

# Thought leadership ebooks Vocovo

A series of five ebooks covering key topics in retail communications

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eBook

## Replicating success

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### Every store can be your best store

Today, customers expect excellent in-store experiences. The increased convenience of online shopping and next, or even same-day, delivery has changed consumer perceptions and continues to threaten the high street. In 2023, it will become essential for every store to be a top performing one, and so in order to future proof their operations, retailers need to identify the elements that make a store successful and then take steps to replicate them.

With this in mind, this ebook will offer guidance for retailers to help them not out the right initiatives to create an ecosystem of best performing stores. This will be supported by the recent findings from Vocovo's Retail Disconnect research of 2023 in-store employees and 256 senior retail decision makers with over 100 stores across the UK, North America and Germany.

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### Why physical stores need to do better to achieve success

The pandemic drove millions of shoppers online for the first time.

By the end of 2022, internet sales as a percentage of total retail sales in the UK remained at high:

**27%** up from **19.7%**  
in May 2022 from in February 2020

Shoppers are also lightening the purse strings during the worst cost of living crisis in a generation, with essentials being prioritised when it comes to spending for even the lowest income households in Britain, this has meant making trade-offs in key areas such as food and heating.

With the threat of more consumers making more considered decisions about the channels they're purchasing through, as it's more important than ever for retailers to cut and ensure in-store customers are getting a consistently good experience to prevent them from taking sides to the competition. To make it happen, retail enterprises need to follow four steps to ensure every store can become their best store.

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### 4 steps to make sure your best store is every store

#### 1 Identify what makes the store successful

Retail success depends on boosting operational efficiency to keep operational costs low, without compromising on the customer experience. To achieve this, in-store colleagues must leverage the full capabilities of the technology provided to them. The first course of action to identifying what elements are driving success in a high-performing store is to leverage data and insights from shop floor managers and colleagues.

Alongside the experience of shop floor colleagues, other data could be gained from the smart technology being implemented. This could be connected tablets or smart shelf-edge technology for real-time stock checking or that generates portable voice communication technology or the self-service checkouts currently in place.

It could be, for example, that voice communication technology is used more widely by colleagues. This is then allowing for customer queries to be handled more quickly and creates an improved overall experience for customers. Another key area that should be explored are the key differences in training programmes and their effectiveness. It may be that the best performing store colleagues are benefiting from more hands-on training by those who use the technology most, with in-store technology champions having a positive impact on how the technology is being utilised.

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#### 2 Prioritise the resolution of shop floor challenges

The next step is to address the underlying challenges facing those stores. When surveyed, 4% of retail colleagues felt the head office does not consider their needs and challenges when choosing new smart technology, and nearly one third (33%) of staff believe that senior decision makers don't have an accurate understanding of their challenges. While this may sound negative, there is however clear intent among decision makers to implement more smart solutions in their stores in the next year, with 83% planning to do so.

With this purchasing intent in mind, decision makers need to be cognisant of the main challenges being faced on the shop floor to ensure they're selecting solutions which will help address them.

These challenges include, unsurprisingly:

- a lack of staff **40%**
- and worryingly, abusive customer behaviour **12%**

Enabling better knowledge sharing will allow colleagues to answer queries confidently to support under-pressure staff who may not otherwise know the answer to a specific question from a customer. Empowering staff on a hobby knowledge of all times can also help colleagues feel safer on the shop floor, confident that assistance is only the touch of a button away.

Where colleague numbers are running low, perhaps due to general staff shortages, voice-activated approval and communication technology can improve efficiency of Click & Collect. Dealing with a customer can also allow customers to talk to a colleague without having to pin the man queue. On self-checkouts, it could be that automatic alerts are sent to a colleague when a customer needs assistance. In addition to this, remote intervention could also enable staff to approve age verification requests with a simple voice command.

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#### 3 Identify and overcome the smart technology implementation barriers

Some of the key barriers to smart technology implementation identified by retail decision makers include:

- a lack of staff training **14%**
- lack of staff buy-in due to unwillingness to change **12%**
- low levels of staff buy-in due to staff not understanding the benefits **12%**

Additionally, almost a third (30%) of retail colleagues say they haven't received sufficient training to use technology. This is despite 85% of decision makers saying they are confident it being used to its maximum. With lack of training and resistance to change proving to be common hurdles, decision makers will need to review existing and new training programmes to make sure that any technology implemented is being understood and utilised to its full potential.

