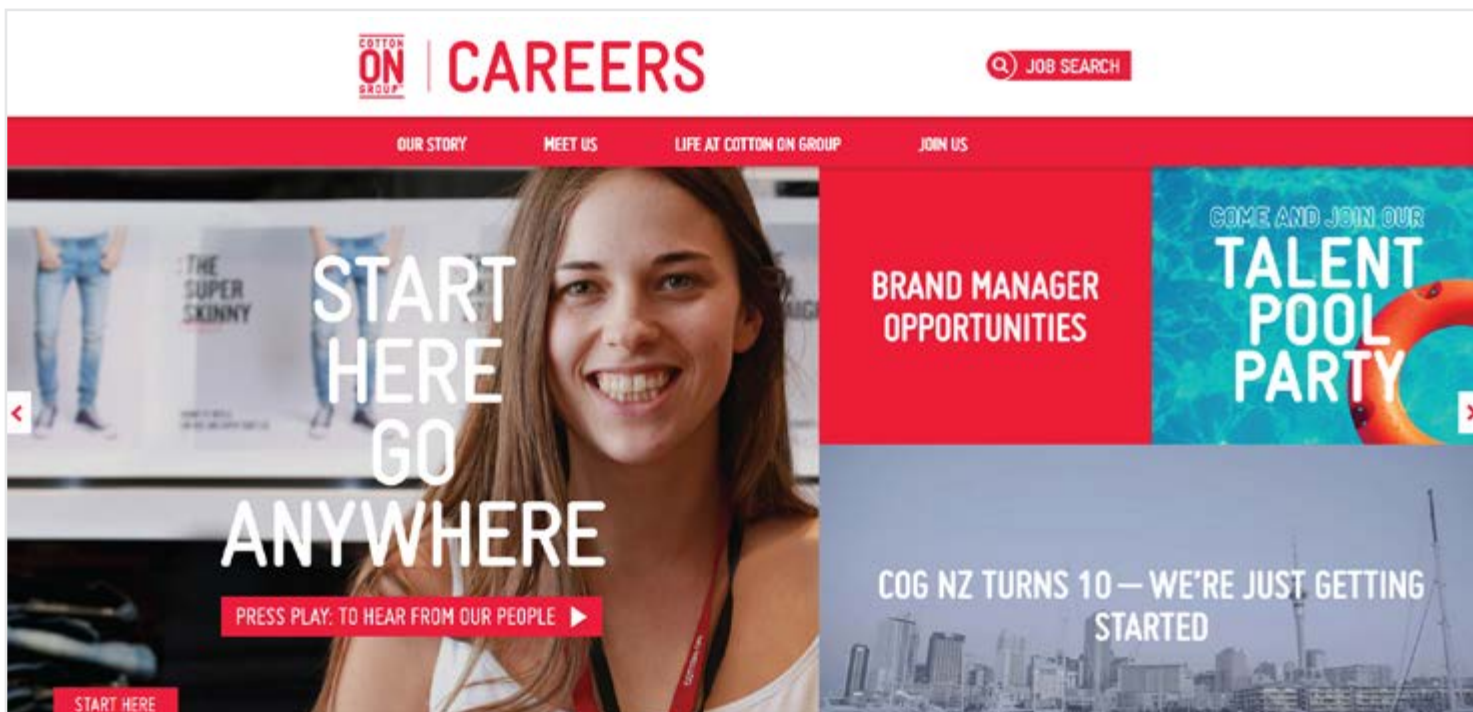


Image: Cotton On

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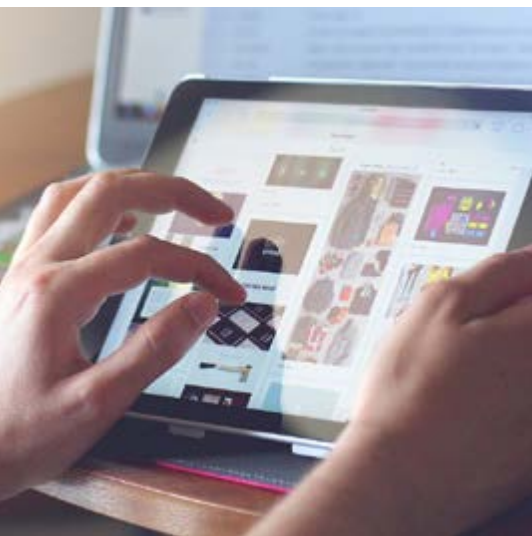
# The Role of Digital in Transforming Retail Businesses

By **Brian Walker** – The Retail Doctor

To fully embrace the digital world, retailers need to know where to intelligently invest their development dollars.

