Is Mobile POS Right for Your Enterprise?

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A RETAIL PRO WHITEPAPER

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Is Mobile POS Right For Your Enterprise?

Going mobile is a popular trend in retail today. It looks cool when store associates use an iPad Mini to look up inventory or help customers order a product online, and every retailer wants the cool factor in their stores.

However, when we talk to retailers who come to us wanting mobile POS, we have found that many retailers have little conception of what they want to do with their mobile POS *besides* look cool. A mobile POS investment is a high price to pay if all you get is aesthetics, especially for scale companies. You want to be able to leverage it in as many of your retail processes as possible to maximize ROI.

The first thing we always ask retailers is, What do you want to accomplish in your stores?

It is important to think through your end game and then see how mobile can help you accomplish that, rather than starting with "I want mobile" and trying to figure out how to fit what might be a square peg in a round hole. You may even come to the conclusion that mobile is not a good fit for your strategy.

To help you determine whether mobile POS is right for your enterprise, here are four key questions to ask your team.

4 Questions to Consider Before Adopting Mobile POS

STRATEGY

What do I want to accomplish in my retail stores?

SECURITY

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STRATEGY
What Do I Want to Accomplish in My Retail Stores?

Aligning your technology investment with your strategic goals will help you get the most out of mobile POS. Here are four areas we see retailers focusing on, and what to look for in a mobile POS software to help you accomplish each strategy.

I want to improve customer experience

How customers experience your brand plays a big part in determining whether they will shop with you again, so creating a good experience is an important piece to every retail strategy.

This includes how you engage your customers on the sales floor.

Do you greet them and then give them space to wander independently through your store? Then you might choose to set up stations where customers can access your website on iPads to see other items you offer or product availability at other stores.

Retailers with a consultative approach on the sales floor might have comfortable chairs set up so store associates can take a customer aside for a tête-à-tête to learn their needs, and personally walk them through the selection process using the mobile device to display product options.

If your goal is to improve your customer experience strategy via clienteling, you will want a mobile POS that allows you to access your inventory from the same device.

If you choose to let customers engage with the technology independent of your sales associates, it will be critical to limit the modules available for viewing, so make sure the software you choose gives you full control over security settings.

You Need:

- ☑ Customer lookup
- ☑ Inventory lookup
- ☑ Security controls

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I Want to Empower Associates to Close Sales

Certain products – complex or durable goods like electronics, home appliances, furniture, etc. – require careful consideration before making a purchase, so your customer will likely come to the store having researched your products to some extent.

In cases like these, it is helpful to equip your sales associates with more detailed product information than what shoppers can find online. Giving sales associates the ability to look up inventory item details through your mobile POS, for example, can help them close the sale.

For luxury retailers displaying only a small subset of product in stores, being able to help a customer find the item that perfectly suits their needs and preference is vital.

Just as critical is having a place in your mobile POS to store the personal knowledge about their preferences that your associate gains through the interaction, to help guide the sales conversation in future visits.

In addition, using a mobile device as an endless aisle can draw the customer into the sales process, giving them a sense of co-creation over a custom product, and can provide a natural point of engagement for your sales associate.

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If your goal is sales enablement, you will want a mobile POS which will give you flexibility to define your own fields and workflows for customer data capture and which gives sales associates access to customer history and in-depth product details.

You need:

- ☑ Flexible UI
- ☑ Customer lookup
- ☑ Inventory lookup

I Want to Improve the Checkout Process

Your customer's experience at the cash wrap is their final interaction with your brand before they leave the store. If the experience is to any degree less than stellar, the customer will remember that every time they use your product. Much of this is related to training store associates to be generous with their natural warmth and friendliness, but the technology environment can also play a role in the final experience.

For example, everyone hates waiting in long lines. Equipping a sales associate to complete transactions on a mobile POS when the line starts getting long can help relieve the tension building up in your customers as they wait.

Aesthetically speaking, you may want to decrease your footprint at the cash wrap or update your technology to give it a cleaner, more modern look than your old desktop computer may afford. Having a small mobile device connected to a Bluetooth printer for receipts hidden under the counter can go a long way toward improving brand impressions at checkout.

If your goal is to improve the checkout experience, you will need mobile POS with PCI compliant, securely integrated payments with capabilities like Apple Pay, or a sled so you can insert the customer's credit card.

Also consider how you will provide a receipt. Digital receipts or a Bluetooth connection to mobile receipt printers stationed at key locations on the sales floor can help you accomplish this.

