The Small Retailer's Ultimate Guide to Increasing In-store Sales

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Introduction

"Retailers have long known that small businesses make up the bulk of the industry and exemplify many of its best features," says the National Retail Federation:

- **Small retailers know their customers**
- **Small retailers provide an unprecedented level of personal service**
- **Small retailers care passionately about their businesses, their employees and their local communities**
- **Small businesses create two-thirds of the nation's new jobs**

Unfortunately, small retailers also face some big challenges, especially when it comes to increasing sales in their store. Whether they choose to optimize the checkout experience or start a loyalty program, the question remains as to which areas small businesses should focus on in order to improve their store's bottom line.

This white paper explores five different areas retailers can optimize to increase in-store sales, including compelling statistics, helpful ideas, and real world examples.

Section 1: Reduce Employee Turnover to Maximize Profits

All companies have to cope with employee turnover, whether they're a Fortune 500 corporation or a small mom-and-pop storefront. Employee turnover at SMBs, however, is especially concerning.

This is due, in part, to the fact that employee turnover tends to have a greater impact at companies with fewer employees. The smaller the company, the more impact each employee has, particularly when the employee lost is highly skilled and productive. In fact, according to an Oxford Economics survey, **21% of SMBs** say "shortages of skilled talent have a major future impact on their company."

Surprisingly, SMBs aren't addressing the problem as aggressively as they should be. Studies indicate that **only 50% of SMBs** monitor employee engagement or proactively address employee turnover when it gets high.

Much like employees who work at larger companies, employees of SMBs also value competitive wages, work-life balance, good management, and meaningful work. Unfortunately, only about **40% of SMB employees** (including executives) say their company offers competitive compensation.

"These shortfalls may explain why SMBs are struggling with attrition. Nearly one-fifth say their employee turnover rate is higher than that of their competitors."

"For SMBs to remain competitive," says Ryan Braley (Avitus Group Director of Human Resources and Risk Management), "they have to measure and address employee turnover as much if not more than their similarly sized and larger competitors."

It's imperative that SMBs find out if their employees are happy and engaged, because, odds are, employees who aren't happy won't be personally invested in the company and will typically be less productive. SMB's who don't take the time to evaluate the satisfaction of their workers are at risk of losing them.

So how do you get employees personally invested in your company? Well, how about personally investing your company in *them*?

Here are 6 ways to make it happen:

1. Hire Good Management - Bad managers are one of the main causes of employee turnover. There's even a saying that's becoming quite common in conversations regarding employee retention: "People leave managers, not companies."

In the Inc article, ***5 Reasons Top Employees Leave Their Companies***, the CEO of Gallup made the following statement:

"The single biggest decision you make in your job—bigger than all the rest—is who you name manager. When you name the wrong person manager, nothing fixes that bad decision. Not benefits—nothing."

2. Recognize the Talents and Strengths of Valued Team Members - Employees are more than just a job description. Neglecting to recognize their unique skills, strengths, and achievements is a real motivation killer.

Good leaders will develop close relationships with employees by finding out what their strengths are, and leveraging those talents to bring out the best in their team members and the company.

3. Communicate More - Another common mistake that drives employee turnover is the lack of communication. Managers who hold regular meetings with their team members are almost three times as likely to engage them compared to managers who don't hold regular meetings with their employees.

Remember, too, that employees value communications with their managers that go beyond job details and include discussions about their lives outside of work. According to Inc., research shows that employees who feel that their managers are invested in them as people are much more likely to be engaged.

4. Share Information - Hoarding information may seem like a good idea to managers, but it will lead to employee turnover, especially when it's done repeatedly and intentionally.

Managers who share information with their team members demonstrate vulnerability and cultivate an environment of mutual trust—a leadership game changer.

5. Don't Micro-manage - "A negative atmosphere in the workplace is not only stressful but it's also harmful on the morale, well-being and health of workers," says Dr. LeMesurier, Ph.D, "It can decrease both employee retention as well as clients and customers retention."

One way negative environments are created in the workplace is through managers who micro-manage their employees. Eventually, employees will begin to view their manager as a despot who cares about only one thing—ensuring that the job gets done *his way*. When this happens, companies can expect to see a loss in productivity, as well as an increase in employee exits.