When it comes to digital, retailers have a growing number of questions; where are we at with digital retailing in Australia? How much are CEOs and marketing managers setting aside in their budgets? Is digital spending increasing above traditional channels? Where should Australian retailers spend their digital dollar?

To answer these common questions, our consumer insights team recently went out to 20+ Australian retail CEO's and marketing managers to understand perceptions and comparative expenditure on digital. Our research has shown that retailers across Australia are continuing to invest heavily in digital marketing, with a focus on customer retention and repeat purchases, with email direct marketing being one of the most popular channels for investment.



However, this investment is restricting the growth and potential of so many businesses. Many retailers struggle to invest in digital and technology to reach new customers early in the purchase journey due to the risk factor and the lack of evidence of ROI.

Our study highlighted the digital trends, concerns and priorities of retailers – providing a snapshot of the current industry, and a preview of where it's headed digitally.

## INSIGHTS FROM THE STUDY:

- Digital will be the major focus on marketing expenditure going forward. In fact, on average, digital marketing spend has increased by 35+ percent.
- Top priority for the majority of senior retail respondents was achieving a single view of the customer.
- The top four priorities for digital expenditure (in order) are:
  1. Increase customer retention and repeat customers
  2. Drive footfall into shops
  3. Increase basket size/margins/ profitability per customer
  4. New customer acquisitions
- 88 percent of CEOs interviewed use EDM reminders, which makes them the most mature and popular activity (although not innovative per se, rather refining what has always been available). This is while 75 percent use retargeting and location based offers.
- Retailers are focused on mobile enabled loyalty schemes, developing unique offers and increasing the sophistication of their

EDM programs. Developing in-depth customer understanding in this focus area is of high perceived importance.

As we study and compare global trends on retail digital uptake, we see many Australian retailers still taking a 'silo' approach to digital – not yet creating a true 'omni-channel' business with investment into information systems, shop experiences, and digital integration.

Rather, we observe that digital is seen in the 'territory' of marketing, helping to build a supply channel to an agile brand space. This comes with the adage that a digital communication strategy is not about adding a room – but about rewiring the entire house. Our consumer insights study is showcasing CEO desire to invest in digital, however there is still great opportunity to innovate and implement from the customer perspective as distinct from the organisational lens.

Of course, knowing what technology to invest in comes from knowing your customer segment's purchase behaviours, psychological drivers, your sector's benchmarks and the future direction of your industry. This knowledge can be established through a detailed consumer and market insights diagnosis, forming a foundation for your retail implementation strategy. With a strong underpinning of consumer and market insights, comes a decrease in risk, and greater opportunity to be more predictive, see significant ROI sooner and most importantly offer your customer a highly personalised and memorable retail experience.

Retailers who let this customer-centric strategy lead them forward in 2017, will certainly be seeing greater return on their digital investment, and overall a significant increase in their 'business fitness' this year. ■

**Brian Walker is the CEO and Founder of The Retail Doctor. For more information on building or improving your retail business visit [www.retaildoctor.com.au](http://www.retaildoctor.com.au).**



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# 5 Tips to pull customers into your store with Visual Merchandising

By **Paul Farina** – Fresh Eye Solutions

**Focussed effort on Visual Merchandising will keep shoppers heading through the door and pay dividends across your entire business.**

The common perception is that visual merchandising (VM) is about making your products and your store look nice, but I assure you that there is a lot more to it than this. It is healthy to view your VM as a hub that links directly to all your other main business departments. These usually include Stock Control, Marketing, Customer Service, Human Resources & Professional Development, Housekeeping and of course Sales. Understanding the connection between VM and other functions within your business opens new levels of creativity for you while making it easier to justify further resources on your VM and in-store animation.

VM is also a key way to pull customers over the threshold into your store and assist you in delivering a high level of customer service, resulting in increased sales. Here are my top five tips to bring this to fruition:

---

1

## PROMOTIONAL DISPLAYS

Visualise your store as you walk in the main entrance, and ask yourself - what is the first thing that your eyes are drawn to?