You Need:

- ☑ Integrated payments
- ☑ Flexible receipt options

I Want to Make Inventory Management Easier

One area in retail management where retailers have perhaps adapted most quickly to mobile technology is in the back room. Retailers use mobile devices behind the scenes to help make inventory management easier.
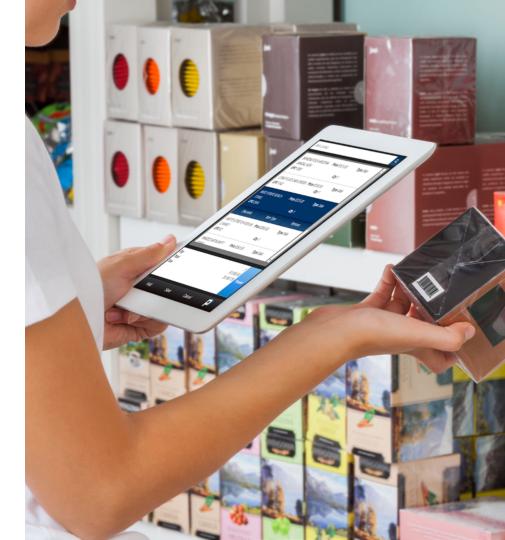
The simple convenience of being able to receive inventory and conduct physical inventory counts without having to carry a pen and clipboard and then manually enter all that data back into your inventory management system is a major time saver.

Other simple capabilities in your retail technology – like the ability to automatically generate a purchase order, making and breaking kits, assigning items to various stores, or managing pricing and markdowns – can help decrease the time you spend on your inventory and replenishment tasks, so you can focus on selling all that inventory.

If your goal is to simplify inventory management, you will need a mobile POS that will allow you to access and work off of your purchasing and receiving documents, and your inventory records.

It should also be connected to your server to make sure inventory counts update across all your devices so your staff is always using current inventory information.

You need:

- ☑ Purchasing
- ☑ Receiving
- ☑ Replenishment
- ☑ Pricing management

SECURITY
How Will I Keep My Mobile Technology secure?

Security is a top priority in retail. Malicious hackers and data and device thieves are targeting retailers so keeping data in your mobile POS safe will bring new security challenges for your IT team. Here are 3 common security concerns you will need to consider.

Keeping Data Secure Over WiFi

Mobile POS means your data will travel to your servers using a wireless connection. If customers are able to access the same wireless network, you risk slowing your system down when there are many customers in the store using your WiFi.

More importantly, it makes you vulnerable to a data breach. Hackers can tap into your wireless network and compromise your customer and retail data.

Having an entirely separate WiFi network for your mobile POS is highly recommended to maintain compliance with PCI security standards.

Setting Permissions for Access to Data in Your POS

One of the greatest benefits of mobile software is the ability to spark shopper interaction with your brand via your website or endless aisle on your mobile POS.

However, handing over the device to give customers a hands-on experience may make some IT directors nervous. The mobility of mobile software also makes it easier for theft to occur.

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Therefore it is critical for retailers to secure access to customer, inventory, and other retail data. The ability to set varying permissions levels for different user roles, and simple features like automatic log off will reduce the risk of data compromise, should your mobile POS walk out the door.

Building Your Long-Term IT Strategy

What you are building in your tech strategy today may be starkly different from where the retail industry will turn in just a few short years. This makes flexibility a key element in your retail software.

Flexibility to Choose and Replace Hardware
Having a software that can operate smoothly on a variety of hardware for different tasks in your strategy can help you get the job done more effectively. In addition, it helps minimize risk of investing in only one type of hardware, as technology continues to evolve.

Flexibility to Retail Globally
If you operate globally, you will also need to consider whether the software you select is available in those geographies, and whether it

will make sense to deploy mobile in every region. Quality of internet infrastructure will play a role in this decision in emerging markets.

Flexibility to Customize Software for Changing Needs
As your enterprise evolves its strategy across various departments and as industry requirements (like EMV) change, customizability in your retail software will allow you to pivot more quickly and adapt.

Will your workflow change? Will the marketing department need to gather particular customer details at the POS for their campaigns? Will the government require a new tax? As you expand into other regions, will you be able to adapt to the language and currency? Will you be able to host your servers in the cloud?

If your software is customizable and gives you open access to APIs, your IT team will be able to handle every change that comes its way without having to completely overhaul the system.

SOLUTIONS
Which Hardware Should I Choose?

Once the priorities of strategy and security are set, you can determine which devices would best enable you to deliver on your mobile strategy. Here are 5 things to consider when choosing your hardware.

- **Security** Business-grade devices tend to be more robust and offer more security to keep your customer and retail data safe

- **Cost** Inexpensive consumer devices minimize hardware costs, and can be quickly and easily replaced as needed without the need to contact an official hardware sales partner

- **Device Connectivity** Your ability to connect to preferred peripherals (AirPrint, Bluetooth printers, etc.) will play a part in determining which device to choose

- **Footprint** Leaner mobile devices on sleek stands can replace clunky legacy computers and minimize cash wrap footprint

- **Aesthetics** For some brands, image is everything, and let's face it – some devices just reflect your brand essence better.