Managers can quell micro-managing behavior by putting the spotlight on their team members and focusing on their development. They can show that they truly value their employees by offering feedback and listening to their input in return. Lastly, managers can let employees express their creativity and give them the opportunity to make decisions on their own.

6. Really Listen to What Employees Have to Say - Managers who fail to listen to their team members foster an environment in which employees don't feel cared for, respected, or valued. Furthermore, leaders who don't invite the opinions of others—especially in the face of change—weaken the bonds of trust and decrease morale.

Managers should evaluate their personal communication style and make changes that will invite open discussions, build relationships of trust, and boost morale.

While you can't entirely avoid employee turnover, following the six guidelines above will help you increase retention and avoid costs resulting from hiring expenses, training labor, lost sales, and productivity.

Section 2: Increase Your Store’s Curb Appeal to Drive Foot Traffic

Foot traffic is one of the most important elements in building a successful brick-and-mortar store. More traffic translates into more opportunities for customer engagement and sales, which can lead to higher revenues.

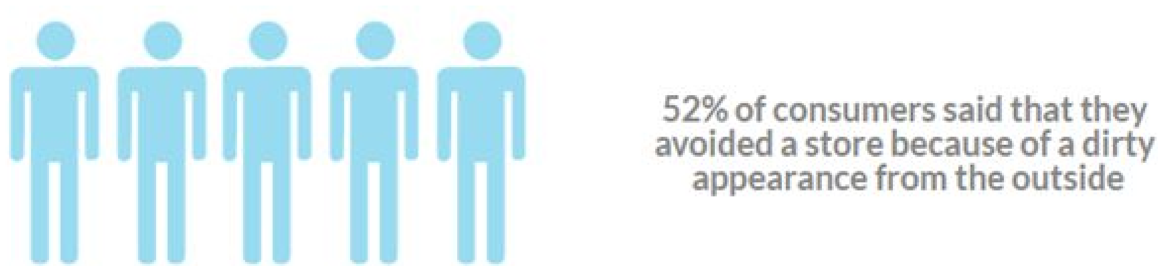
One of the things you can do to increase store traffic is to improve your establishment's curb appeal.

According to Matworks, **95% of consumers** surveyed said that a store's external appearance influences their decisions about where to shop. Based on these findings, your store's curb appeal can be a make or break factor in attracting consumers to your establishment and drastically impacting your company's bottom line.

One business owner who recognizes this fact runs one of the most successful restaurants in California. This savvy retail owner spends almost nothing on ads while shelling out loads of money on the landscaping around the restaurant.

Plants bloom throughout much of the year in nearly every spare patch of ground. That's because the restaurant's owner knows that the profusion of flowers gracing their establishment will attract the eyes of customers and perpetually advertise their location in town.

Of course, if the curb appeal ends promptly at the sidewalk, due to dusty windows and peeling paint, you've still got some maintenance to do.



Not sure where to start? Look at your store from the outside and evaluate the physical condition of the windows, doors, walls, etc. to identify areas that need to be spruced up. And don't skimp on interior maintenance either.

In order to make a good impression on visitors and potential customers, it's important to keep your store clean and tidy, offering attractive displays, as well as an organized and welcoming environment.

If your store is pretty well maintained inside and out, consider adding some extras curbside. For example, a bike shop might set up some of their bike racks outside their store so customers can park their bikes while they shop. A coffee shop might put out a sign asking passers-by how their day is going and inviting them in for a free warm beverage. Or a surf shop might park a colorful car outside their shop featuring one of their own surfboard car racks. Additionally, they can load the car rack with a popular board they sell in the shop, along with a sign advertising a promotional sale on that board.

When you're trying to get more foot traffic in the door of your retail establishment by improving your curb appeal, the goal is to essentially dangle a carrot in front of potential customers and give them a compelling reason to visit your store.

Keep in mind, too, that while your employees may not technically be part of your curbside, if shoppers can see them, then how associates behave in-store may affect people's decision to walk in.

Untidy or bored-looking sales staff, for example, can be a turnoff to potential customers who are debating whether to shop at your store.

You can prevent this by making sure your staff members are always mindful of how they look and act, even when there aren't any customers inside the store.

Your employees should appear industrious and welcoming at all times, so shoppers passing by will be more likely to come in.

To ensure that your retail store is sending out good vibes and attracting customers, you need to recognize that your store's presentation is essentially a marketing tool that can be used to boost foot traffic and in-store revenues.

