

Prominent CX Trends and How to **Prepare Your Business**

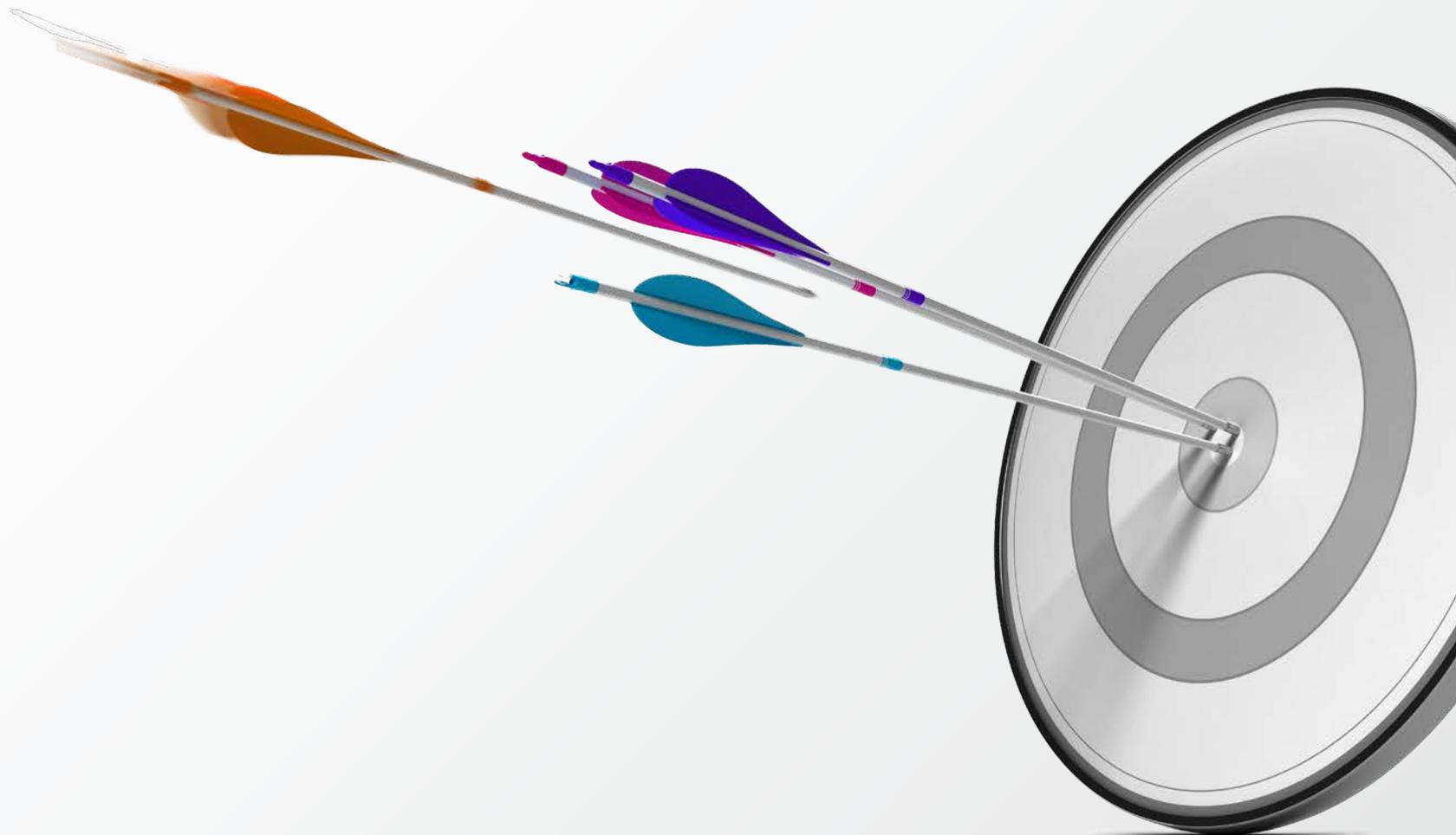


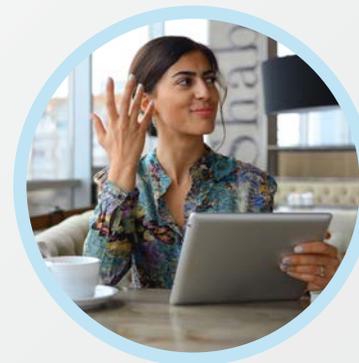
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Shifting and **changing**

With so many trends floating around the retail space, uncovering the ones that will keep you competitive with other businesses should be your mission. Much is shifting and changing in the business world with technology that is continuing to advance rapidly, so it can be tempting to lose sight of the human aspect of the sales equation. However, there are many businesses and retailers who are actually turning to technology for new ways to create a shopping experience made just for the consumer. These businesses know it is imperative to keep the customer experience (CX) in mind, acting with purpose when implementing new strategies.

