

How to Prepare Your Telco Business for Generation Z – *and Beyond*



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Executive Summary

We live in a connected, instantaneous world. Telcos deliver this to us in a convenient, pocket-sized package. But despite selling some of the most desirable products and services ever made, telcos are struggling to stay ahead of the rapid pace of change in the industry.

For years, telcos have operated with a “set it and forget it” mindset. The retail infrastructure and experiences that they established in the

flip phone era have remained relatively untouched since then. But while many telcos have sat static, there have been dramatic changes to a key element of their business – their customers.

The world’s two newest generations, Generation Z and Alpha, have entered the picture. More tech-savvy than any generation before them, the Z’s and Alphas have lived their entire lives online – and they’re ready for the physical world to get connected too.

To stay relevant, telcos will need to respond in a big way, and come up with a plan to stay ahead of the game.





A New Generation

Would it surprise you that one of telco's biggest threats is under 9 years old?

Telcos youngest customers (and future customers) are already changing the industry forever. The two newest generations, [Gen Z](#) and [Alpha](#), are radically different than any that have come before, and are bringing a whole new set of expectations to retail.

Generation Z

The kids in Generation Z are some of telco's youngest customers today. Born between 1995 and 2010, Gen Z's fall between 9 and 24 years old.

This is a huge generation; there are 2 billion Gen Z's worldwide, which represents 25% of the global population.

They also have the highest device penetration ever, at [97%](#).



Gen Z's are known as Digital Natives; they have never known a life without technology. So much so, they no longer have a concept of "offline" anymore.

Gen Z's have grown up with all the world's information at their fingertips. Their devices are their personal assistants, their social life, and their shopping mall. In their connected world, they can buy pretty much whatever they want, whenever they want it- and have it shipped to their home the next day.



Gen Z's hyper-connected, on demand lifestyle just doesn't jive with the standard telco experience. Telcos have a lot of work to do if they're going to cut through the noise and find ways to delight customers who are unimpressed by current offerings.

Generation Alpha

Gen Z is just the start of the change-avalanche. Right behind them is Generation Alpha.

Born between 2010 and 2025, the youngest Alphas are under 9 years old at the time this whitepaper was written.

2.5 million new Alphas are born every week, and by 2025, there will be 2 billion of them.

They will be the most formally educated, tech-supplied and wealthiest generation – ever.

The Alphas are known as Digital Heirs; they are the first true second generation of digital kids. Most of them are the children of millennials, who were the first generation to grow up with technology. As a result, the Alphas are themselves exposed to the latest technology at home, like voice-activated home assistants, a wide range of devices, and more.

To the Alphas, technology is part of their DNA. **96.6 percent** of them use a mobile device before the age of 1 and most have their own phone **by age 4**.

Any young parent can attest that their kids are swiping before they can speak.





A New Retail Experience

By the time they're a few years old, Alphas are as tech-savvy as most adults. It's clear that by the time they can make their own purchases, the entire retail rulebook will be thrown out the window.

This begs the question - what changes are telcos going to need to make to appeal to this sort of customer? If telcos are going to remain relevant, they will need to re-examine every aspect of their retail experience if they want it to resonate with these tech-savvy new customers.

To cope, telcos will need to adjust their business strategies across the entire retail experience, which will require significant changes in three main areas:

- Marketing
- Products & Technology
- Customer Experience

Marketing

Marketing is the first step in the purchasing experience. It tells customers what's available, and reinforces their decision to visit the store, or click "buy". Three key areas within marketing that will need to change significantly are brand relationships, advertising and social awareness.

1. Brand Relationships

What determines how we feel about a brand? For many of us, it depends on the ads we've seen, our past experiences, recommendations, and more. We piece together these data points and form a representation of what that brand is about – and these ultimately influence if we feel comfortable enough to make a purchase.



Brands spend a lot of money getting their name out there through traditional advertising and social media, all in the hopes of convincing their potential customers that they are trustworthy and offer quality products. This conversation has been led by brands themselves, and historically has worked quite well.

Now that new generations are exercising their purchasing muscle, that's starting to change.

In a 2018 Forbes article called [What the Futurists Are Saying About Retail](#), Leslie Ghize, EVP of [TOBE](#), talked about the changing relationship with brands across generations. In the past, our love or dislike of brands controlled our shopping behaviour – but things aren't so simple anymore.