In retail, we want the first focus of attention to be the promotional product or range of the week, month, or season. It is critical that retailers have an engaging promotional display front-and-centre as shoppers enter the space. This not only creates interest for the consumer to stop walking and turn into your store, but it also excites the shopper - no matter if they are new to the store or a returning customer. The golden rules are to use a New Product, a Seasonal Product, a Topical Product, or a Hero Product from your range. This promotional product should also link to the display in your window. Additionally, make sure your store remains fresh and up-beat by changing this display regularly.

---

2

## PRIME SHELF REAL ESTATE

There are Hot and Cold Zones in our stores, with a Hot Zone representing an area of high foot traffic. You may know why people gravitate to this area, or it may be a mystery. Either way, be sure to recognise your Hot Zone, and the shelving units within this zone.

This zone is generally the first-place shoppers will look and want to browse after they have enjoyed your promotional display at the entrance of your store. You may designate a shelf at eye level, or an entire bay as your Prime Shelf Real Estate. Whatever amount of space you choose, be sure to fill it with product that matches your promotional display mentioned above. The key to this is to make it clear that people can shop from this area. I say this as a promotional display can often be left untouched by shoppers as they do not feel that they are allowed to shop from this area. By using the sequence of your window display, that matches your promotional display, that matches your Shelf Prime Real Estate - we have now built a slick easy to use path-to-purchase.

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3

## PRICING

The way that we communicate individualised pricing is a critical part of VM. Pricing needs to be visually aligned with branding, scaled appropriately to products, and be easy and clear to understand.



Depending on your type of retail you may use hanging tags, pricing stickers, branded labels, or shelf talkers. Whatever pricing display you choose, be sure to pay close attention to detail. Make sure pricing labels are consistent throughout the store to make pricing easy to find and read. Let's face it, the first question most consumers have is "how much is it?"

Premium Retail will usually not display prices and certain retailers will have a different pricing convention (i.e. on lists or in menus), but no matter what pricing is relevant for your business, be sure that it is brand aligned and that it is correct! There is nothing worse than getting pricing wrong and

costing your business money, credibility and resulting in a negative customer experience

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## 4 NEGATIVE SPACE

In large discount retailers and supermarkets, you will see products jammed in and stacked as high as possible. This signals to the consumer that the products are of a low value. In a majority of retail environments, we want to increase the value proposition of our products using VM. One of the most effective ways to do this is to use

Negative Space. Negative Space is the use of gaps, or space between products. This is a clever technique that draws a shopper's eyes to the individual products allowing the shopper to browse at ease while creating more interest in the shopper's mind. Negative Space also signals to the consumer that the products are important enough to command such a generous use of space. This is where the perceived value of a product is enhanced. This layout technique will enhance your overall branding, and will be noticeable from the exterior of the store as consumers look in through the entrance. It can also be used in window displays.



## 5

### CLEAN ALL DAY, EVERY DAY

This is my favourite as it is vitally important. No matter how much a consumer is paying for an individual product, if it's not clean then it's not attractive to buy. The retail environment out there is ultra-competitive, so if a store is not clean and tidy, then the consumer will simply go somewhere else. Cleanliness underpins all of your VM. You may have the latest technology, the biggest screens, the flashiest lights, or the most on-trend animation, but if your window and shelves are dusty, sticky, grimy or dirty in anyway, then your whole VM is undermined. My golden rules are that we clean at the beginning and end of every day, and then throughout the day constantly. Other than education and product knowledge, re-stocking the shelves and cleaning is the number one task that we all need to commit to when we have down time in-store. It is critical that everyone in the store team is contributing to this too, and that there are no exemptions. It is a team game with sales to be lost if someone is excusing themselves from cleaning. Keeping your store and products clean can be made harder if your store has an Open-Door Policy (ie. Your front doors are left wide open during trading hours). This is always a great best practice as it invites customers into your space (take that as an extra free tip!) but it will encourage dust to accumulate quicker so be aware of this in regard to directing your team to clean. ■

**Paul Farina is a trainer for ARA Retail Institute and runs Fresh Eye Solutions as a leading retail business coach. To challenge, motivate and innovate your business visit [www.fresheyesolutions.com](http://www.fresheyesolutions.com) or contact Paul on 03 9972 5287.**

**“In a majority of retail environments, we want to increase the value proposition of our products using VM. One of the most effective ways to do this is to use Negative Space.”**





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# Refreshing your Digital Shopfront

By **Shaun Bajada** – ARA

## Treat your e-commerce website as a key component of your retail business.

**W**hen was the last time you looked at your website? Is it looking tired and neglected? Does it need a refresh to give it that gleaming spark that it once had?

