



Moving from Maintenance to Growth in Retail Technology

Posted by [jstine](#) in [IT Peer Network](#) on 04-Mar-2015 11:54:43

Ready, set, welcome to the new retail year.

It's time to start fresh, and for those of us in retail technology, it's time to get the final word on budgets and do the final editing on the 2015 plan.

As you do that, keep two simple questions in mind. Is it enough? What's beyond?

Role of Technology in Retail: Is It Enough?



Of course it's not. These are tumultuous times. Few retailers need a consultant to explain the [economic](#), [demographic](#), and [technological transitions](#) that are blowing like a storm across the landscape.

Words like *innovation*, *transformation*, and *disruption* filled my recent face-to-face conversations with industry executives in North America and Europe. There was a clear understanding of the central and strategic importance of technology in retail.

But such understandings are not always accompanied by budget growth. And even if they are, there's never enough funding (or time) to meet all of what a business truly needs. Especially in these times.

Let's take a step, then, beyond discussions of portfolio management and prioritization. Let's talk about what it takes to shift significant dollars from maintenance and ongoing operations to growth and innovation initiatives.

That's easier said than done. But to compete today, let alone tomorrow, retailers must spend an ever-higher percentage of the funds available for IT on ways to make the business more efficient, the customers more satisfied, and the merchants, marketers, and store ops folk more informed.

We at Intel have some ideas on how and where you can do this.

The price of not doing so — of waving the white flag in the race to survival — is simply too high.

Envisioning the Future of Retail Technology: What's Beyond?

As we look at the challenges ahead for retailers, “what's beyond” has become our strategic mantra. And, for 2015, the focus is on three specific areas:

What's beyond the digital store?

It's been clear for several years that shoppers jump back and forth between channels. The so-called “showrooming” is multidirectional, and the Internet is increasingly the front door to the brand — that is, if shoppers are willing to resist the blandishments of Amazon.

We'd argue that we should all be thinking about the cross-channel brand, thinking about and designing decision influence and influence delivery that works from sofa to shelf to post-sale service. (For some further thoughts on this, take a look at my next blog post.)

What's beyond big data?

In a world of rapid advancements in data acquisition and analytics, big data becomes the strategic starting point and not the end goal.

How can we move from a descriptive understanding of trend and assortment to something more predictive? How can we put to work those interesting and real-time leading environmental indicators of demand, such as weather (e.g., temperature, humidity, and wind speed, to start) or the Twitterverse or the location of opt-in mobile app loyalists?

What's beyond PCI compliance?

A lot, actually. All of it begging to be implemented to reduce the risk of data breach. There are security tools in the silicon and security software and — most importantly — a holistic, connected approach to data security architecture.

The cybercriminals have certainly upped their game. It's time we do as well.

The New Year is here.

Let's find a way to make it enough. And to move beyond.

[Jon Stine](#)

**Global Director, Retail Sales
Intel Corporation**