



Re-Shaping Retail Integration

Changing retail landscape with Social-Mobile-Analytics-Cloud

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Abstract

Technology is reshaping the retail landscape, with a conscious move towards e-commerce. The new technologies being introduced into stores and an increasing reliance on smartphones and apps, retail is undergoing a massive tech transformation. While the retail industry is still learning to deal with e-commerce; m-commerce is already opening up new avenues. In a hyper connected and mobile age, retailers have to deal with highly informed and demanding consumers who have a whole world of information available to them.

Faced with the growing importance of the online channel, coupled with the rise of mobile devices and social media, it's not surprising that the need to embrace change is uppermost in the minds of retailers. Today it might be a choice, but going forward it will become a must for the retailers to adopt these technologies to satisfy and engage their consumers.

As the shop window has moved online and the point of purchase mobile, it is important for retailers to leverage these new technologies to their advantage and provide an enriching experience to the consumers.

Retail Industry Ecosystem – Socially active and mobile enabled consumers

Social consumers

For consumers today, the activity of buying is not an isolated and individual activity. Gone are the days when a consumer would go to a store and look at the available products. Based on what was available in the store, he would make a decision whether to buy or not. Today, he

Buying is a social experience where 70-80% of the cycle happens even before the consumer walks into the store

is highly informed and spends a considerable amount of time searching, comparing and reading reviews about the products even before they hit the store. Online shopping has made all kinds of information available to the consumer; at the click of a button in the comfort of his home. The process of buying is more of

a social activity where people take inputs on what to buy and where to buy from their friends. For example, if someone is looking to buy a mobile phone, they simply update their status on the social networking site saying 'Looking to buy a phone'. Within a couple of minutes he would start getting reviews, suggestions and links to sites which provides reviews on products and also ratings on the retailers.

It has become imperative for retailers and consumer goods companies to tap into social networks, to better connect with the consumer and use these mediums to influence their buying decisions.

Mobile is the interaction channel of future

Mobile has firmly embedded itself in the way consumers look at their shopping experience. Retailers are waking up to the fact that they need to offer 'anytime anywhere' mobile shopping experiences for their consumers, giving rise to what is now known as mobile commerce or m-commerce. Today almost any consumer walking into a supermarket store or a shopping mall has a mobile device. Courtesy these smart devices when a consumer walks into a store he literally walks in with the competitor's store in his pocket. At any point, the consumer can check the prices, availability and product information using the competitor's applications on their mobile devices. In addition to online presence, retailers now need to have mobile friendly websites to keep consumers engaged in their brand.

This is leading to new aspects which retailers have to look at as part of their strategy. Smartphones give consumers direct access to the world's information on nearly every retail product, which forces retailers to keep their prices competitive and their web presence active. Best-in-class

retailers need to reach consumers across all media channels and touch points, mobile being a key one. The need is to leverage this technology platform to increase more personalized engagement with the consumers.

Analyze to know your consumers

Today selling has become more personalized and consumers expect the

Personalized and contextual relationship with consumer (cross channel) is a critical success factor

retailers to know them. For example, when we fill in our anniversary date, while filling the loyalty form for a retailer, there is an implicit expectation that we will get some offer around that date. This level of direct acting on information is the basic expectation, however

the trick is to combine this with more information about the consumer and provide them a personalized experience. Retailers need to use the

available information in a smart way to tailor customized solutions. There needs to be seamless integration between the stores physical, online and mobile presence. For example, if we know from online wish list of a consumer that he is looking for an auto tool-kit and an expensive female perfume then instead of just sending them a 10% off coupon before their anniversary, retailers should send an offer on the female perfume to the husband and the offer on auto tool-kit to the wife.

Developing such deep insights into the consumer needs and behavior will help bring in smarter experience for the consumer. One of the most critical aspects for retaining consumers is to be responsive and acting on events. The retailers have to be real-time enterprises and should act on events. For example, if a consumer walks into the store and swipes his loyalty card, based on the consumer details we know that the consumer had aborted a shopping cart on the website earlier in the day. If the store associate is alerted with the information of products which were in the shopping cart then he can really change the whole shopping experience of the consumer.

Aligning Enterprise Integration platform to support the changing business models

Convergence of Social, Mobile and Analytics will lead to emergence of single consumer experience across multiple channels.

In this ever changing retail landscape, it is no longer sufficient to make incremental adjustments. The need of the hour is seamless integration of the multiple shopping channels and presenting a unique shopping experience to the connected consumer. To support the changing business models, it is imperative for the

CIOs and CTOs of the organizations to plan and build enterprise platforms to support these from a technology perspective. Traditionally the focus of middleware teams has been around building capabilities of integrations between enterprise applications (A2A) and partners (B2B). However

the new trends in consumer behavior require middleware platforms as well to transform to support the new business process models. The key elements which need to be considered from a Middleware Platform are –

- Event Architecture to support Real Time Enterprise
- Capability to integrate with devices like mobile phone, tablets
- Integration with Social sites to exchange information
- Complex event processing rules engine to provide responsiveness
- Scalable platform to support the growing volumes of events and mobile applications
- Leverage cloud based applications and platforms for cost optimization and faster time to market

integrated Social-Mobile-Analytics-Cloud Platform (iSMAC) for Retailers



Channel Integration Layer

<p>Edge Integration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connectivity Adapters Gateways Protocol Switch 	<p>API Facade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> API Management Policy Enforcement 	<p>Security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentication Authorization Industry Standard Protocol Support
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- API Management Tool
- Web Services
- Gateway
- Cloud Integrator