You can get the ball rolling by asking yourself the following questions:

- What message is our business presenting to potential customers?
- Are we inadvertently turning potential customers away?
- Is our store's appearance consistent with our target customers' expectations?

Armed with the answers to these revealing questions, you'll know how to move forward with transforming your retail store into a foot traffic magnet.

Section 3: Use Digital Tools to Increase In-Store Traffic

Could your business be among the many that are missing out on new customers by not taking advantage of digital tools?

According to SCORE, small and midsized companies that led in adopting technology **increased annual sales 15% faster** than companies that didn't adopt new technology. Surprisingly, a SAP-sponsored survey revealed that most small businesses are only at the "early stages" of digitally transforming their companies.

Fast Company indicates that **64%** of Bank of America Small Business Owner Survey respondents said they wish they took better advantage of technology innovations to help manage their business.

The great thing is, they can. And so can you! If your small business can identify a genuine need, the technology to fulfill that need most likely exists. But how do you know which digital resources are worth your time and effort?

We've identified several areas of your business that will greatly benefit from digital enhancements and help you build online visibility, as well as drive traffic to your brick-and-mortar location:

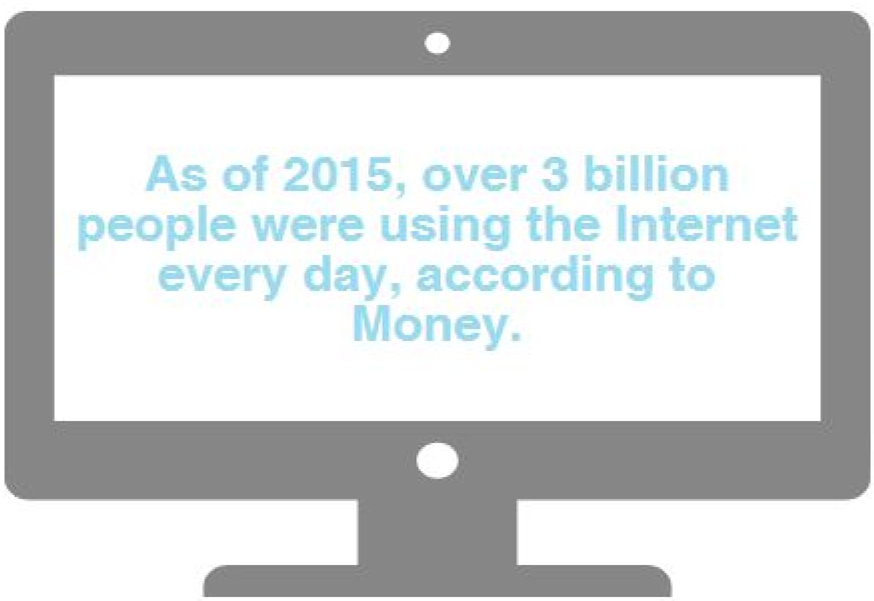
SEO - According to Small Business Trends, **only 17 %** of small business owners are willing to invest in search engine optimization (SEO) in 2017. That's unfortunate because, as the Small Business Digital Trends Report indicates, **SEO is the secret weapon for getting local leads**.

Optimizing your website or blog content for search engines will make it easier for consumers and potential customers to find you, suggests Webrunner.

Be sure to research keywords and set up your website pages correctly for maximum search results. They are an essential part of building your online presence because, Duct Tape Marketing points out, **at least 89% of consumers** use search engines to research products, services, and/or businesses prior to making a purchase decision.

Website - According to Google, **97% of consumers use the web to search for local businesses** – and if the vast majority of your potential customers are online, you should be, too! Having a strong online presence is a crucial component of your marketing strategy, no matter what size your business is or what industry it belongs to.

All businesses, regardless of size, should have a website. It doesn't have to be fancy, but it should include the essential information consumers need to easily contact or locate you. If you don't have a website—even a basic one—you could be losing a lot of potential customers by not investing in a tool that's relatively easy to set up and doesn't cost much.



Having a website helps you connect to Internet users, establish credibility for your brand, and gives you a place to showcase your products and services (it's sort of like an online brochure, but less expensive than printed ones. As an added bonus, websites can easily and frequently be updated so that they're always relevant).

