**CHECKLIST**

# 5 Retail Technology Infrastructure Must-Haves

Is Your Point-of-Sale Platform
Tough Enough For Retail?

retail
TouchPoints®

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The retail environment isn't getting any less demanding. Between tightening margins, intense competition and the convenience of e-Commerce, brick-and-mortar stores are challenged to drive value and maintain customer loyalty.

Shopper behavior is also shifting, with consumers increasingly expecting a broad omnichannel experience that blends in-store service with online features like loyalty programs. In February 2019, Toshiba's research found that up to **90%** of purchases still happen in stores. And while the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way customers will buy, convenience is another factor that will drive customer behavior. These changing dynamics make the need for a reliable and speedy checkout process — one that brings together powerful personalization elements with a highly convenient customer experience — a top priority for retailers.

Technology is the foundation of the checkout experience, and it often represents a significant investment for companies. To keep pace with changing consumer expectations while also controlling costs in today's dynamic environment, brands need a set of infrastructure solutions designed for retail. That means support for current and future application requirements, extreme dependability, durability for extended use and a low cost of ownership over the technology's lifespan.

Selecting a platform that can handle new technology integrations easily while surviving the perils of the checkout counter, the challenging environments of pop-up stores and the heavy demands of many specialty retail establishments is key to getting the highest return on that IT investment. This checklist will define five retail technology must-haves to help brands meet today's needs and tomorrow's challenges.

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR RETAILERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The shopping journey is more fragmented than ever as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Retailers will be under enormous pressure in the near term to maintain stores in accordance with social distancing and other health guidelines. Technologies must be able to support a wider variety of touchless payment options as part of the mission to keep customers moving through the line as quickly and safely as possible—and to keep associates and customers healthy.

In the new normal, flexibility and durability will be more important than ever. The exterior surfaces, screens and PIN pads of in-store devices will need to be able to endure frequent cleaning between transactions without suffering reliability or other issues. These devices need to be tough enough from the inside out to ensure that checkout lines can move quickly, especially if retailers need to adhere to customer capacity limits.

Since front-ends are having to adapt to new configurations to limit the spread of disease, like the installation of physical barriers and other protective measures, modularity is also going to be key. Infrastructure solutions that are flexible and durable enough to withstand these unexpected pressures are critical in keeping retail businesses moving forward in this extraordinary time of uncertainty and change.

Toshiba POS systems can remain powered on when cleaning frequently used surfaces such as touchscreen displays. Toshiba recommends the operator logs out of the POS application while cleaning. Errant touch inputs are expected and normal during cleaning while the touchscreen remains wet.

# 1. HIGH AVAILABILITY AND RELIABILITY

System availability and hardware reliability are complementary features that retailers should prioritize in their technology investment. When a piece of equipment is required to allow customers to complete their purchasing trip, the last thing a retailer, store associate or customer wants is a malfunctioning hardware component, with screens that stop responding or connections that loosen unexpectedly. If something goes wrong with a piece of hardware during a transaction, a shopper's experience will likely be diminished; even if the shopper decides to wait to finalize her purchase while the store associate tries to fix the problem, the prospect of that shopper making a return trip to this store quickly begins to drop. When a store's technology isn't reliable, customers' trust is negatively impacted, and the effects could reach the brand's bottom line.

Retail environments are notoriously unforgiving, and this is where design makes a tremendous difference. Many cash wraps have poor airflow, while bar tops and restaurant counters bring the potential for spills. Even everyday dust can interfere with operation if the equipment's internal components and exterior construction aren't designed for maximum reliability.

Toshiba's retail-hardened devices are designed to ensure liquids can't reach critical areas inside, even if they enter the chassis, so they won't take the equipment out of commission. Fans maintain an optimal internal temperature and are designed to keep working despite the normal buildup of dust and lint. These essential design elements help avoid downtime due to damage and ensure the hardware's longevity.

Security features also contribute to reliability. It's imperative that retailers maintain a strong security posture across their infrastructure. Toshiba enables robust security measures through remote administration, where security updates can be monitored and rolled out to ensure stores always have the latest protections. In addition, ongoing support for the life of the technology includes security patches and other refreshes that keep systems secure from end to end.

# 2.

## SERVICEABILITY

Periodic hardware maintenance is a given, and any piece of equipment subjected to the rigors of the harsh retail environment may require an occasional repair. Data and power cords may be damaged or inadvertently unplugged, and memory or other component upgrades might be deployed. If the devices and cables aren't designed for quick and easy access, downtime increases, and the checkout line becomes a source of frustration for customers and associates.

