Notes: "How to Be a Retailer of the Future"

Retail is changing at such a rapid pace it's hard to imagine what the future may hold. As a retailer, you not only are challenged to offer the products your customers want today, but to do so profitably while providing optimal customer service and staying one step ahead of your competitors — remaining agile enough to address whatever lies ahead. Evolving omnichannel customer preferences and demands have ignited change among retailers, now working to deliver exceptional customer experience regardless of the channel. New strategies, procedures, and tools are being deployed, but retailers still have work to do to reach their business goals. Our session will cover: "Where Retail Is Today, Where Retailers Need To Be, How Retailers Can Get To Where They Need To Be, and the role of technology in accelerating your progress to help you become a "retailer of the future" today."

Where Retail is Today
Over the past few decades, technology has enabled the rise of eCommerce. Although shoppers complete most transactions in brick-and-mortar stores (PwC Survey), customers have grown to expect the same personalized, relevant, convenient, and easy-to-use experiences they encounter online when they shop in-store. Online is more convenient than in-store and retailers have a number of areas to address to improve the in-store experience. What's noteworthy and surprising is the overwhelming majority who prefer online to the store. Consumers find the online experience more personal – likely a result of receiving more personalized offers. While the majority of purchases still take place in a store, as there's no substitute for being able to see, touch and try on an item, today's North American shoppers have become accustomed to researching and purchasing online, only then to receive their parcel on their doorstep or via "click and collect" in store the very next day.

To be successful today, retailers must optimize their businesses across all channels, as well as continually meet and exceed consumer expectations.

Retail businesses continue to face challenges in these areas:
•	Omnichannel: Channel lines are blurring, but most retailers with multiple channels still do not provide a consistent experience across channels.
•	Inventory Visibility and Order Fulfillment: Inventory visibility across all channels, which could help retailers reduce safety stock, shrinkage, and associated costs is lacking in many businesses.
•	Mobility: In many cases, however, retailers are not using mobility to its fullest potential.
•	New and Emerging Payment Technology: The transition to EMV chip card payment technology in the U.S. continues. Most tier 1 retailers have implemented EMV, but many more retailers have not.

Where Retailers Need to Be
In each of these areas, there are goals to aim for that will enable you to fulfill omnichannel profitability.

• Omnichannel: To provide a seamless customer experience across all channels, retailers need to have a single view of the customer — not only their behaviors and preferences online but also in-store and other channels.
• Inventory Visibility and Order Fulfillment: Managing inventory from a single stock pool can mean better rates of order fulfillment, more satisfied customers, and lower carrying costs.
• Mobility: In addition to taking point of sale (POS) functionality anywhere in the store or pop up shops anywhere with Internet, mobility also empowers you to increase your level of customer engagement.
• Payments: Retailers of the future will have migrated to EMV technology, but also will have other measures in place to keep cardholder data and their networks safe.

How Retailers Can Get Where They Need to Be
You may identify more with the "Where Retail is Now" category rather than "Where Retailers Need to Be," or maybe you would categorize yourself as somewhere in between. Regardless of your progress, technology can help take your organization to the next level.

Meeting customer expectations has never been more important. With the rise of eCommerce, the pool of competition has expanded beyond your geographic region to include online and specialty retailers from all over the world. Successful retailers are putting technology in place to create a superior customer experience characterized by personalization, convenience, and ease of use. To do so, they are analyzing their own shopper data and converting it into meaningful moments for shoppers.

As retailers modernize their point of sale (POS) platforms and add new systems for mobility, loyalty and rewards, digital and geomarketing solutions, improved inventory management, and eCommerce, it is not always a priority to ensure that those systems can communicate with each other. While each of these solutions provides detailed shopper information gathered online and in store, disparate systems and siloed data can prevent you from accessing the most valuable insights and, in turn, providing relevant, personalized customer experiences.

• Retail POS System: Imagine your retail POS system as the nerve center of your business. By automating processes such as labor scheduling, promotions, and reporting, you can save time — and money — by using an integrated retail POS system.
• Integrated Platform: Rather than disparate systems, select an enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution that integrates with your brick-and-mortar store and eCommerce systems. You can manage your operations, inventory, payment transactions, other back office applications, and data analytics and reporting tools from one system. Leveraging these tools can help you cut costs. For example, SAP finds ERPs can decrease administrative and operational costs by more than 15%.
• mPOS: Mobile POS solutions let you take POS system functionality anywhere your sales associates need it in the store. Mobile POS is the tool sales associates need to access data through your POS system, enabling them (without leaving the customer's side) to look up out-of-stock items, check on order status, or inform the customer of promotions that would be of particular interest based on their history with your store.
• Wireless Network: A wireless infrastructure enables your mobile devices to communicate with your POS system, as well as providing Wi-Fi to enable customers to connect.
• Payment Technology: Payment solutions enable you to accept various payment types securely. Consider emerging technologies such as near field communication NFC, which enables retailers to accept payments from mobile wallets such as Apple Pay, Samsung Pay, and Android Pay.
• Loyalty Programs: A loyalty program solution, whether integrated or standalone, helps you engage customers with rewards and special offers. Loyalty 360 reports more than half of retailers attribute 20% of their total revenue to their loyalty programs.
• Data Analytics Programs: Data analytics tools help you leverage all the data you are collecting from your POS, mPOS, online sales, loyalty program, customers' mobile devices, and other sources and generate reports in formats that make it easy for you to track metrics, see trends, and gain important insights to help make business decisions that can help

your bottom line. For example, consulting firm Boston Retail Partners report when retailers collect insights from loyalty programs to refine pricing, promotions, and marketing, they see a 4% to 7% increase in profits.

Chances are you're somewhere on the road towards the time when you can be considered a retailer of the future. Although, getting there from here may seem beyond what you can accomplish with in-house resources. Your retail technology provider can be a great asset to your business. As a trusted advisor, your retail technology provider can work with you to develop a plan to deploy technology in a way that suits your business goals, creates minimal disruption to your operations, and suits your budget. Your retail technology provider also can provide advice on the best ways to leverage technology to differentiate your business, improve customer engagement, and operate more efficiently and cost effectively.

In a time of rapid change, to do nothing often means you fall behind. Technology can help you vault ahead of your competitors and achieve a "future" version of your business today. **Why wait?**

For more information about SAP Business One and iVend POS/Retail helping you to run your business at optimal efficiency, please contact Barry Lederman: 818.704.7000, blederman@softengine.com.