The new year is here and it's the perfect time for renewal; to take stock, refresh and rid your business of outdated e-commerce practices that are no longer viable or useful. Rejuvenating your website is something that will take some planning, but it is critical to maintain brand awareness, gain new customers and retain market share. The start of the new year is the perfect time for you to clear out the cobwebs and revive your online shop front. Sometimes trivial tasks such as updating the static parts of your site can slowly but surely get away from us. However, it is important that each part of your website is consistently maintained as your digital shopfront is a crucial part of your overarching retail business.

### HOUSEKEEPING

Spending some time at the beginning of the year to ensure your security certificate is current and your returns and privacy policies are up to date will save you more time in the long run. Little things like updating your news, events and 'About us' page is vital to maintaining an up-to-date and transparent relationship with your consumers. Websites with incorrect contact details, faulty links and static pages lose traction and deter customers. The simple things not working on your website are often the most annoying to your users, as they expect a frictionless browsing and purchasing experience.

### FUNCTIONALITY

Consumers are often impatient and won't hang around your site very long if they can't find their way around. Ensuring basic functionality on your site keeps customers engaged and on your network for longer. Every so often, it's great to step outside the box and view your site from a consumers' perspective. How easy or difficult it is to find products? Having a consistent navigation system, in the same location on every page, allows customers to find products and information effectively and efficiently. But remember, too many navigation buttons can cause confusion. Avoid irrelevant links that are unnecessary and time consuming. A great way to get feedback on your website navigation and functionality is to survey a small sample of your customers.

### INTEGRATION

With new technologies entering the retail space, it's critical that your website is in tune with the latest technologies and social media. Making sure your website is responsive on tablets and smartphones is a must. Websites that are a few years old might need a fresh layout to ensure accessibility on each technological platform. Integrating key social widgets into your site allows consumers to share and easily navigate from smartphone applications to web pages with a simple button. Maintaining constant visibility and transparency over these channels is imperative in retaining loyal customers. An open, honest relationship with consumers will always add value in every stage of your business. These extra consumer touch-points are important in telling the story of your

business and making your customers feel at ease when navigating through your website.

### CALLS TO ACTION

Call To Actions (CTA's) are an important tool for effective ROI as they clearly tell your customer what you want them to do i.e. register, call, or buy. Every page on your site should have a CTA. A user should never be lead into a dead-end without being guided or promoted towards a desired behaviour through a CTA. When creating a CTA, ensure that your tone is clear and to the point, as simple calls to actions are often the most effective. Ideally CTA's should be highly visible on the page and in the central column, and don't forget - white space is your friend. The more space around a CTA the more attention it gets, as users are drawn to the centre of the white space. Having an alternative colour for your CTA is also an effective way of drawing attention to your message.

### SEO & ANALYTICS

Over time, the keyword terms that customers use to search for an item can change, but not reviewing and updating your SEO strategy can severely reduce the amount of traffic coming to your site. Making a few simple changes to your SEO strategy can have a profound effect in increasing your web traffic. For example, compiling a list of your product keywords and aligning them to your product pages will drive new users onto your website. Additionally, adding that extra bit of descriptive text to images that are searchable by google can boost page performance further.

Many retailers think of their physical and online stores as separate entities, however your ecommerce operation is in truth another shopfront that needs your constant love and attention. You wouldn't leave your bricks-and-mortar store run-down and outdated, so why would you do it to your ecommerce store? Spending time to make these few updates to freshen your online presence will go a long way for your retail success this year and into the future. ■



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	NSW	20 Mar	29 May	09 Aug		
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Guide to Retail Marketing & Customer Loyalty	VIC	08 May	22 Aug			
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## FINANCIALS & PRODUCT BUYING