Additionally, adding quality content to your website will help you establish your brand as an expert in your industry, as well as functioning as a marketing tool for attracting new customers and providing value and a sense of community for current customers.

Social Media - "Social media has become a crucial part of digital communications strategies," says DreamGrow. "Social media delivers measurable results in sales, leads, and branding. It also enables to reach a large number of people at a low cost."

Despite the obvious benefits of using social media, Small Business Trends discovered that **85%** of small businesses are hitting some kind of roadblock when attempting to use social media to promote their businesses. That means that only 15% are effectively using social media to market their products.

Of the world's 3 billion + internet users, **over 2 billion of them have active social media account**s, according to Hootsuite. That means if you're not using social media, you're not reaching consumers where they most like to hang out...online.

The truth of the matter is, social media for business is no longer optional! Here's why:

- **Provides valuable customer insights -** Want to gain a wealth of information about your customers? Social media can help you discover who they are, what they like, and how they feel about your brand. Actively engaging in social listening will give you the customer data you need to make smarter business decisions.
- **Increases brand awareness and loyalty -** Having a presence on social media makes it easier for customers to find and connect with you. This, in turn, increases customer retention and brand loyalty.
- **Gives you real-time results when you run targeted ads -** As an inexpensive way to promote your business, social media offers powerful targeting

options to help you reach the right audience based on location, demographics, interests, behaviors and connections. You can also track and measure the performance of your social ads in real time.

- **Helps generate higher converting leads -** A 2015 Sales Best Practices Study by MHI Global discovered that social media is the most effective way to identify key decision makers and new business opportunities. Furthermore, in the State of Social Selling (2015), it was noted that nearly **75% of companies** that engaged in selling on social media reported an **increase in sales in 12 months**.
- **Provides rich customer experiences -** According to Hootsuite, **57% of customers** now use social media for customer service and they expect fast response times **24/7**. Businesses that can deliver are the ones that will win out, enjoying bigger annual financial gains.
- **Increases website traffic and search ranking -** One of the best benefits of social media for business is using it to increase traffic to your website. Additionally, the more social media shares you receive, the higher your search ranking will be!
- **Helps you spy on competitors -** Social media monitoring helps you gather key data about your competitors that will give you the insight you need to make strategic business decisions and stay ahead of the game.
- **Makes it faster and easier to share content -** With the help of social media, distributing content about your brand is as easy as sharing it on your business's social network accounts. Some software companies, like Rain POS, even offer social media integration to make marketing easier for retailers.
- **Builds Relationships -** Social media is a two-way channel where you can enrich customer relationships before, during, and after their shopping journey with your company—something traditional advertising couldn't achieve.

Mobile - "Smartphones are a new front door to the businesses around us," says Lisa Gevelber, vise president of marketing at Google. "We see more and more people turn to their phones prior to making an offline purchase."

That's because Smartphones have effectively become shopping advisers, with consumers using mobile throughout the entire shopping process, whether they're gathering ideas and inspiration, comparing products, or searching for store locations. In fact, according to Advertising Age:

- **50% of consumers** using their smartphones for local searches end up visiting a store within a day, while **18%** of those searches result in a purchase.
- **1 in 4 people** avoid stores if their mobile search can't determine if a product is in stock or not.
- **82% of shoppers** say they consult their phones on purchases they're about to make in a store.

To make sure your business doesn't miss out on in-store traffic driven by mobile, you'll need to do the following 3 things:

1. Update your website to a responsive design - When your website is responsive, it will adapt to fit the screen size of the electronic devices consumers are using.

This means pages will be presented in a viewer-friendly version on cell phones, iPads, etc., ensuring that consumers can see the products you want them to see when conducting mobile shopping searches.

2. Optimize SEO for local search - It's imperative that consumers can easily find you when they perform online searches. Why? As Advertising Age points out, "Consumers are hungrier than ever for local information." Here are the stats to prove it:

- Google searches with “near me” have grown **2.4 times** year-over-year.
- A 2015 Google consumer survey found that **50% of consumers** who conduct a local search on their smartphone visit the store within a day and **18%** of those searches lead to a purchase.

3. Make Sure Your Inventory is Accurate - As mentioned above, Google search data indicates that **1 in 4 people** who avoid stores say it’s because they don’t know if a product is in stock. If consumers know that the inventory items they see on your website are represented accurately, they’ll be more likely to visit your store and make a purchase.

