



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF FRONTLINE RETAIL WITH UNIFIED COMMUNICATION

Abstract

As technology continues to disrupt and transform the retail sector, a paradigm shift is underway for the industry. The global pandemic has further rewritten the rules of retail and pushed it into a digitalization overdrive. With 'remote' becoming a norm, retailers are scrambling to adapt and keep up with the ever-changing customer needs and demands. Faced by unprecedented challenges to innovate continuously at scale and respond to the new ways of work, retail businesses are increasingly looking at nimble technologies, that can help create a resilient enterprise. This white paper will provide a perspective on how retail enterprises can introduce the power of low code/no code platforms to communicate, stay relevant and become profitable in a competitive industry.



Current Challenges in Retail Industry

At a time when business operations across the board have undergone a sea change, retailers on their part, should be thinking about the impact these changes will have on their customers and customer relationships. Some of the action items that top their agenda are maintaining trust in brands/products/services, resetting expectations for today, and recovering customer experience in the future.

One of the crucial yet often overlooked pieces of retail digital transformation is empowering frontline workforce with unified communication and collaboration tools. Among the many perceived 'barriers to its adoption' is the notion that these tools are complex and difficult for frontline workers to master, resulting in traditional

paper-based manual work to manage various tasks. On the contrary, digital enablement of frontline employees helps the connected worker become more productive and autonomous, which allows them to make valuable contributions to the business. Building a data-driven organization where employees can access and use data on demand, adds to the frontline's ability to make informed decisions and effectively address issues while enhancing their workflow.

Like any other industry, the utmost requirement for retailers is to know their customers, understand what they want, and when they want it. Retailers need to actively listen to their customers and better identify their needs by building a 360° perspective that encompasses the end-to-end customer journey, from product discovery to after-sales service. Acceptance

into the customer's circle of trust starts with these insights. They give retailers the opportunity to be present and appealing in the micro-moments that matter to the customer. By integrating what they learn back into their business, retailers can shape and improve what they choose to present to the customer. They can go beyond simply providing personalized promotions and drive deeper customer satisfaction. Also, they can use these data insights to inform operational decision-making in areas such as assortment, replenishment, and supply chain management. This will create a virtuous circle that delivers value to the customer and to the business. After the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of big firms moved from physical stores to online channels. This gave rise to new challenges in adapting to a digital and cybersecurity culture, assuring employee security at workplaces, and maintaining risk management and business continuity.

Current Retail Trends

Digital everywhere for everyone

Finding the right mix of digital channels will provide opportunities to drive engagement and growth. Brands need to quickly accelerate their digital operations, such as adding more delivery spaces, entering new markets and in some cases, introducing new e-commerce skills. Building an omnichannel presence may involve a combination of different trends, such as AI, robotics, IoT, AR/VR etc. These technologies will empower retailers to deliver online purchases to offline stores and, as well as the rich interactive nature of offline shopping in the e-commerce world.

Sustainable supply chain Management

The pandemic has taught a crucial lesson to retailers on having a flexible supply

chain in place. The new retail supply chain will also need to be more collaborative and sustainable and must have built-in agility to allow for severe fluctuations in demand. Diversifying supply, improving local sourcing and on-or-near shore manufacturing are few of the things that require focus.

Organizational resilience

Along with strengthening the financial position of the business, leadership needs to prioritize quick and proactive decision making. Retailers with the mindset of 'test, learn, and move forward with a minimal viable product' have been key to the acceleration of digital in the industry.

Safety and security

Be it at store, in warehouses, or during

delivery of products, there is a need to ensure adequate safety measures are in place to protect customers, employees, and suppliers.

The customer experience also needs to be adapted to make customers feel safe and confident in returning to stores.

Back to work and future scope

Despite the devastating impact that the pandemic has had on the retail staff, retailers can also take this as an opportunity to re-engage, re-train, and redeploy their workforce for supporting new organizational priorities. Companies need to redesign their business model, engagement avenues with customers and display agility in terms of such endeavors.