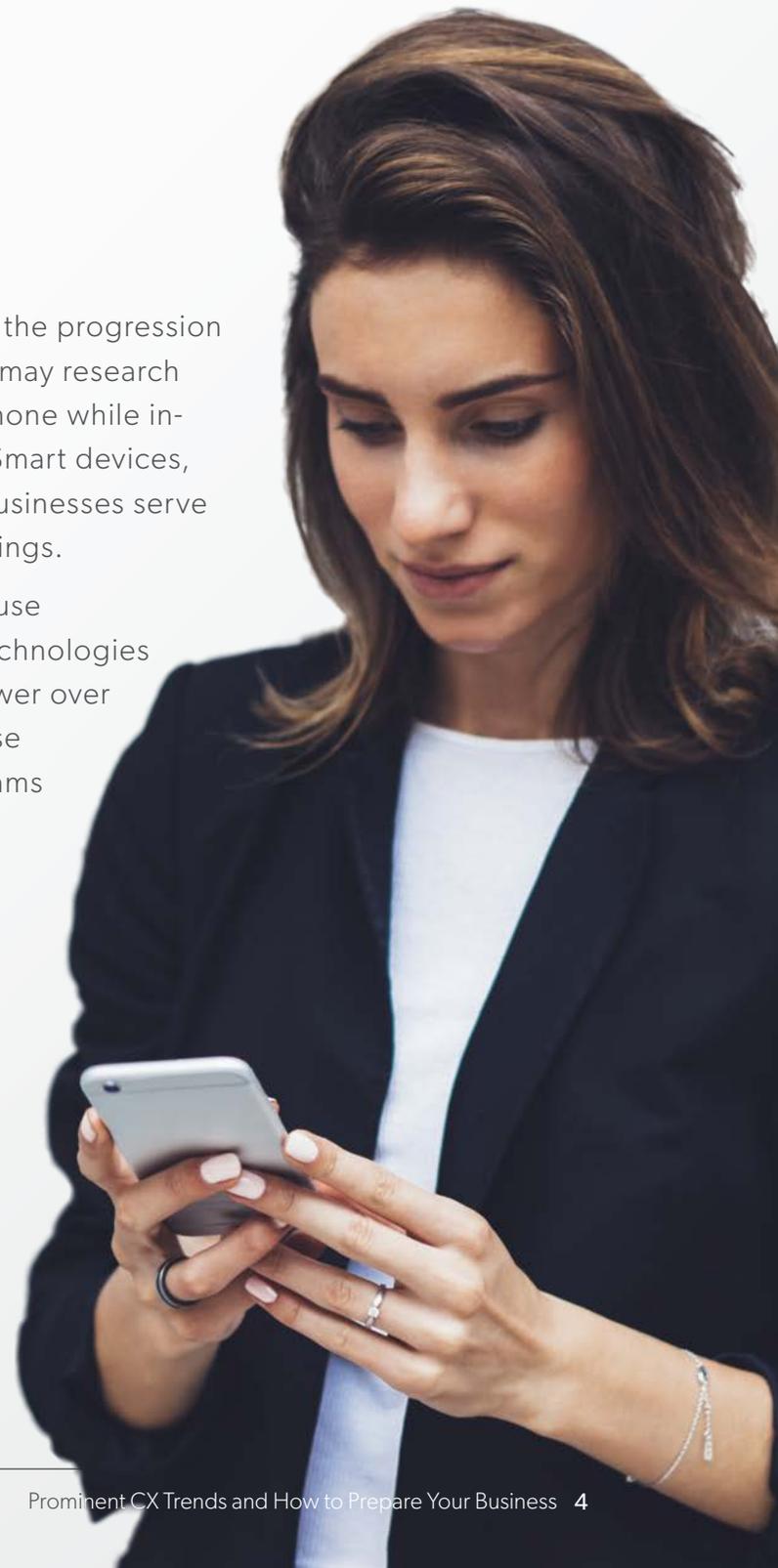
Advanced technology, evolving customer expectations, and personalization are three important trends right now and as they continue to shape how we sell, businesses will need three powerful CX-focused solutions to prepare and be successful. Understanding what motivates consumers and cultivating deeper empathy with them, while creating lasting, positive memories, will keep you on track and up to speed with the CX trends that continue to shape how we sell.



Trend #1 – Advanced technology

Lines between online and in-store experiences are becoming non-existent with the progression of technology, namely because they are happening simultaneously. Customers may research products online and visit the store to make a purchase but then pull out their phone while in-store to conduct further research on said product. Blurred lines at their finest. Smart devices, artificial intelligence, and the internet of things are heavily impacting the way businesses serve customers—as the day-to-day interaction is no longer limited to in-person meetings.