Financial Fundamentals & Product Performance	VIC	31 May	11 Sep			
	NSW	15 May	25 Sep			
Foundations of Retail Buying	VIC	13 Feb	12 Apr	21 Jun	02 Aug	15 Nov
	NSW	20 Feb	11 Apr	05 Jun	07 Aug	06 Nov
	QLD	02 May	26 Sep			

## RETAIL MERCHANDISING MASTERCLASS

VIC	09 May - 10 May	19 Sep - 20 Sep
NSW	23 Mar - 24 Mar	13 Nov - 14 Nov
QLD	16 May - 17 May	27 Nov - 28 Nov

## CUSTOMER & SALES

Sales & Service Excellence	VIC	27 Mar	04 Jul	02 Oct
	NSW	08 Mar	03 Jul	24 Oct
	QLD	29 Aug		
Managing Dynamics of Challenging Customers	VIC	21 Feb	14 Aug	
	NSW	28 Feb	21 Aug	
	QLD	19 Jul	30 Oct	
Steer Your Success: Retail Leadership	VIC	26 Apr	24 Jul	20 Nov
	NSW	19 Apr	31 Jul	01 Nov
	QLD	30 May		
Manage & Transform Sales Programs	VIC	12 Sep		
	NSW	06 Sep		
Lead & Develop Staff	VIC	27 Jun	27 Nov	
	NSW	14 Jun	28 Nov	
	QLD	11 Jul		



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# Predictive Supply Chains and Intelligent Future Gazing in Retail

By **Chad Gates** – Pronto Software

Integrating new systems to optimise supply chains provide retailers with better business intelligence.



Selling out of a product is usually a great thing, but it also highlights the difficulty of correctly predicting demand, especially for the holiday shopping season. Retail specialists have long battled with the idea of how past performance can feed into a better understanding of what stock, promotions and even staffing are required to meet future needs.

Without using performance metrics and predictive analysis, retailers may be

unable to meet a spike in demand, or be left with unsellable stock if they over-estimated demand.

Taking advantage of integrated business intelligence (BI) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, retailers can use data driven insights to put in place plans to predict and deal with future demand.

Predictive planning is especially important when dealing with perishable goods. An oversupply can leave food rotting

in the warehouse, whereas a lack of future planning can leave the retailer without the stock needed to supply a rise in demand.

For a specialty retailer like Vic's Meat, which employs 170 staff, has in excess of 3,500 retail customers at two locations, and supplies 700 wholesale clients, an understanding of past performance and moving away from paper-based and ad-hoc forms has transformed the business.

In the past, customers would call, fax,



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drop in hand-written notes, or order via email. Because of this manual system, it was very hard for Vic's Meat to gain an understanding of stock levels. Predicting future demand was almost impossible.

Vic's Meat went to market and installed a BI system linked to a brand new online ordering portal. This means all orders are now handled in a consistent manner and customers can order at any time during the day, up until 2am using the device of their choice, and know their order will be picked and dispatched by 8am, in time for the day's business. Customers can also see order history, outstanding invoices and, for specialist customers, order from a bespoke menu.

The new system has improved the business's operational efficiency and order accuracy by removing human error. The system also allows the company to understand its past demand and use data for their predictive analysis in order to define future demand and performance.

Take another example, trade tools retailer, Gasweld, who took great pains to modernise its reporting system when management realised they didn't have the information at hand they needed in an easily digestible format.

The company, established in Newcastle, NSW, in 1978 currently employs around 170 staff at 19 locations. Along with its retail locations, it also enjoys a rapidly growing ecommerce operation. With the aim of predicting future demand and planning for retail stock levels, Gasweld implemented a state of the art business intelligence system capable of managing its 300,000 strong catalogue of Stock Keeping Units (SKUs).

The implementation of the business intelligence system gave the company clear visibility into all aspects of its business. This, in turn, allowed for fast, informed and smarter decision-making for future planning.

In the past, employees had picked stock manually, with no location identification. Introducing a next generation business management system enabled warehouse

location tracking for optimal picking paths and efficient replenishment. The retailer has also increased staff efficiency – whereas in the past it took a new staff member up to six months to become fully productive, new employees are now up and running within two days of coming on board.

For a business like Gasweld, reporting is an important part of being able to understand past sales and plan for demand. With real-time data and reporting, staff can understand what is selling, when it is selling, and what is not selling.

