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How to Innovate Your Customer Experience Through Omnichannel

TECHBLOCKS WHITEPAPER

The Omnichannel Approach

Let's face it, today's retail market is growing increasingly competitive, especially in Canada where we have seen a retail exodus in the past few years — Target, Mexx and soon Danier Leather to name a few. The battle for consumers' attention, loyalty and wallet continues to rage with new market entrants and global online giants are raising the stakes. This battle is being fueled by the evolution in customer behaviour which has deviated from linear interactions to a very nonlinear engagement. A customer's view of a brand is no longer shaped by product quality or price point — it is now shaped by multiple interactions across various touch points, allowing for the consumer to curate most of their brand experiences — also known as the the omnichannel experience.

Omnichannel is not just another iteration of how retailers interact with their consumers — it's about how they reimagine their engagement so that it rises above siloed behavior, unlocks value across devices and platforms, and delivers a more curated and interactive brand experience. According to research firm, RIS, $45 million is lost in sales for every billion in revenue because of a lack of cross-channel integration. It's clear that efforts to embrace an omnichannel approach are certainly a move in the right direction. However, many businesses struggle to keep up with the pace of change — much less the capabilities of far larger competitors.

But it this doesn't spell doom for companies lagging behind — by looking at internal operations and by starting with small projects and being agile, businesses will set the foundation for success. Through delivering powerful brand experiences across both their physical and digital channels, businesses who decide to move forward with an omnichannel strategy will reap the benefits and those that do not will suffer a loss in revenue, a loss in customer retention and could also suffer the fate of so many companies that chose to sink rather than swim in the digital age.

HOW TO GET STARTED

This whitepaper is aimed at helping you achieve competitive differentiation for your brand by creating omnichannel experiences. We will cover the key components to any omnichannel strategy including how to:

- Transforming Your Internal Culture
- Properly Leveraging Omnichannel with CRM
- Enhancing Your Customer Service with Self-Serve
- Becoming a Mobile-First Company

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Transforming Your Internal Culture

Consumer companies have been taking steps—often baby steps, admittedly, but steps nonetheless—to adapt to the changing business environment and the world of omnichannel itself. There's no single path to omnichannel success, however, and many find themselves struggling to make progress.


OMNICHANNEL STARTS FROM WITHIN:

One of the big reasons for companies' omnichannel challenges is a lack of alignment between the business strategy and the organizational structure needed to bring omnichannel thriving to life. A lack of clear ownership and accountability appear to be the main culprits in this. Without identifying a leader responsible for delivering this key component in the consumer experience journey, companies experience cross-functional confusion, miscommunication and suboptimal strategic alignment.

For omnichannel to succeed, it requires a solid governance structure that crosses all functions and draws upon stakeholders from all areas of the business. Omnichannel is not a front-end endeavour; it requires significant back-end alignment—from metrics and incentives to budgets and more—to deliver on its promise. Furthermore, omnichannel needs to be seen not as a cure-all, but as one aspect of delivering a compelling and seamless brand experience to consumers.

Here are some key components to changing your internal culture:

Omnichannel starts at the top	Omnichannel is everyone's role	Implement Change management
• Executive buy-in • Appoint an omnichannel officer role	• Remove silos • Establish change agents	• Provide proper training based on roles • Commit to a schedule
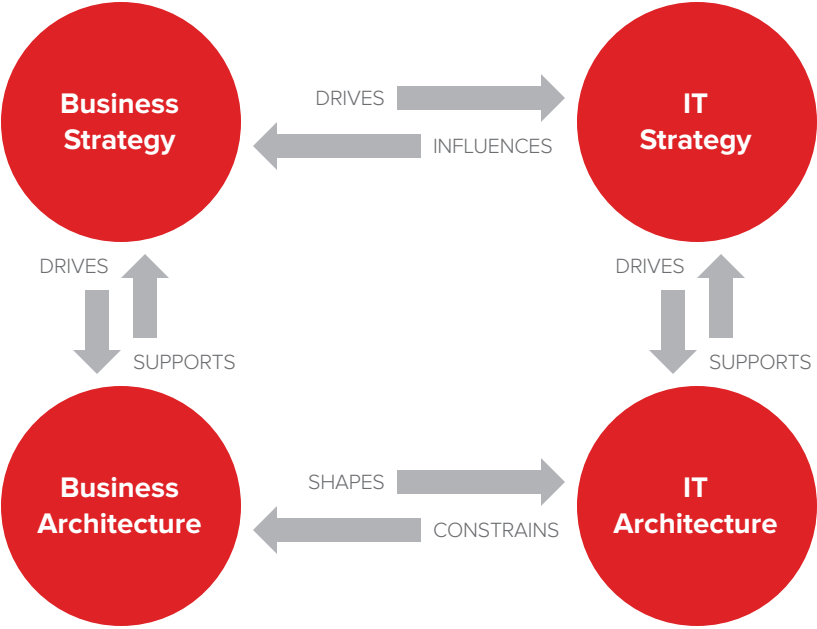
BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN BUSINESS AND IT:

The fact is that even if your business teams and organization structure are aligned, it is unlikely that your will achieve success with your omnichannel strategy unless you can effectively work with your IT team toward a common goal. After all, business and IT exist in a symbiotic relationship whether they like it or not since technology is becoming the major catalyst in creating omnichannel experiences.

One of the biggest challenges affecting the rate of change within organizations is this disconnect between business and IT teams. Business wants to innovate and sees IT as a roadblock because they don't think they are agile enough to deliver a fast go-to-market. IT sees business as overbearing and they feel misunderstood or underappreciated. At the end of the day, both sides want the same thing – mutual respect and a clear end goal with metrics to measure success – they just speak a different language.
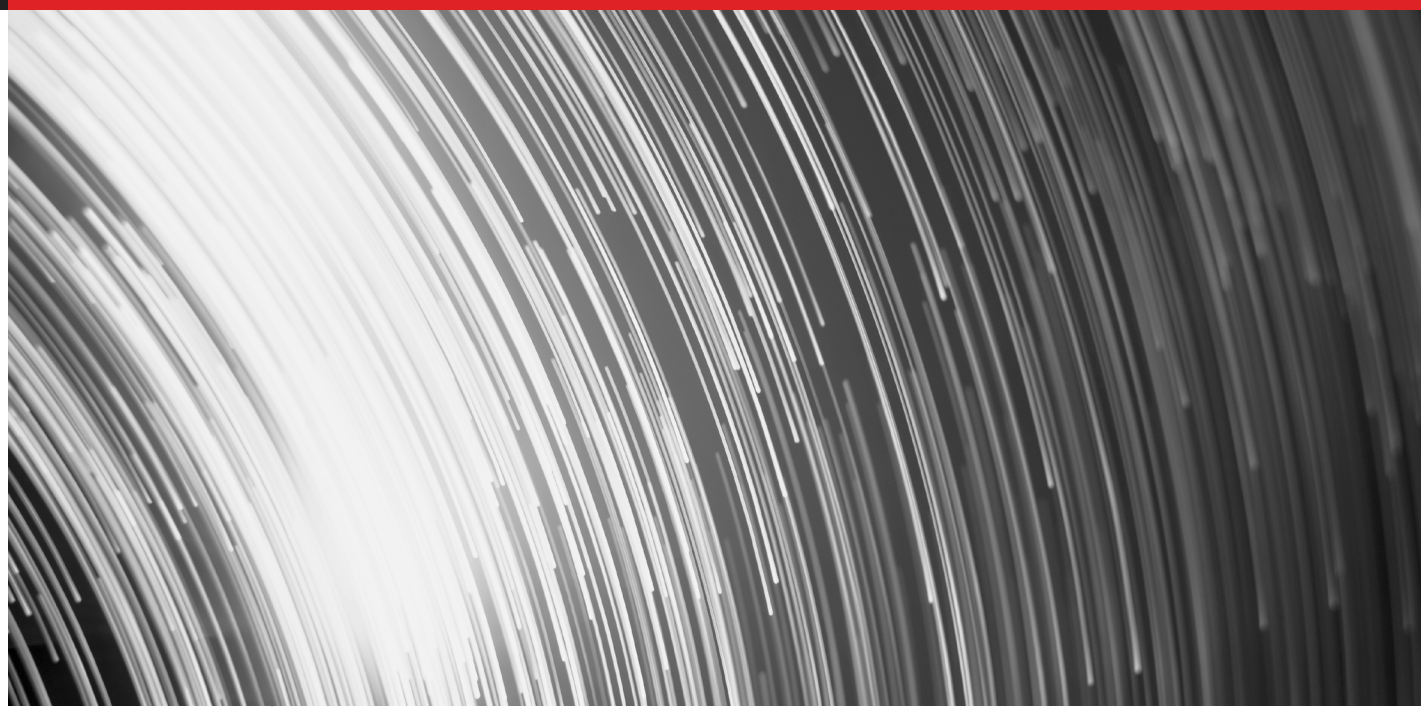
In order to overcome this – both sides must:

Set Common Goals	Be Agile	Maximize Resources
• Define business impact • Outline deliverables and KPIs • Focus on the end-user experience	• Start with minimum viable product • Continuously improve or enhance • Provide autonomy	• Work with existing technology, people and systems • Work within constraints (governance, security)

Properly Leveraging Omnichannel with CRM

In our technology driven world, the role of IT has evolved and business and IT are now converging. The combined pressure for changing customer expectations coupled with increased pressure to update legacy systems to more agile cloud based tools is putting pressure on business that ultimately trickle down to IT. Both sides need to be equally involved in any innovation project in order to speed up go-to-market and meet required KPIs. IT is now becoming the growth catalyst that will help businesses meet rising customer demands and drive loyalty and engagement through things like self-serve, mobile and IoT.

Businesses today need to manage multiple layers of communications channels, both internal and client facing, at the same time. It's not just simply about handling requests and satisfying customers anymore, it's about integrating these various channels to that they "talk" to each other in order to create seamless experiences. By doing so a huge amount of valuable data can be collected and used to improve processes. For example, if a customer has an issue that they have tried to resolve on a self-service portal, when it is the escalated to an in-store or phone rep they will have access to all the information the customer entered on the portal in real-time. The customer won't have to repeat themselves which in turn saves you a lot of resolution time and money.

Properly handling the omnichannel environment requires strong CRM solutions that are cloud based for widespread accessibility, and have the technical framework in place to manage multiple information workflows. These solutions will for example use APIs to handle the different presentation layers, meaning content coming from web, mobile, in-person interactions, chat, and even outside sources. Used properly, a true omnichannel CRM solution means a consistent customer experience.If a client raises an issue via email, the customer service responding agent should have access to salesperson notes, chat transcripts, and other data about the client. It's context and speed that are vital for omnichannel approaches.

A great example of how a CRM solution can be leveraged to create amazing omnichannel experiences can be seen in the work we did for a national food distribution company. This specific client encountered several roadblocks when they were attempting to manage their omnichannel strategy before reaching out to TechBlocks. Specifically, their data was very siloed making it difficult to get a clear picture of company performance. Our consultants implemented the Microsoft Dynamics CRM and Power BI solutions which then enabled them to gain a 360 degree of their customers buying behaviour and engagement levels. This solution fully leverages the Cloud, so their field reps and internal staff can all dynamically enter and view CRM information in real-time. It's a solution requiring minimal administration and upkeep, instead allowing the client to focus on sales and finding connections between previously unconnected data sets.

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Enhancing Your Customer Service with Self-Serve

A huge component of creating positive customer experiences lies in how business provide service – in fact, 82% of consumers have stopped doing business with a company because of a bad customer service experience (Zendesk). Today's technology driven consumer has grown increasingly impatient and they demand highly personalized experiences at the right time, through their preferred channel – mobile. 90% of consumers now expect a brand to offer a self-serve customer support portal, and 60% of these consumers have a more favourable view of the brand if their self-serve offering is mobile responsive (Parature).

Forward thinking companies have responded to these new demands and have started offering self-service portal solutions as an integral part of their omnichannel strategy. These portals provide an open line for communication that the customer can use on their own terms, boosting satisfaction and retention. Take for instance one of our clients – Koodo Mobile, one of the most successful low cost mobile providers in Canada. In 2011, we partnered with their online marketing team to develop a mobile responsive self-service portal, based on the DNN Evoq Content CMS platform, where clients could easily resolve their service and billing issues and view FAQ's. Through this portal Koodo saw a dramatic 50% increase in their customer satisfaction rating.

Self-serve portals lead to better customer experience because they provide users with benefits including:

Convenient 24/7 assistance from any location	They make it easy to find answers quickly and with minimal disruption	They leverage the preferred channels of communication (online, mobile)	Integration with social media platforms for increased engagement

Of course it's important to remember that customers don't think in terms of "channels", they think in terms of finding answers to their problems in the most efficient way possible sometimes causing the lines between channels to blur. That's why it's crucial to ensure that the data gathered from your self-serve channels does not exist purely in silos and is properly integrated with email, phone, SMS/text, social or web in your CRM system in order to maximize insights and provide a truly seamless omnichannel experience for your customers.

ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL SELF-SERVE PORTAL:

Peer-to-peer capabilities	**A good search-engine**
• Expand your ability to answer questions efficiently • Grow your knowledge database • Humanize the experience	• Easy and fast access to information • Index information across blogs, files, discussions, support documentation & web

Audience Segmentation	**Exclusive information & updates**
• Cater to customers at different stages of the lifecycle • Provide the most relevant information to your customers • Segment by product line, service, geography	• Give users a reason to engage with your portal on a regular basis • Make it an integral part of your online marketing strategy

Becoming a Mobile-First Company

Just a few years ago, mobile users accessed information on their mobile devices using a browser, and it was often painful. Many websites were – and still are – difficult to navigate on a smaller screen which can be quite frustrating. So frustrating, in fact, that it's estimated that 40% of users will move on to another site if they feel the one they are on isn't mobile friendly. Bottom line is, if you're not making your mobile users a priority – you're losing valuable business.

In October of 2015, Google's search technology chief, Amit Singhal announced that mobile searches now top desktop ones. As the time we spend on the web increasingly shifts away from desktops and laptops toward mobile devices, the need has grown for businesses to consider adopting a mobile-first web strategy.

TechBlocks recently engaged with the largest job search site in Canada to revamp its web presence and develop a smooth mobile-first platform. The client featured an outdated mobile web experience, that wasn't adjusted to the sheer numbers of mobile users who search for jobs on their devices. TechBlocks implemented a complete overhaul of the client's platform for both iOS and Android, with mobile-responsive content and an interface better suited to mobile's unique mode of operation. As a result, the company saw a 30% increase in traffic on mobile platforms and a 20% increase in job applications. They also saw a corresponding 25% drop in support ticket requests due to the improved functionality.

40%
OF USERS WILL MOVE ON TO ANOTHER SITE IF THEY FEEL THE ONE THEY ARE ON ISN'T MOBILE FRIENDLY

A mobile-first web strategy entails a company-wide shift toward prioritizing mobile friendly websites and native/web applications that cater to the modern consumers interactions and purchasing behaviour. From a web development point of view designers will start by creating the mobile site first as the baseline for the larger form factor versions (tablet, desktop). The need for such a strategy is growing, with ComScore stating that 11.3% of web users are mobile only. Companies need to look at their current site design philosophy and pick a strategy that allows them to best leverage the rise of mobile users.

11.3%
OF WEB USERS ARE MOBILE ONLY

Being mobile-first is an important component is achieving omnichannel success. It's important that your mobile components, web or native apps, seamlessly integrate with your other channels in order to provide a consistent brand experience and to make sense of the customer journey at every touch point.

SOME BENEFITS OF THE MOBILE-FIRST APPROACH:

Improved User Experience:
With a mobile first site, menus are simplified and content is trimmed down – overall the complexities of a mobile optimized desktop site are left behind for a more streamlined version for small screens.

Enhanced Customer Personalization:
If you think about all the data that can be collected from mobile devices (geo-location) in comparison to desktop you will realize that there is a whole world of opportunity when it comes to real-time targeted marketing.

Clear Site Navigation:
In a smaller environment the user simply doesn't have the real estate to get muddled with menu items and drop-down navigation. Drop-downs menus and complex animations are removed leaving a cleaner and easier to use site.

Solves Problems Quickly:
Mobile-first helps to breakdown and solve issues such a site navigation, content hierarchy, ease-of-use and critical user functions – that mat arrive when developing a desktop site first.

e-wallets:
Provide seamless and fast payment options to enhance the in-store checkout experience. Enhance with targeted content, social reviews and real-time offers.

Conclusion

When we look at all the various ways to meet evolving customer demands, it's important to remember to have an agile approach to digital transformation. Start with enhancing what you already have in place, analyze and present the data and keep building out. Also remember to create a culture of continuous innovation and change that aligns across all of your business divisions — digital transformation is only as successful as the environment it's fostered in.

There is no one size solution fits all for businesses and each industry faces their own unique challenges. That's why it's important to work with an IT consulting firm who will work to understand your goals and objectives, align them across your business, conduct an audit of your current systems/business processes, define requirements and KPIs and then help you enhance your assets (people, technology and systems) to help you bring your customer experience vision to life.

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