

Creating customers' best and most realistic omnichannel future

A bad delivery experience can ruin a customer relationship permanently. So can a truly great delivery experience do the opposite? Sadly, shoppers are demanding and fickle. They aren't won over quite so easily. But a consistently great delivery experience, time and time again... now you're talking.

We are all aware of the damage done by the pandemic to people's lives and livelihoods. In the retail sector, lockdowns around the world left stores and shopping malls empty. Meanwhile, ecommerce boomed as it became the only viable way to shop for many millions of people.

It is still too soon to know if shoppers will ever return to the good old days of in-store shopping. It is likely that some will and some won't. It is also likely that some retailers will benefit and some won't.

The sector is going to have to learn from the success stories of the pandemic era. That will mean investing – literally, in technology, and figuratively in partnerships that will be mutually beneficial. Here's how some of that might play out.

Back to the omnichannel future

It feels like 2015 again – *the future is omnichannel*. But before you zone out (we understand, you have heard **all** the omnichannel sales pitches already) please consider the following. The most successful retailers in the pandemic era have been those with a strong digital offering backed up with a killer logistics operation. They have drawn customers in and consistently offered fantastic levels of delivery service.

The key to a great blended retail experience in the future will be technology. How do we know this? Well, because technology is already the key to a great blended retail experience here in the present.

Learning from what works today will inform what kind of tomorrow we have. That often means being more realistic about our plans and less futuristic about our expectations.

Blended digital experiences for the last mile

Customers want the power to make choices and control their end-to-end experience. That's why the future of retail will be a blended future. But not just between online and offline shopping.

Kelsey Robinson is a partner at McKinsey. Quoted in a recent webinar called [Omnichannel shopping in 2030](#), she said: "For a customer walking into a store in 2030, I think it will feel

really integrated – meaning, affirmations from social media or friends and family who aren't even near me will somehow be integrated into that store.”

She went on to say: “I also think personalized fulfillment is a 2030 concept that might even come earlier: How do I, as Kelsey, want to have my products delivered, and how does a retailer actually know that in advance and get them more quickly to the exact door or location, either through their own channels or through partner channels?”

McKinsey isn't the only big-name consultancy that is highlighting the important link between omnichannel retail and delivery.

Emily Pfeiffer is a senior analyst at Forrester. She has written about how some of the pressures created by the pandemic are going to shape the future: “A year ago, there were a handful of little-known curbside pickup providers. A couple of the largest retailers in the US were testing the practice – but it was still a rarity and usually was managed by a homegrown solution. Today, [every enterprise-level order management system has a solution for it.](#)”

It doesn't matter very much if you do or don't offer curbside pickup right now. Not in the context of this argument, anyway. No, what matters here is that businesses need to be able to respond quickly to changing customer needs.

Omnichannel retail tells us that retailers must be present wherever customers are present and that the shopping experience must be uniformly excellent. But it doesn't stop there.

Being able to [truly personalise the delivery experience](#) will help close the loop and bring delivery services out of the shadows – out of the past in some cases – and make them the hero of retail