In the past, company reports were run manually, and it took a trained staffer to extract and format the data for the management team. Now the reports are delivered in the right format and scheduled automatically, sitting on the right person's desk, inbox or smartphone.

The new system has made a significant difference, increasing speed in which business decisions can be made and providing better business insights.

They can analyse information from multiple sources, tie data between receivables, inventory and manufacturing, and from there, easily identify new opportunities to further expand the business.

In the retail game, real time stock visibility is a critical element, especially during live promotions where stock may be sitting idle in one store while flying off the shelves at another. Being able to see the velocity of inventory movements in real time, and (even better) being able to redistribute that inventory on demand, can maximise returns and avoid those embarrassing 'post-sale' markdowns. Retailers still running with 'batch mode' Point of Sales systems are sadly missing this opportunity because information may be out of date before they see it.

What's clear from Vic's Meat and Gasweld is that software can provide the insights into the business that allow for streamlined planning and predictive analysis, without which, would certainly impact their competitiveness and ability to capitalise on rapidly growing markets. ■

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**“Introducing a next generation business management system enables warehouse location tracking for optimal picking paths and efficient replenishment.”**

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**Chad Gates is the Managing Director of Pronto Software, an award-winning business management software. Find your moment: [pronto.net](https://pronto.net)**



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# Generation Z: the Powerful Influencers

By **Peter Smith & Carole Duncan** – Experian Australia Pty Ltd

**As the new generation increases their purchasing power, it's crucial for retailers to understand their buying behaviours.**



**U**nderstanding Generation Z is crucial for any forward-thinking business – this generation is the primary customer of tomorrow. It is therefore important to have a customer lifecycle strategy in place to make sure this lucrative market remains engaged with your brand as they get older.

In a few years, they will likely start to become independent and open their own wallets, however right now they are very effectively influencing how their parents spend money. In fact, our recent data is showing that about 19 percent of households have a Generation Z child, and 15 percent of parents will spend more when they bring their Generation Z child shopping with them.

However, it is important to be able to distinguish the nuances within this large segment as these families are not the same. They live in different areas of the country, have different household incomes, and exhibit different attitudes and behaviours

which all have an impact on the type of purchases they will make or influence.

This generational gap in reference is part of recognising what drives Generation Z and therefore their expectations of product and service delivery, innovation, and response timing to the framing of content. The fundamental differences between parents and their young children is in part due to the ubiquitous access to the internet and constant information, with the ability to communicate with anyone, anywhere and anytime. This is compared to the prominent generation classifications of Gen X and Baby Boomers which didn't have access to the internet for a long period of their lives, and when they finally did, it was at dial up speeds much slower than those we are used to now.

Generation Z is at an interesting life stage for marketers. They are old enough to be influencing their families' spending, but young enough to be directly influenced by their environment. They are growing up in a fast-changing, cloud-connected world of social media and pervasive devices, and can be reached by more channels than ever before.

Despite a general perception of Generation Z as the impatient generation, new technologies gaining momentum in the retail sphere are forcing retailers to adapt to the ever-changing needs of these current and future consumers.

To get a sense of Generation Z and how they differ from Gen X and Baby Boomers, we've taken a deeper look into how kids and teens are using different media platforms. We've identified that children under 11 years of age have already grasped

an understanding of how to use these technologies, while children aged 12-18 use these technologies to source content important to them. For example, children under 11 years old use online platforms to watch movies and listen to music, while those ages between 12 and 18 spend their time online searching for celebrity information and reading blog posts.

Generation Z absorbs information and marketing content in a drastically different way to other generation classifications – and it matters. This knowledge is crucial for retailers as they will need to tailor their marketing techniques on different technical platforms for this specific consumer segment.

Last year we saw a rise in smartphone shopping with a growing number of consumers completing their purchases on mobile devices. Having these technologies at hand allows Generation Z to be in absolute control of their spending habits, further increasing their purchasing power and their spending opportunities from anywhere. In the coming years, the most successful retailers will be those that truly understand and cater to the behaviour of Generation Z, how they might evolve in the future – and which channels to use to reach them. ■

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**Peter Smith, Insights Analyst, Experian Australia Pty Ltd & Carole Duncan, Head of Analytics and Consulting (NZ) Experian Australia Pty Ltd. To unlock the power of data and help transform your business to deliver increased value to customers, head to <http://www.experian.com.au/>**



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