To overcome these challenges, shop floor colleagues from the best performing branches could offer valuable insights and training to other stores - sharing their top tips and advice, and allowing the team to identify any challenges or improvements can be made. It could be as simple as that some employees are either overlooking the use of that voice communication technology or not making the best use of it. As mentioned previously, champions can prove helpful when it comes to breaking down barriers to smart technology adoption and ensuring that everyone fully understands the value it brings.

The best store champion candidates are available people that have previously worked closely with the system on the shop floor and know the technology inside-out, using it themselves every day. Alternatively, the most relevant employees are likely to be those not versed in digital technologies, an encouragement from a colleague that they know and trust could be all they need to help make use of a new solution.

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#### 4 Leverage data and insights to inform decision making

According to the survey, almost half (48%) of decision makers only receive their smart technology deployments once a quarter or on fewer occasions which is a great to see. However, of those that do conduct audits, one in four (25%) don't then use those insights to inform decision making. By leveraging this data, decision makers will be able to have clearer insights as to whether the technology that has been implemented is being used effectively to help colleagues on the shop floor, or whether action needs to be taken.

This information should then be compared with the KPIs that the business is measuring against. Device usage, response times and user behaviour in the organisation's tool of choice will allow the business to measure ROI by identifying training needs to get more from installed devices. The data can also be used to set new company-wide benchmarks. The integration of state leader boards can be a way of introducing some friendly competition and encourage the lowest ranked store to climb the standings.

Cautiously, the key benefit of being data driven is that data can be used to help decision makers to make improvements on the shop floor. It could be that the store in question needs to make enhancements to security, with the premises frequently being targeted by shoppers. This could not only prove detrimental financially, in terms of stolen stock, but could negatively impact colleague wellbeing.

Integrating voice communication technology with security cameras may be the best option to ensure that alerts can be sent to teams if any suspicious activity is detected. Voice alerts are instant and hard to ignore, as opposed to messages sent to staff or email that require another device to receive them, so can provide immediate support to employees when required. Once implemented, the impact of the technology then needs to be effectively measured to assess its contribution. If the feedback to store success isn't clear, the shop floor or decision makers to talk openly with colleagues on the shop floor about the challenges they're facing, as investment decisions can then be made based on the feedback.

With voice communication technology having only been implemented in just over a quarter of stores (25%), it's a significant room for greater adoption. Making use of insightful data and the knowledge of store observations can help to reduce change. Colleagues can learn of their own pace and not worry about being too digital. A massive amount of information from a one-day training course.

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### Achieving store success

To summarise, these are the key steps to replicating store success:

1. Identify the factors that make top-performing stores successful and apply these to underperforming stores
2. Speak to colleagues on the shop floor to uncover the challenges that are holding operations back
3. Make use of store challenges to overcome key barriers such as a lack of training and staff buy-in by building knowledge and expertise within teams
4. Continuously leverage key data from technology deployments to inform decision making, which will ultimately ensure that solutions are helping colleagues on the shop floor

Online retail experiences show no sign of slowing in 2023, but with top-performing stores as the blueprint, retailers will be able to rise to new heights in 2023, by leveraging existing new technologies and expertise to bring members and instant experiences to customers when they visit brick-and-mortar stores. By doing so, decision makers can empower their shop floor workers to deliver on improved customer service in-store, and also help to update their capabilities too.

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### About Vocovo

Established in 2016, Vocovo drives transformation in retail communications to maximise operational efficiency and enhance customer experience. For leading global retailers, we're connecting over 100,000 associates in 21 countries through voice, their retail-ready hardware, software, and smart integrations power store teams across Grocery, Home Improvement, and Fashion.

Vocovo is growing fast and is backed by household names in the UK, Europe, Australia, and North America. The company has a list of accolades, from Regional Business of the Year and Innovation awards to 5th place in the Sunday Times Tech 100.

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