Introduction to Power Platform

A low code no code (LCNC) solution features reusable components and drag-and-drop tools, which represent steps or capabilities that a user can link together in the platform to create the desired computerized workflow. These solutions generally have features that allow for

experimenting, prototyping, testing, and deployment. By encapsulating the 'under the hood' working, LCNC solutions allow users to build applications quickly with visual tools. In Forrester's total economic impact of Power Platform study, they recognized immense economic impact

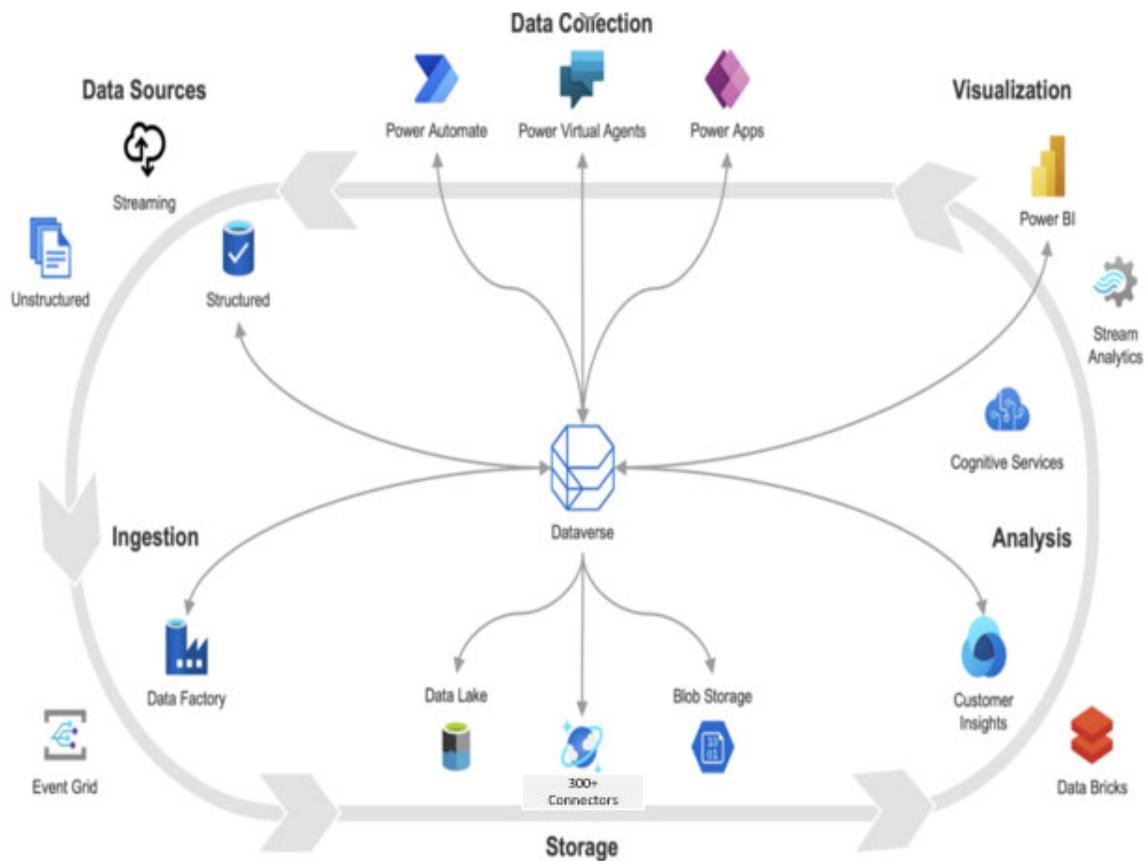
for enterprises who had adopted LCNC Power Platform in their digital journey. Accordingly, over a three-year period, it was found that LCNC reduced the app development effort by 70% and there was an increase in efficiency of day to day business by more than 15%.

LCNC - Powered Retail Frontline Technology

LCNC democratizes the accessibility of digital information to the non-technical end user base, such as retail frontline staff. It provides a simple method for creating, automating, or analyzing their data in ways which have

never been possible. What's more, it makes the leveraging of technologies like AI, hyper-automation, and AR/VR to connect systems, automate processes, and improve data insight, much easier. Microsoft's LCNC

Power Platform – along with Power BI, Power Apps, Power Automate, and Power Virtual Agents – is one of the market leaders in the arena given its ability to make rapid strides in a quick timeframe.



Simplified Technical Architecture of Power Platform

Below are the different facets in the retail world wherein Power Platform can be leveraged to bring about accelerated transformation:

Building a resilient supply chain

Building a resilient supply chain is imperative for any retail enterprise to be successful. Moreover, with multiple stakeholders, managing a uniformed communication and information flow is trivial. Here, the need is to create a one-stop all-inclusive enterprise solution for gaining planning agility and fulfilling evolving customer demands. Microsoft's Power Platform can modernize the legacy applications to enhance collaboration with dealers and users. It can equip dealers with seamless anytime-anywhere communication and enable them to submit after-sale surveys all on a responsive portal. This reduces manual documentation and administrative efforts by means of reduction in approving, uploading documents, survey configuration, questionnaire modifications etc.

