Guide

How to ensure efficient operation and great customer experiences across all sales channels

5 essential success factors

Get a quick overview of what you specifically should pay attention to when you establish the technological foundation for your retail chain. If you take these five factors into account, you'll be stronger, create cohesion and meet new trends in an evolving market.

Consumers expect that they can shop anytime and anywhere. The fusion of retail's online universe with bricks-and-mortar is reality. It is hard to predict the future and when talking about omnichannel and retail development there are no correct answers.

Instead of looking for answers, it makes better sense to ask the good questions. Questions that identify limitations and possibilities. Questions, that help you get a clarification of what is needed within your specific chain of stores and your customers. Questions, that you can use to start an internal dialogue and together with colleagues create better understanding of roles and departments. Or questions you can use in a dialogue with a future collaboration partner.

We have listed 5 factors, you need to pay attention to – including questions that will help you throughout the process. You can use the questions when you are in a dialogue with a potential collaboration partner or as a tool for internal discussions. Either way, the answers to the questions will give you a direction when looking at your prerequisites for success regarding sales and service online and in the store.

#1 Success factor

Your prices, campaigns and discounts are the same everywhere

There must be complete integration between all the systems you use so that the prices within your ERP system are the same as in the webshop and store. If prices, campaigns and discounts are manually updated on every channel it's only a matter of time before you'll see mistakes that will compromise customer loyalty, employee satisfaction and the bottom line.

How do you ensure that you only need to maintain data in one location? Is there a reliable procedure that ensures that when data is entered centrally it's send out to all stores and units?

• How great is the faith in data through all systems – is there places within the process (e.g. in each individual store) where manual updates are necessary?

• How valid are data when customers in the store or online ask for prices and discounts etc. – are data accessible in real time or does updates run in certain time intervals?

#2 Success factor

Sale is always possible – also when all connections break

The technological possibilities and customer expectations to cohesion across all sales channels means that you are vulnerable when the system connections break. There are ways to safeguard yourself against breakdown and ensure that it's still possible to sell when you're offline. Be sure that data related to transactions
during exceptional circumstances are updated as soon as the system is running on full capacity again.

• Do you know which breakdown scenarios that make you most vulnerable? Many features and functions are not accessible during a breakdown but do you know which are the most critical and how you make reservations according to them?

• How do the company's employees handle a breakdown when they are in the middle of a customer transaction? What are your offline procedures and are these procedures communicated clearly to the store staff so that a breakdown will give minimum impact on sales and customer experience?

• How do you ensure maximum uptime? How strong is your infrastructure, do you have reliable network connections and to what extend do you use redundant lines?

• What is your procedure to get online and on full capacity as fast as possible? Do you have service agreements that provide the support you need? And do you have clear descriptions of who you should contact and what your requirements are?

#3 Success factor

Your POS gives you access to relevant information

Technology is an important tool to create dialogue with customers. When employees use the POS, it must be fast and simple to retrieve the information the customer asks for. It will produce greater quality and efficiency into the customer transaction and the customer will get a personalized customer experience with relevant information about discounts and special offers or instructions on laundry, allergies etc.

- The exact information you need to provide to the employee within the POS is individual – Did you ensure that your POS is able to interact with all platforms that provide the information you need?

- Information is only helping the employee if it's correct and clear which means that you should be able to predefine views – how do you limit access to information within the POS so that it makes sense and is simple and relevant?

- Access to information is one aspect, but how you display it is another and just as important – how intuitive is the interface and are you able to build flows that will help employees to better and more efficient customer transactions?
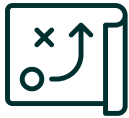
#4 Success factor

Your customers can shop anytime and anywhere

The fusion between online and offline stores is reality and if you add a new sales channels it should seamlessly interact with your other channels.
Customers
expect a unified experience across channels. At the same time your system should be geared for interacting with 3rd party software and units, for example if you want to use people recognition and situational offers.

- How efficient do you collect and use data across units and channels? How strong are your integrations and are your systems equally capable of retrieving and delivering data to other systems?

- It can quickly become expensive to build integrations – do you already have a partnership with an experienced supplier who works with standard tools that ensures that you pay for what you need?

- We don't know what the future holds but freedom of movement and drive are important parameters for success – what level of openness and possibility of integration to other systems are right for you?

- Exactly because it isn't clear what the future holds, you should ensure solutions that are technological well-founded – to what extend do your business partners follow trends and do they have a customer base that gives them enough challenges and inspiration for innovation?

#5 Success factor

You can scale your system flexibly without interfering with performance

Most likely growth and innovation is part of your plan. You should be able to easily open new stores or expand the capacity of existing stores. If growth or upgrade affect performance negatively you have a new challenge. Therefore, operation stability, data cohesion and efficient roll out are important parameters for success.

- Some solutions are heavier than others and you don't want to put all your money in hardware – how aware are you of the requirements your POS-technology makes on the tills, servers and your communication lines?

How well do you meet changing buying behavior? Do you have a setup where you're able to adjust operation and payment options within the store to meet the needs of customers? Are you able to easily add mobile units and self-service solutions?

- Continuous software updates should never be a burden that makes an impact on daily operation – to what extend can parts instead of the entire POS be updated separately to make roll out depend on your needs without compromise quality and stability?

Consider this carefully

Should you choose an end-to-end solution or should you be the architect?

Omnichannel, unified commerce, connected retail – there are many buzz words. Seamless integrations between POS, ERP, web and other units are a must when you want to offer customers a unified buying experience. The trend is moving towards individual solutions for each retail chain and is tailored to their specific needs.

The advantages of buying an end-to-end solution provides you with everything you need. It is especially a great relief for many to only have one supplier. More than often the supplier knows you and your business very well and you'll always know who to contact when you need support. The other side of the coin is of course that you might get the feeling that you are in the supplier's pocket and the price you pay for letting the supplier take on most of the responsibility is that you'll sacrifice a large share of control and influence.

If you want to keep your freedom to choose your own specialized and maybe more advanced services, you should keep the task of tailoring your own solution inhouse. You should choose your own internal point-of-contact. Instead of the supplier being your go-to-guy, you'll keep the overview – but also put your own money on the line. You'll have a greater commitment but also more flexibility and drive, because you'll build competences and knowledge inhouse.

In this way you can be more agile and it will be simpler and relatively fast to test new ideas as you'll learn more about how the future of retail experiences should be within your chain.

Who is responsible?
The challenge of taking on the responsibility for the total solution is the well-known "who has the overall responsibility" challenge, especially when something doesn't go as planned. Perhaps a scenario you didn't even consider when you developed your detailed partnership agreements and contracts.

The solution lies in the choice of partner. The word partnership is central. It's all about finding the suppliers who'll take on the full responsibility for their own solution but also understand the whole and enter into the role as collaboration partner. They enter into a greater network where communication and collaboration with you and other suppliers is crucial for success.

We deliver innovative software solutions that increase customer loyalty and boost sales figures.

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