If you don’t already have one, invest in an integrated inventory management system that always keeps your website up to date. You’ll earn the trust of consumers and drive more traffic to your store.

Business Processes - Business processes ensure the smooth operation of any organization. However, if your company has even one bad process, it can affect your overall profitability and hinder your ability to accomplish your goals. If you have an out-of-date inventory management system, for example, you run the risk of losing money from overages and shrinkage.

Inefficient processes can result in frustrated employees, missed deadlines, noncompliance, lost opportunities, and upset customers, all of which can increase costs to the business.

Start evaluating your processes to see what’s holding you back. If you’re spending a lot of time entering data in multiple software systems, upgrade your POS system to one that uses a single database. This way, you’ll only enter data once and everything will automatically sync across your online and offline stores and point of sale simultaneously.

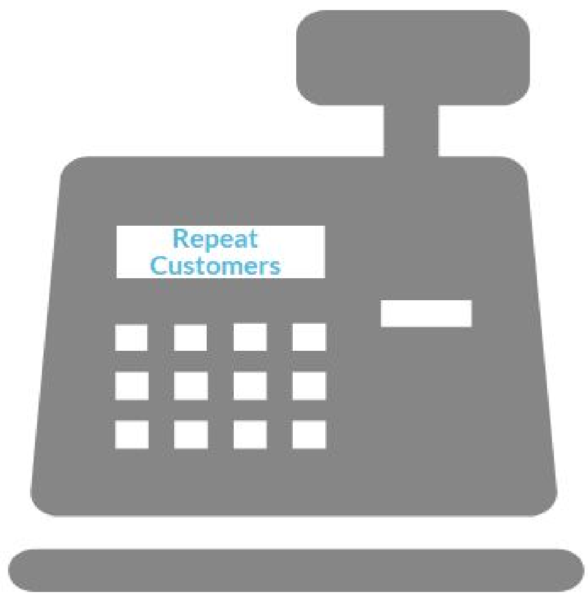
With administrative functions running at peak efficiency, you’ll have more time to focus on growing your business. Once you identify and fix the inefficiencies in your processes, you’ll notice a decrease in monetary losses.

Online marketing is an important part of building brand awareness, connecting with consumers, and driving traffic and revenue to both your online store and your brick and mortar establishment.

As Fast Company points out, “There are few barriers to entry in an age where anyone with wireless can cheaply and quickly access the enabling technologies needed to execute their business model.”

In so doing, you’ll become one of the small businesses that is able to **increase sales 15% faster** than companies that don’t adopt new technology and use digital tools.

Section 4: Focus On Customer Retention



How Focusing on Customer Retention Will Increase Your Sales

According to Forbes, “There’s a misconception in retail that you need to gain new customers all the time when in reality, repeat customers are what any business should aim for.”

That doesn’t mean the task of finding new customers should be dropped from your marketing strategy altogether. But statistics continue to show that repeat customers are more likely to yield increased revenue and long-term success.

Here’s the proof from customer loyalty experts, Fivestars:

- **61%** of SMB’s report that more than half of their revenue comes from repeat customers, rather than new business.
- On average, loyal customers are worth up to **10 times** as much as their first purchase.
- It can cost **5 times** more to acquire new customers than it does to keep current ones.
- **82%** of companies agree that retention is cheaper to execute than acquisition.
- The average repeat customer spends **67%** more in 31-36 months with a business than 0-6 months.
- A **2%** increase in retention has the same effect as decreasing costs by **10%**.

As you can see, repeat customers are the real moneymakers. But to keep them coming back, you must rediscover the value of ongoing customer relationships. “Brand loyalty is no longer something to be won once and relied on forever,” says Zuora. “Today, you have to win your customers repeatedly with every interaction.”

The recipe for customer retention is simple – your business must become relentlessly customer-focused. Here are 5 strategies that will help you take customer retention to a whole new level:

1. Offer seamless online & offline experiences - For today's consumers, the distinctions between online and physical retail, between e-commerce and brick-and-mortar stores, have been merged into one unified view of your brand. It's time you saw it as a single entity too.

As a modern retailer, you need to stop viewing e-commerce as a secondary storefront. Modern consumers like to either try out products in stores and then buy them online or research online first, and then head to stores to make the purchase. It's not important where the customer first connects with you, nor does it matter where the purchase is made.