Enterprise Integration Platform

Business Services		
Get Consumer Profile	Get Offers	Create Gift Registry
Authorize Coupon	Get Wish List Items	Redeem Loyalty Points
Business Utility Services		
Offer Service	Appointment Scheduling	Order Lookup
Return Products	Payment Service	Enterprise Text Service
Platform Services		
Authorization & Authentication	Audit Caching	Logging Event Handling
Routing Services Security	Re-submission	
Exception Handling Reporting	Scheduling	

- BPM
- CEP
- IMDG
- Rule Engine
- ESB
- Messaging

Conclusion – Right leverage of integration technologies will help retailers transform their consumer experiences

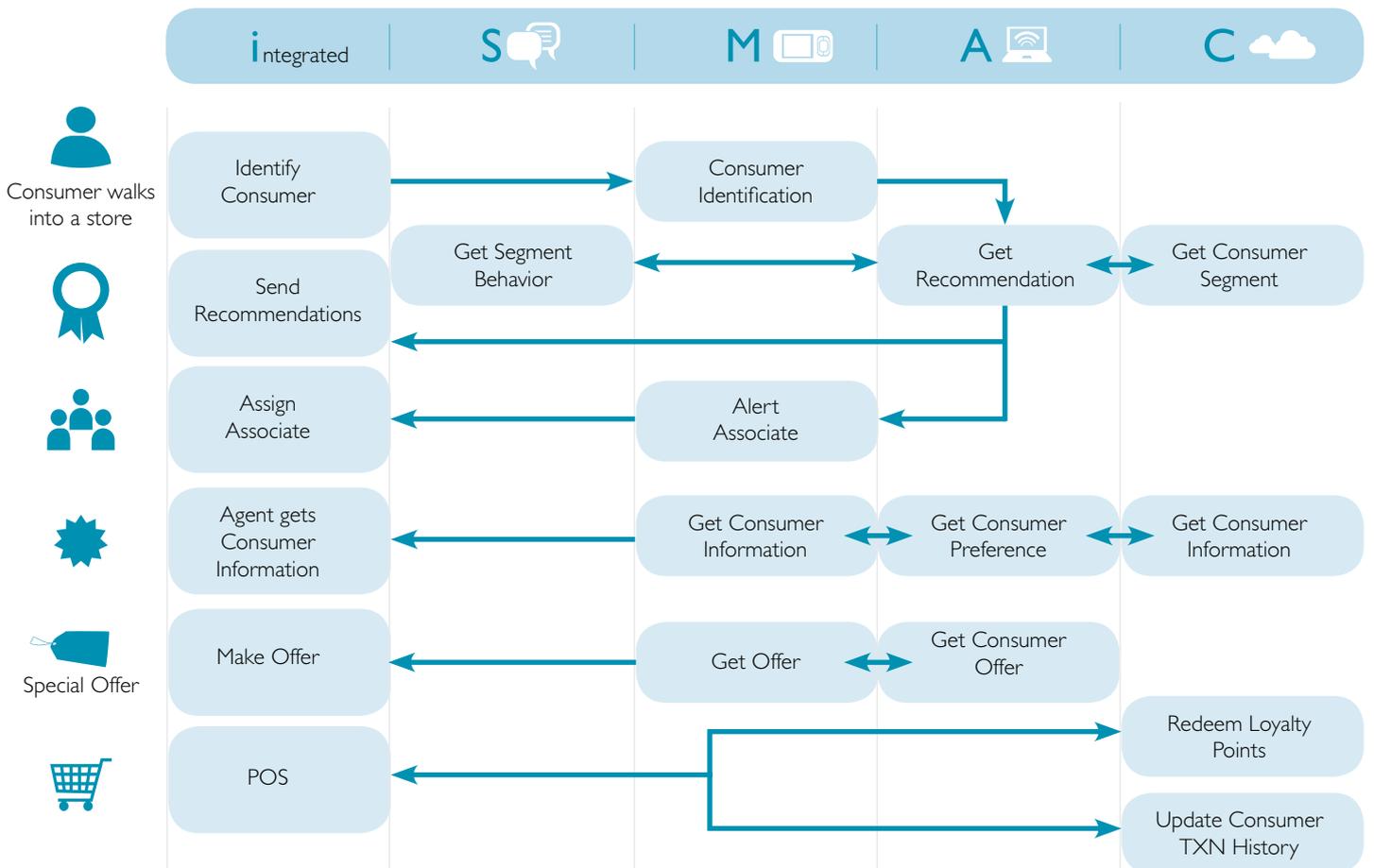
In the dynamic business environment today most retailers are leveraging the current technological trends and responding to them in one way or the other. Given the changing and challenging retail landscape, the critical thing is to leverage these multiple platforms of consumer engagement in a holistic manner and create an overall engaging and enriching experience for the consumer.

Combine the personalization and responsiveness of web channels with In-Store experience

For example, when a consumer walks into a store, using his mobile device and NFC the consumer is identified. Once the consumer is identified the Analysis comes into play, leveraging the recent Events about the consumer.

The consumer experience can be uplifted by sending a relevant product recommendation to the consumer on his mobile while he is in the store. Also to further elevate the experience, the store associate can be alerted, who can in turn get consumer information on his handheld device along with consumer preferences in terms of brand loyalty and buying capacity. This will enable him to have a more meaningful conversation with the consumer. The agent can also leverage an enterprise service to get the personalized offer which can be made to the consumer.

Above is just one example of leveraging these technology channels to influence and close sales. The opportunities are immense and will depend on business models of individual retailers but the base platform required to achieve those remain same.



About the Author

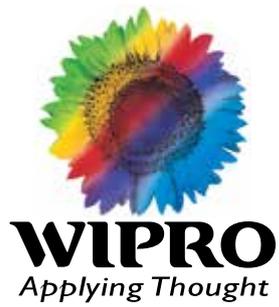


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