Ghize refers to Gen Z's as "brand celebrators". As long as a brand resonates with their personal lifestyle and image, they will act more like a brand ambassador than a traditional customer. For telcos, the message is clear. If you can find ways to resonate with your Gen Z customers, they will return the favour in spades. On the other hand, if you can't find a way to resonate, the opposite is true.

The Alphas, on the other hand, are what Ghize calls "brand takers". For them, a brand is not a fixed construct – its meaning shifts and changes based on how they personally interact with it. In the Alpha's world, a brand is a jumping off point for their personal creativity.

We are starting to see the beginnings of this already with [Converse](#) shoes. On their website, you can [customize your own sneaker](#) by picking the colour of the heel, laces, tongue, and accents. In a world where you will no longer buy a fixed-product, the relationship to the brand will also change.

An Alpha will love their Converse because they designed it to their taste – and that won't be influenced by what the brand, or anyone else, says about it.

How can brands deal with this? According to Ghize, brands will have to hand over control to their customers and go with the flow.

This reality is representative of an overall trend: hyper-personalization. Customers are no longer settling for standard experiences and products, and instead want everything to suit their personal tastes. Much like that custom Converse shoe, companies have to find ways that celebrate individuality. This will affect retail in every industry, including telco.

The new commerce mantra is **me-tail, not retail**. All companies, telcos included, will have to create room within their brands for hyper-personalization.

2. Advertising

Advertising is changing too. In the past, everyone saw the same generic ads on tv and in the paper. But today, there is more competition for attention than ever before. Ads now have to find customers, rather than waiting for customers to stumble across them.



Gen Z's are highly aware of when they are being sold to and are naturally skeptical of advertising campaigns. So, if traditional advertising is not effective, how can brands spread the word?

One answer is **Influencer Marketing**. While Gen Z's tune out when an ad comes on, they have no problem giving their undivided attention to their favourite celebrity while they espouse the values of the same product. To a younger generation, influencers are more powerful



than a brand's own marketing because they seem unbiased and trustworthy by comparison. The internet is rife with thousands of social media influencers, and a lot of brands are supplementing their marketing campaigns with influencers.

Influencer marketing works especially well with Gen Z's; as brand celebrators, the Z's follow influencers because they reflect the personal image they are trying to project. It's a

particularly effective way to cut through the advertising noise while seeming credible at the same time.

Influencer Marketing doesn't work for every company, or for every situation, and certainly isn't a magic bullet – but it is an effective tool in the toolbox.

Location-based advertising is another tactic that is especially effective for Gen Z customers. This type of advertising appears on their device when they walk into a designated area, such as near a store, or near a certain product. This tactic works for many reasons. First, it targets their handheld device, which as we know, is their gateway to their entire world and is bound to be noticed.

Second, these ads seem more authentic. If you walk into a store and are offered 15% off your purchase, that's a real, tangible value. These offers are timely and relate to the customer's current activity.

Unlike many ads that get ignored, location-based ads are one way that businesses can make a direct-pitch that is less likely to be overlooked.

The Alphas will take location-based ads even further. As we know, the Alphas want everything to be personal to them – including their advertising. Like the Z's, the immediacy of a location-based ad will be hard to ignore – but the Alphas will expect it to be tailored to



their exact needs. When an Alpha enters a store, they will want offers that relate to products that they want to buy. For telcos, there are many possibilities

This adds another element of complexity. Now, retailers will need to leverage [artificial intelligence](#) to understand their customer's interests and habits in order to generate offers that make sense.

With the wealth of subscriber data and usage statistics, this is not outside the realm of possibility. Imagine a world where you have booked a trip overseas, and through AI, your carrier knows about it and sends you a text message about adding a roaming package before you leave. This will give telcos a new challenge. Now they will have to identify the customer's needs without speaking to them, then advertise on their phone what they are looking for.

3. Social Awareness

Social awareness hasn't always factored into purchasing decisions. For many consumers, the impact that a business had on the environment or society was not a consideration when making a purchase. This is starting to change.

As a whole, Gen Z's are a socially-conscious group. They have a strong desire to make a difference and are mindful of the environment. These beliefs also affect how they shop.

Gen Z's are big fans of [green companies](#).

These are organizations that actively work to reduce their social or environmental impact. Many Gen Z's won't spend their money with companies that don't consider these factors.

There are some great examples out there, like [Boxed Water Is Better](#). This company is taking a much-maligned industry and putting a green spin on it. Although they are still selling water, they have made small changes that improve their footprint. They use boxes instead of plastic bottles because they use less resources to make and ship. The boxes are 100% recyclable and are shipped flat to filling locations; this requires fewer trucks, and results in a smaller carbon footprint.