"What matters for customer retention is a consistent and reliable experience at every touchpoint."

Remember, to convert consumers into loyal fans, you need to stop focusing on single transactions and start concentrating on building long-term relationships with each customer.

2. Use data to get to know your customers - Take advantage of the fact that we live in the age of big data and use your online data to improve in-store practices and vice-versa.

Data will help you understand your customers, including their likes and dislikes, what they want, how they feel about your brand, and what their shopping behavior patterns are, etc., so you can customize your services accordingly.

For example, Birchbox uses rankings and reviews from their website to inform the physical inventory arrangements in their New York store. Similarly, Nordstrom tracks Pinterest social data to determine which products to highlight in its stores. Using data, these retailers are enhancing the customer experience by providing curated choices that are more customized to the consumers wants and needs.

3. Start thinking of your customers as "clients" – Wait. What? Aren't customers and clients the same thing?

Not according to Josh Linkner:

"Customer' relationship implies a short-term, non-professional, transactional relationship. Buy gas or a burger on an out of town road trip, and you'll probably never do business with those establishments again. Here, it is only about maximizing near-term gain for the merchant, often at the expense of the customer. In contrast, think about a financial advisor who has served a client family for generations. Here, the advisor cares about the long-term and serves as the client's advocate. It is more about trust, service and care than making a quick buck."

When a retailer start's to view itself as a product "agent" for each customer, suggests Chron, long-term relationships will flourish. "Even if you're traditionally a transactional business such as a dry cleaner or auto repair shop," says Josh Linkner, "shifting your mindset from customer to client will yield a positive result. Change the language, and the results will follow."

4. Don't make excuses, deliver results - Running a business can get complicated. Economic turmoil can make your industry more competitive, increasing the pressure to up your game, innovate, and find ways to cut costs all at the same time. You also have to rely on suppliers and other people or services in order to deliver for your clients.

With so many outside forces impacting your work, it's easy enough to toss your hands in the air when something goes wrong and explain to your clients that it's not your fault that a shipment didn't arrive on time or a service wasn't completed by the promised date.

But making excuses puts you in a weak position, suggesting that you don't have the capability or the means to deliver on your promises. Besides, your clients have their own problems to deal with without absorbing yours, too. "Don't make your issues your client's issues," says Josh Linkner. "Instead, take personal responsibility for delivering excellence even if things get messy behind the scenes."

"The true mark of a professional is delivering no matter what. They build in contingency into their model, and do whatever it takes to keep commitments."

5. Put in 5% more effort if you want 95% more results – According to Inc, "…satisfaction is the bare minimum of what a customer should get in their experience." Unfortunately, "the bare minimum" is exactly what many companies are offering these days.

Needless to say, that kind of service won't win your company long-term customers. And those are the ones you want. In fact, According to Harvard Business School, increasing customer retention rates by a mere **5%** can increase profits by as much as **95%**.

That extra five percent might be as simple as sending customers a personal handwritten note (okay, so this might cost you a few cents…but it will more than pay for itself several times over in the long run) or offering them an exclusive coupon.

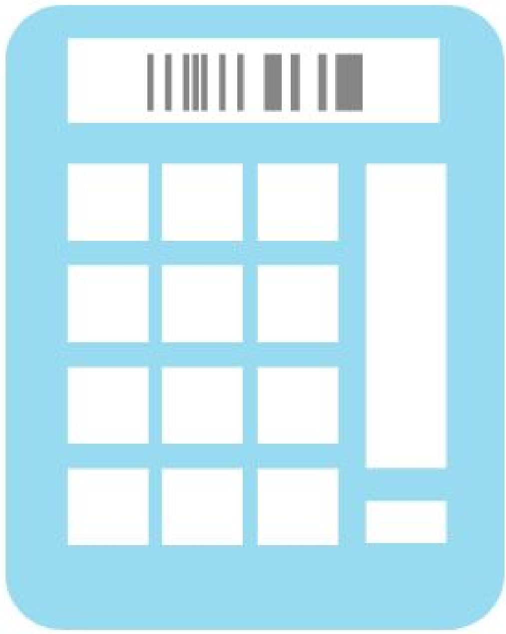
If you commit to providing a little extra something with every customer touch point, you'll transform clients into raving fans. Not only will they do more business with you, for the long run, but they'll reciprocate your thoughtfulness by telling all their friends and family about your brand.