With a deep background in the retail industry, Toshiba understands the value of making its devices easy to use and maintain. With tool-free access to critical components, which helps streamline any in-store work, and cables with locking connectors that reduce accidental power and communication interruptions, Toshiba's equipment features a design that reduces downtime because it's easy to make repairs or perform routine upkeep without waiting for a specialized technician. Its embedded tools work to resolve many problems before they have a chance to occur, minimizing downtime and increasing shopper satisfaction. In the event day-to-day issues do arise, Toshiba is well-equipped to handle them — swiftly and seamlessly, 24/7.

Keeping your systems up and running is mission-critical, so ensuring you have visibility into the health and operations of your retail store and enterprise in real time is critical. Toshiba Proactive Availability Services bring retailers insights through a remote monitoring service that assesses store health, detects issues, and provides time sensitive and actionable insights through advanced analytics as it learns from resolutions. This effectively moves the current retail maintenance model from reactive to proactive, and ultimately, predictive.

# 3. EXTENDED LIFECYCLES

The true measure of any technology's value isn't only its performance on day one. It's years down the line, when the equipment is still working, and the latest software continues to streamline transactions and blend customer engagement, associate engagement and organizational productivity.

Toshiba's engineers have examined retailers' hardware performance needs at every level, resulting in equipment that's built to remain at peak efficiency through at least seven years of real-world field use. Service parts availability is sustained during that span, and engineering support extends another seven years after a product is withdrawn from the market. This commitment to a long lifecycle is unparalleled in the industry, ensuring retailers experience a low total cost of ownership for Toshiba's infrastructure offerings.

When a retailer's infrastructure is expected to work across a long time frame, future-proofing is also a consideration. As self-service becomes more common and a wider range of users interact with the platform, the technology should remain usable for multiple generations of people, whether they're digitally savvy or are adjusting from a more traditional associate-led transaction.

# 4. EASE OF MANAGEMENT

For today's retailers, understanding the status of all POS systems across all store locations is a must. This becomes even more crucial — and more challenging — as the range of peripherals increases and more touch points center on the consumer. Recognizing that today's distributed architecture is more vulnerable than ever, now brands must be able to understand where and how each element in their integrated infrastructure is performing. With downtime prevention a top priority, brands need to know everything is working optimally.

Toshiba offers remote management tools, such as the Remote Management Agent and Retail Enterprise Management Service, that can be deployed at multiple store levels. In-store POS systems, peripheral devices and software can be monitored remotely, both individually and in an enterprise aggregated format. This helps internal IT teams maintain awareness of the entire system's health status and performance metrics.

# 5.

## BROAD SUPPORT FOR CUSTOMER APPLICATIONS

Hardware and software have undergone some remarkable changes in recent years. Retail technology's evolution has gone from supporting associate-led interactions to an environment where consumers are also frequent users. Today's engagements commonly involve more than one person interacting with the technology during a transaction. As a result, modern platforms must be capable of displaying information in multiple ways, and be intuitive enough to allow shoppers and in-store staff to quickly navigate their respective portions of the system.

And all this needs to happen in a way that doesn't interfere with the more personal interaction occurring between associates and the consumer. With the checkout process increasingly used to enhance the customer experience — to drive loyalty, encourage return visits and offer upsell and cross-sell opportunities — it's imperative that the technology supports associates' close connection with shoppers throughout the buying journey.

Toshiba understands the need for open application and operating system support in a landscape where technology is moving fast. Its solutions are compatible with multiple operating systems, ensuring maximum flexibility. This enables retailers to deploy robust equipment that will facilitate a seamless transaction process, while also providing the ability to select processors, hard drives and memory capacities to suit the organization's back-end operational and infrastructure requirements.

# CONCLUSION

When it comes to infrastructure solutions and equipment, retailers have a unique set of needs. Toshiba is at the forefront of meeting those requirements with hardware designed to endure the rigors of everyday life in the harshest of retail environments. Toshiba's focus on addressing the demands of the retail sector means its solutions deliver speed, security, availability, accuracy and flexibility to help brands solve their unique business challenges as well as deploy equipment that supports the customer experience and delivers real value. Visit Toshiba's web site for more information on its designed for retail infrastructure solutions.

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