

# Improving the retail CX during tough times

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The retail industry faces the challenge of delivering a consistent experience across all channels, including online and physical storefronts. It is also becoming increasingly critical to delivering tailored offerings that meet the needs and interests of individuals - a blanket approach to marketing is simply no longer sufficient.



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The key to both of these elements is analytics, which in turn relies on 'always on, always available' data and 24/7 uptime. However, this can prove difficult during times such as now, during a lockdown. Without effective data management in place, including backup and recovery, this is an impossible goal.

## The omnichannel experience

With the lines between online and physical stores blurring, it has become imperative for retailers to deliver what has become known as an omnichannel experience. Not only does the look and feel of an online presence need to mimic that of a store, but the entire experience should also be seamless.

Retailers are therefore having to consider gathering and augmenting data from customers regardless of their chosen channel of interaction so that the data can be analysed, and intelligent insights gained.

Subsequently, the intelligence can be used to deliver an optimised experience based on the individual needs and desires of the customer – a tailored customer experience that has become crucial to success in today's highly competitive global marketplace. During times such as Covid-19, a competitive advantage is crucial to ensure that your business remains relevant and revenue streams continue.

## **All about the data**

Data lies at the heart of this ability, which means that it needs to be always-on and always available with as close to zero downtime as possible. The entire appeal of online retail is its availability at any time, so any outages are detrimental. Couple this with the growing need for delivery of goods during this time. As a result, it is now imperative for retailers to understand what data they have, how it can be used, and how it can and should be protected.

This requirement is also being driven from a regulatory standpoint, with the imminent enforcement of the Protection of Personal Information (PoPI) Act legislating how customer data should be handled. In addition, retailers need to comply with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI-DSS) which regulates how customer payment information must be stored and processed.

### **Data protection is key to continuity**

Data may become lost or corrupted for any number of reasons, from innocent problems like a failed hard drive or accidental deletion to more sinister issues like ransomware attacks. Regulations mean that such an instance could result in hefty fines, however protecting data is also critical for business continuity.

When using analytics, artificial intelligence, tailored marketing and shopping experiences, access to data is critical. If for any reason the data cannot be accessed, the insights gained will be negatively affected, which in turn has a detrimental effect on the customer experience. This might mean a loss in competitive advantage, which in retail could be devastating.

While off-the-shelf data management solutions are readily available today, given the critical nature of data for the retailer, it is often beneficial to seek the skills of an experienced data management provider. Managed services are hugely beneficial to retailers in assisting them to deliver the omnichannel experience and make the best use of centralised data and analytical tools in a cohesive, workable solution.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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