Author, scientist and management consultant, W. Edwards Deming, once said, “Profit in business comes from repeat customers…” And there’s certainly plenty of research to back up his statement.

While acquiring new customers should still be included in your marketing game plan, the reality is that new customers aren’t as profitable as repeat customers.

That’s why it’s so important to evaluate how your business interacts with customers and to implement strategies (like the ones above) that will lure current customers back to your store to purchase from you again and again.

Section 5: Optimize Inventory Management to Increase Profitability



How Optimizing Inventory Management Increases Profitability

The amount of profit your business will achieve depends largely on how well you manage inventory, from the purchasing of inventory and inventory control, to the shipping of goods and post-sales activities such as customer service and returns management.

Inventory management can be your business's competitive advantage and the key to increased profitability. Here are 4 reasons why:

1) **Good inventory management Improves accuracy**

If you're not keeping a watchful eye on your inventory or performing regular stock counts, you're setting yourself up for potential inventory errors and challenges that can lead to a loss in profits.

Proper inventory management helps you determine how much inventory you need to have on hand so you can avoid product shortages and keep just enough inventory without having too much stock sitting around in your storeroom or warehouse.

When you exercise inventory control, you'll have accurate data that tells you whether you can meet customer demands with the inventory on hand.

You can also review the inventory records to identify product trends and make predictions about inventory that might run out faster than usual.

That's why it's imperative that your small business uses a reliable inventory management system to track products, from the day they arrive at your store until the day they are purchased.

Having accurate inventory records will give you the information you need to better plan and strategize. This is critical to good cash flow management and future growth.

2) Good inventory management saves time and increases efficiency

Business owners spend hours and hours trying to decide which products to reorder and which ones to hold off on. This is an important decision that retailers should be concerned with since **70% of shopping decisions** are made in front of the shelf.

Time is money and also needs to be considered. The greater the inventory, the more time retailers and their employees need to spend managing that inventory. With these considerations, how is a retailer to know which items to keep in stock?

Rather than stabbing in the dark at which product to feature and which ones to send to the clearance section, let the numbers tell you. Use a POS that tracks your sales and reports, telling you which items are popular and which ones you can hold off on restocking.

Your POS should alert you when items have low inventory so you can order those items to avoid having them go out of stock. This will ensure that popular items are always on hand, thus preventing you from losing those sales. Additionally, your POS should keep you aware of items with excessive inventory so you can manage those items accordingly.

Having a POS that automatically runs the numbers for you, telling you sales by item, which inventory is low or in excess, and what your inventory value is will not only save you hours upon hours of time spent with a calculator, it will also help you make wise inventory management decisions.

3) **Good inventory management drives in-store traffic**

National retail chains such as Best Buy have learned that the Internet is a powerful force in the quest to draw customers in-store.

The electronics retailer reallocated it's broadcast budget to digital, where they could leverage the benefits of local inventory ads that showcase their products and store information to nearby shoppers searching on Google.

By showing local store inventory online, Best Buy increased their website traffic by **44%** and drove over **1 million** in-store visits, according to Think With Google. While those are impressive results, many smaller retailers might wonder if digital media can really improve their foot traffic when their brand is significantly less visible than large retailers like Best Buy and Target.

According to Techopedia it can:

"The phenomenon of webrooming [the process of researching a product online before going into a brick-and-mortar store to make the purchase]...shows that physical retailers still have a role to play in the future of commerce."

Mounting evidence suggests that despite the rising number of purchases that actually take place online, an even larger percentage of sales is influenced by online product content, ratings and reviews, and more. In fact, a 2015 Deliotte study revealed that "digital influences 64 cents of every 1 dollar spent in-store."

That's good news for small retailers who can leverage ROPO (Research Online, Purchase Offline) to drive traffic and increase their store's revenue. Here's how:

Search Rankings "can fundamentally impact ROPO traffic for your products," says Profitero. "Discoverability is key in clueing shoppers into researching your products, whether they search for product keywords or browse specific categories."

You can use search engines to guide consumers and customers, online or offline, with an attractive, easy-to-navigate website that presents the information your visitors are looking for, is optimized for mobile, and ranks well in the SERPs.

