



Tech Forward

Retailers wield technology to drive sales from the pump into stores, streamline the hiring process and introduce new payment methods.

Where technology was once solely invested in to cut costs and reduce shrink, retailers today are wielding it to drive sales and enhance the customer's experience. Whether it's utilizing touchscreen terminals and kiosks to facilitate ordering or automated processes to find the right candidate for a position, technology is much more top-line focused.

Kiosks and SMART Pumps

One consumer technology rapidly being embraced in the convenience retailing channel is kiosks, whether financial services, foodservice or purchasing merchandise.

Some retailers feel the "human element" is imperative to maintain for some transactions, like those that require age verification, but it needs to be reconciled with consumers' need for speed of service. On the other hand, kiosks can help upsell retailers' offers, particularly foodservice, where store associates might not have the time.



(pictured above). Dispensers provide couponing and allow stores to target specific offers while customers are captive at the tanks. Retailers like Maryville, Tenn.-based Calloway Oil and Greenville, S.C.-based The Spinx Co. have experienced compelling success testing the technology, with 74% and more than 60%, respectively.

Hiring Smarter

Hiring the right employees can have a huge impact on retailers' businesses, but it can also be a tricky task. Current methods of collecting resumés and applications are ineffective, time-consuming and can present a legal liability. To help streamline the selection and hiring process, Web-

based automation solutions can provide retailers with "recruitment strategies" by increasing the size of the applicant pool and expanding a company's brand.

With automation, the selection process is timely, offers efficiency, standardization and accessibility, therefore acting as a funnel to help retailers locate the most qualified prospects from a large applicant pool. It can help improve the timeliness of follow-ups, help ensure retailers that there are no "lost" applications and multiple managers can review applications simultaneously.

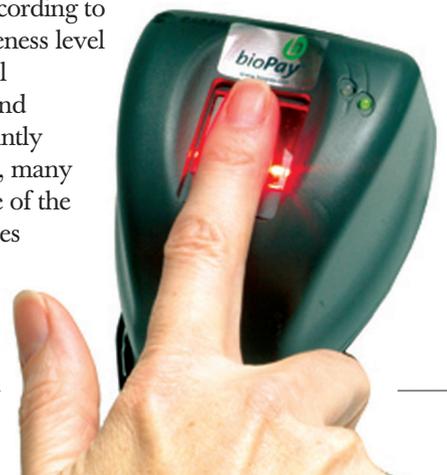
Having the Right 'Touch'

Speed of service will continue to be integral for retailers and with a major shift away from cash payment to credit cards, retailers have to find a way to avoid lofty processing fees. Biometrics is one technology that offers that diversity of payment. Customers no longer need to carry around a checkbook, it's secure because no information is being left behind—no receipts or PINs exchanged—and each transaction carries a flat 15 cent to 30 cent fee. And it's an accessible technology that even smaller retailers are taking advantage of, like four-store Winchester, Va.-based Apple Valley Foods.

RFID Ready?

NCR Corp. sponsored a survey, "How Far, How Fast?" that cites challenges impeding adoption of RFID, but also unveils reasons to believe growth may be on the way. Forty-four percent of manufacturers have developed a timeline, while only 9% of retailers who responded have a timeline. Among those companies that have a timeline for RFID adoption, most respondents (both retailers and manufacturers) report that they have pilot distribution centers up and running.

Although there still may be several challenges on the horizon in the adoption of RFID, the outlook is cautiously positive, according to the survey. The awareness level of RFID among c-level executives, directors and managers has significantly improved. In addition, many respondents are aware of the benefits their companies can expect to see within the first five years of RFID implementation.



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