Empower frontline staff

Frontline employees are an asset since a brand or a product's first impression is

created by them. They also play a pivotal role in new customer acquisition and influence the brand loyalty of the existing customers. To achieve optimum level of customer experience, empowering the workforce becomes imperative. This can be done by introducing MR-based training tools and real-time communications between executives, managers, and front-line employees, removing any latencies between corporate policies and company-wide adoption. Embedding the implementation of Power Platform in Microsoft Teams can enable employees to view company announcements, store-related promotions, trade marketing activities newsletters, and testimonials and watch store-specific videos and events.

Power Platform can also be leveraged to digitalize the inspection and compliance process, so that frontline employees can use a simple Power Apps canvas app on their mobile devices, with pre-loaded checklists to perform ad-hoc and scheduled inspections. To visualize and aggregate data, Power BI dashboards and

reports can be used.

Improve customer experience

With the impact of COVID and digital retail becoming the new normal, adding a personalized touch to buying experiences is the priority for any retail enterprise to stand out in the market. Microsoft's Power Platform enables retailers to set up a LCNC portal in days' timeframe wherein they can view and buy the products. Also, Virtual assistants can provide highly personalized recommendations and expert-like guidance, which is like having a store employee assisting the patrons. Customers can also interact with the brand through virtual bots from a channel of their choice – WhatsApp, Messenger, voice call, etc., – to clarify their queries 24/7, providing consistent service anytime, anywhere. Moreover, through AI-enabled personalized marketing and social listening, retailers can actively listen to their customers and identify their needs better by building a 360° perspective that encompasses the end-to-end customer journey, from product discovery to after-sales service.





To Conclude

Buyers having a change of preference in their brand, product, channel, or frequency is something that the retail industry will continue to encounter, no matter what. Stakeholders tasked with retail transformation of the future need to consider these evolving vectors and have a flexible digital presence that can accommodate such changes rapidly. LCNC will have a massive role to play in determining this future.



Powered by Infosys

Infosys' Unified Engagement and Communications Platforms powered by the LCNC Microsoft Power Platform has been facilitating retailers in various areas. We, at

Infosys, have made a significant investment in our resources and already have more than 25+ ready solutions for the retail space, ably supported by 100+ Microsoft specialized consultants. Enterprises have derived strong business benefits

in our association and their testimonials are a proof of the same. Through our engagement models, we have been able to help enterprises accelerate their digital journey and provide them benefits across the spectrum:



Person Hours of Administrative overhead reduced



Reduction in Erroneous reporting/ Certification Data



Reduction in Development Cost



Real time Maintenance visibility



Reduction in Manual data entry



Increase in Adoption

About the authors



Arbaz Siddiqui

Arbaz has been working as a techno - functional consultant in the LCNC – Power Platform suite for various fortune 500 clients in the US and APAC region. He has also assisted various leading FMCG and retail enterprises in adopting LCNC platforms in their digital transformation journey and hence possesses in-depth business expertise in this industry.



Siri Mysore

Siri is an MBA Marketing Graduate having 5 + years of experience who has worked with leading companies across the geographies' and aided several digital transformations. Possesses good view working on complex opportunities with Solutioning, Presales, and GTM activities. Currently she is working as the Functional consultant for EMEA and APAC region specializing in Power Platform in Microsoft Biz Apps Practice at Infosys.



Poornima Pal

Poornima is an MBA in Insurance and Risk Management. She has more than 4 years of experience in Reinsurance domain and has lead Power Platform transformation for various organizations in USA, Canada and MEA region. Poornima possess a strong functional and solutioning knowledge and currently working as Functional Consultant and contribution towards solutioning of Power Platform projects in MEA region.

Infosys Cobalt is a set of services, solutions and platforms for enterprises to accelerate their cloud journey. It offers over 14,000 cloud assets, over 200 industry cloud solution blueprints and a thriving community of cloud business and technology practitioners to drive increased business value. With Infosys Cobalt, regulatory and security compliance, along with technical and financial governance comes baked into every solution delivered.

For more information, contact askus@infosys.com



© 2021 Infosys Limited, Bengaluru, India. All Rights Reserved. Infosys believes the information in this document is accurate as of its publication date; such information is subject to change without notice. Infosys acknowledges the proprietary rights of other companies to the trademarks, product names and such other intellectual property rights mentioned in this document. Except as expressly permitted, neither this documentation nor any part of it may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, printing, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of Infosys Limited and/ or any named intellectual property rights holders under this document.