Good **Product Content** will encourage webrooming, allowing consumers to compare your products against those of your competitors. Make sure you post detailed product descriptions, photos, and prices, as well as product availability. Complete and compelling product content will amp up discoverability and drive traffic to your category and product pages.

Ratings & Reviews - When you consider that nearly **70% of consumers** rely on online reviews before making a purchase, you get an idea of the important role they play in the consumer's purchasing experience. That means retailers should be paying attention to what's being said about their brand online and managing their company's reputation in the digital realm:

"A positive reputation is one of the most powerful marketing assets a business has to convince new customers to contact them. The social proof contained within reviews and star ratings helps consumers short cut their research and make decisions faster and with greater confidence than ever before.

The growing quantity of online reviews and review sites, covering more industries and services, provides huge benefits to both consumers and the businesses that fully embrace reputation marketing."

Retailers needn't feel threatened by the growing number of consumers who rely on online research for their shopping needs. In fact, Pew Research Center points out that **64% of Americans** say that all things being equal, they'd prefer to purchase in-store over buying online. Why is that?

Techopedia discovered that consumers engage in webrooming (or ROPO) because it allows them to learn more about products before buying them, helps them make easier returns, comes with no shipping costs, and it supports local businesses. Furthermore, some research studies show that webrooming is a fundamental consumer practice that is going to help support physical retailers for years to come.

Building a quality website that performs well in search results, along with creating good product content, and managing your online reputation will help you leverage ROPO to drive traffic and increase revenue for your store.

4) **Optimizes the Mobile Shopping Experience**

According to Small Biz Daily:

"Today, 64% of Americans and a whopping 80% of online adults now own smartphones. And for some, smartphones have even replaced PCs, as these devices have become the sole way they access the Internet."

...[T]he prevalence of mobile devices has created a sea of change in the way consumers make the majority of their shopping decisions, representing a real opportunity for small businesses."

Advertising Age also shared the following statistics on mobile shopping trends:

- **50% of consumers** using their smartphones for local searches end up visiting a store within a day, while **18%** of those searches result in a purchase.
- **82% of shoppers** say they consult their phones on purchases they're about to make in a store.

With consumers relying on their smartphones to "window shop" for the products they're looking for prior to visiting local stores to make their purchases, the need for an integrated inventory management system that perpetually keeps websites up to date is more important than ever.

Why's that?

When consumers know that the inventory items they see on a brand's website are represented accurately, they'll be more likely to visit their store and make a purchase. This helps build trust and drive more foot traffic.

According to a report by Google Inc:

- More than **two-thirds of smartphone owners** use their devices to purchase products or services weekly.
- **92% of people** who search on a smartphone make an offline or online purchase related to the search within a day.
- **70% of consumers** take an action on their smartphone, such as conduct a search, look at images online or use social media before making an in-store purchase.

These numbers strongly point to the fact that modern day consumers are more inclined to use the Internet to gather information before they make a purchase.

This represents a golden opportunity for SMB's to increase brand visibility and drive foot traffic to their physical locations.

Maintaining an accurate and updated inventory management system will allow customers to "window shop" for the products they want on their mobile devices and encourage them to pay a visit to local business establishments to make their purchases in-store.

Conclusion

A recent Gallup poll asked small business owners to list the biggest challenges they face. Of all economic problems mentioned, **merchants were most concerned with attracting customers and drumming up new business**.

If you're a small business owner, you can relate to these concerns, especially when the Targets and Walmarts of the world seem to be gobbling up a large share of the market.

Unfortunately, retailers aren't investing time and effort in the areas that will yield the most success when it comes to increasing their in-store revenues.

"You have to stay up to date with the times," says Tech.Co. "If you continue to rely on outdated marketing techniques, you could fall way behind competitors that have adopted newer strategies more in keeping with modern retailing."

This white paper covered 5 strategies that can make you an unstoppable force in attracting customers and drumming up business, including:

- **Increasing your store's curb appeal**
- **Reducing employee turnover to maximize profits**
- **Using digital tools to increase foot traffic**
- **Focusing on customer retention**
- **Optimizing inventory management to increase profitability**

If you're not continually examining ways (like the ones outlined above) to capture and retain the attention of customers and encourage them to buy from you over and over, you're missing out on an opportunity to substantially boost sales and enjoy greater profitability for years to come.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