Progressing technology and an undeniable need for instant gratification will cause businesses to suffer if they fail to take action. According to Salesforce, “New technologies have put customers in the driver’s seat of the marketplace—giving them the power over which brands sink or swim in the digital age.” But, that’s the bright side. Because customers now have everything right at their fingertips, sales and marketing teams can foster stronger relationships and create a seamless transition between the digital experience and the in-store experience.



Trend #2 – Evolving expectations

Instant gratification is an expectation for consumers and a constant struggle for businesses. People want to be treated like people and expect quick and responsive service. In a self-centered world, it's no surprise businesses are battling to find common ground between each and every customer. Each of their needs is different and quick to change, making it hard to discern whether or not they are satisfied—especially if businesses are ill-equipped to handle such inconsistency. Businesses must learn to thrive in this chaos to deliver undeniable experiences.

Though this type of catered attention was once a novelty for consumers, it is now an expected standard across all channels. Customers notice which companies are reactive and which are proactive, forcing them to cling to those businesses that deliver consistently and without ask. Brad Rencher, Adobe's EVP and GM of digital experience, claims, "Making experience your business is good for business." And, an Adobe report revealed stats that back up Rencher's claim. According to the report, businesses that have made that commitment have experienced 1.6x higher brand awareness, 1.5x higher employee satisfaction, 1.9x higher average order value, 1.7x higher customer retention, 1.9x return on spend, and 1.6x higher customer satisfaction rates.



BRAND AWARENESS



EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION



AVERAGE ORDER VALUE



CUSTOMER RETENTION



RETURN ON SPEND



CUSTOMER SATISFACTION RATES

Trend #3 – Personalization

“In the old world, you devoted 30% of your time to building a great service and 70% of your time shouting about it. In the new world, that inverts,” stresses Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon. Businesses need to be living and breathing, always growing to meet the needs of the customer—however and whenever those needs arise.

Personalization positively affects the entire sales cycle by focusing on each individual customer with deliberate and targeted approaches. Businesses must develop a more human understanding of the customer’s needs in order to create more strategic and personalized approaches. Senior Managing Director for Accenture, Laura Gurski, summed up this trend: “Know what your role is, know your customer more deeply, and design your channels and ecosystem to deliver on a meaningful brand promise.”

In its State of the Connected Customer report, Salesforce found that 64% of consumers and 80% of business buyers expect companies to respond in real time, and 75% of consumers want this personalized interaction across multiple channels—web, mobile, in-store, and social. The end game is an organization that moves with the customer as opposed to the customer having to move across different platforms to find what they want.

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Solution #1 – The omnichannel approach

Having a clear-cut omnichannel approach allows you to play—and win—on the customer's turf. No matter what device a customer is using, your brand and message should be clear and concise. Your site should be user friendly and display the same on all devices. If the customer decides to visit your store to check out the latest products in person, you should have an interactive, physical display for them to explore and discover. With this type of cross-channel business model and content strategy, you will continually win, regardless of your customer's expectations. Mastering this approach equals winning consistently.



Solution #2 – Proper training

Be fully prepared to exceed the customer's expectation across all platforms of their buying journey by having plenty of properly trained sales advocates. With 63% of shoppers doubting that retailers know them and 53% of millennial shoppers feeling that store associates don't have the tools they need to deliver great CX (SalesForce Connected Shopper Report), it's critical to allocate time specifically to this solution. Always assume there are sales advocates on your team who could use more training, as it is best to tackle the issue before it arises. Training that is complete and fresh will remind customers of your attention to detail as they shop, thus fostering deeper loyalty.



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Solution #3 – Experiential demo days

Whether through pop-up shops to drive sales or an in-store display to drive attention to a new product, demo days are essential. This showcases your careful attention to detail, as customers now see how they can be (and should be) accommodated across all channels. This type of marketing is a growing trend itself, because it allows the customer to physically experience a brand and grow a more meaningful relationship with it. Demo days provide emotionally engaging experiences for the customer and create richer connections between the business and customer.

As customer expectations continue to change and technology continues to advance, businesses will need to revamp their marketing and sales strategies to better suit the consumer's needs and generate more sales. Ideas and business plans that focus on refining the customer shopping experience will not plateau anytime soon. Innovative technology, rising expectations, and personalization will continue to humanize businesses.





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To elevate your business above competitors, regardless of trends that infiltrate the retail space, connect with us. Gain more insight into the lasting benefits of proper training, demo days, and a fluid omnichannel approach, so you can win consistently and remain competitive for years to come.

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