Each of these considerations play an important role in your hardware decision, and you may come to different conclusions about which device to implement on the sales floor or back office, or in different departments, channels, or regions.

Your strategy may even necessitate implementing a combination of tablets, laptops, desktops, and kiosks.

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Item Lookup

Sale Item | Return Item | Order Item | ADV Lookup

Superb Short Sleeve Tee
Qty: 1
ALU: 0016161616165
Disc Amount: 0
Item Type: GENERAL
Price: 58.00

Details | Item Type | Discount | Remove | Qty -1 | Qty +1

Amala Tank
Qty: 1
ALU: 0011231617896
Disc Amount: 0
Item Type: GENERAL
Price: 58.00

Dance To Yoga Leotard
Qty: 1
ALU: 0011231613256
Disc Amount: 0
Item Type: GENERAL
Price: 88.00

Water: Salty Cross Back Top
Qty: 1
ALU: 1354231617896
Disc Amount: 0
Item Type: GENERAL
Price: 54.00

Customer Lookup

New | Details | Remove

Customer Name: Sasha Lione
Phone: 916-605-7200
Postal Code: 95630
Store Credit: $59.00

Order Details | Transaction Details

Cashier: Jackie
Price Level: VIP
Tax Area: 0
Sub Total: $258.00
Global Disc: 0
Total Tax: $19.35
Fees: $0
Shipping: $0.00

$277.35

Tender

Edit | Save | Cancel | Copy | Hold | Lookup | ...

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STAFF
How Will I Get Staff Buy-in for My Mobile Strategy?

One simple but key lesson learned from early adopters of retail mobile strategy is that buy-in from store associates is critical to your strategy's success. If your associates are unsure of how or when to use your mobile software, they won't, and your investment will lay face down under the counter, serving as a paperweight for your shopping bags.

However, there are a few elements which can make the transition to mobile POS easier for your associates and reduce resistance to the change.

Consistent UI Eliminates Need for Additional Software Training

Browser-based POS software can be used on both mobile and stationary devices, which means when you launch that software on your iPad, your associates will experience the same user interface and functionality as they are used to using on the desktop at the cash wrap.

Their existing experience with the software's consistent UI will save you time in training, because you will not have to teach them to use an entirely foreign tool set. They will be able to leverage the same capabilities they already use, but with more flexibility on the sales floor and in the back office.

Familiar Consumer Devices Increase Probability of Daily Use

One benefit of using lighter, consumer iOS or Android devices is that people are used to using these same devices in their lives outside work. Even the more enterprise Windows devices are similar to the computers and laptops they use at home, so it will be a natural transition for your store associates to pick up your mobile POS and look up inventory availability at another store to save a sale, for example.

With these fundamental characteristics in your software and choice of device, you decrease your associates' learning curve and increase the probability of mobile strategy adoption.

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Use Case Training Increases Associate Confidence in When to Use Mobile

Painting a picture for your associates of the various process and workflow scenarios in which they can use the mobile POS will increase their confidence in knowing how and when to use it. This is where your retail strategy needs to be put into concrete layman's terms and broken down into a simple to follow process.

Do Not Rush the Shopper to Check Out

If shoppers are used to browsing your sales floor at their own pace before coming to the cash wrap, they may feel intruded upon or rushed if a sales associate just comes up to ask if they are ready to complete their purchase.

Instead, think through ways to spark an interaction that will help your employees understand and meet the customer's needs.

Learn Your Shopper's Needs

In personal shopping scenarios, store associates can learn your customer's favorite colors, or fit and style preferences. They can access your picture library of inventory within the software or on your website,

and make a sale for an item that is currently out of stock at this location. The thoughtful interaction becomes an opportunity to sell more.

Use Your Resources to Save the Sale

If the item is at a different location, your staff can create a send sale or request a transfer to this store, and complete the transaction on the spot. Doing so will save the sale and your customer will leave with her need satisfied, so you know she will not go to your competitors to fill that need.

Providing simple scenario examples like these will help your associates be prepared to make more use of your mobile POS and ensure that the software is completely integrated into the daily store life and processes.

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Going Mobile

These are just four categories to think through when choosing mobile POS. However, every retailer will have requirements that are unique to their organization and may require more in-depth consideration.

To see whether mobile POS is right for your enterprise, request a free consultation from one of our expert technology partners near you today.

REQUEST MY FREE CONSULTATION

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About Retail Pro

Retail Pro International (RPI) is a global leader in retail management software that is recognized world-wide for rich functionality, multi-national capabilities, and unparalleled flexibility. For 30 years, RPI has innovated retail software solutions to help retailers optimize business operations and have more time to focus on what really matters - cultivating customer engagement and capitalizing on retail's trends. Retail Pro is the chosen software platform for unified commerce strategy by serious retailers everywhere.

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