Sustainability can come in less dramatic examples. Most companies these days incorporate some kind of green initiatives into their business plan. [IKEA](#), for example, sources 50% of its wood from sustainable foresters, and has pledged to be 100% powered by renewable energy by 2020 (read more at [10 global companies that are environmentally friendly](#)).

There is no denying that in the future, there will be even more demands on global resources. At this time, the Alphas will have grown up and will be even more motivated to make the world a better place – and will shop accordingly.

According to [Jared Weiner](#), EVP and Chief Strategy Officer at [The Future Hunters](#), the Alphas will seek out [blue companies](#) that have a net-positive effect on the world and change it for the better. It will no longer be enough to



offset any environmental or social impacts – instead, companies will have to improve the world in the course of doing business.

Although this is a future trend, we are already seeing some companies that use this model. [Toms Shoes](#) is a well-known example. For every pair sold, Toms donates a pair to a person in need. To date, they have donated 86 million pairs of shoes. Toms has thrived using a philanthropic business model. In the future, companies like Toms will be the rule, rather than the exception.

There are great examples of social awareness in the telco world. Of particular note is Australia's [Telco Together Foundation](#). Participating telcos donate money and resources to support local community groups. So far, they have raised 2.1 million dollars. With on-billing and SMS donations, this foundation makes it easy to support local disadvantaged Australians.

Smart telcos will look for ways to make positive impacts that resonate with their customers. Small changes can go a long way. [Paperless contracts](#) are an easy and way to eliminate paper and its associated costs from telco transactions. There are also undoubtedly many community opportunities that telcos can explore and support with little effort.

Products & Technology

The products, technology and services that telcos sell are also going to evolve along with the expectations of future generations. Within this area, we'll examine how connectivity, devices and subscriptions are going to evolve.

1. Connectivity

We are entering the era of the [Internet Of Things](#) (IOT). In this world, our everyday items can connect to and be controlled through the internet. Home automation is one of the most familiar examples; use your mobile app to switch on your overhead lights or use the [Google Assistant](#) to turn up the temperature on your [Nest thermostat](#).

This trend is expected to continue as Gen Z's gain more purchasing power. After all, they are already living their lives online – it just makes sense that their physical world will move online too.

In Walker Sands' [Future of Retail 2017](#) paper, it was noted that 19% of people have made a purchase through Amazon Echo or another voice-controlled device in the past year, and 33% plan to make a purchase in the next year.

Given that these devices have only risen to popularity in the recent past, it's a good indicator at how much this will explode in the near future.

Smart telcos have already expanded their product offerings to capitalize on home automation. AT&T's San Francisco "Connected Life" Flagship store is a shining example. A true digital playground, the store shows what a customer's life can be like when it's truly mobilized. Showcasing connected products, AT&T has really focused on the value they can bring to the IOT. (Get a look inside the store [here](#)).



On the other side of the connectivity coin is smart tracking. Anyone who has heard of or used a [Fitbit](#) is familiar with this concept. As the Gen Z's enter the market, it won't just be their activity that they will be tracking. When everything's connected, smart tracking is a way to gather intelligence from a connected life.

In the telco world, [V by Vodafone](#) is a great example of a telco capitalizing on the tracking market. They offer a range of smart products



that you can track from your phone. For the home, they have packages for security monitoring, home automation, and home emergency detection for smoke and water damage. Outside of the home, they have a range of GPS tracking devices for both people and their belongings. This is a smart move for Vodafone, as they are placing themselves at the centre of a connected lifestyle that is only going to become more prevalent as Gen Z's become the principle consumers.

As [5G](#) becomes commonplace in the next few years, the number of connected devices will explode. With higher performance, reduced latency and increased capacity, 5G will make it possible to connect an infinite number of devices to the network.

By the time the Alphas enter the picture, we will have moved beyond the IOT to the IOE – the [Internet of Everything](#). Instead of a few connected devices, now every product we

own will be designed to connect to the network. Forget connection – this is integration.

Imagine a world where you set the alarm on your phone for 6am – your kettle knows to boil water for your tea, and the fridge knows to order more milk from your local shop, so it arrives by the morning. This experience will no longer be the stuff of sci-fi movies – it will be accessible to everyone, in our own homes. [Appkettle](#) is an example of a smart appliance that connects to

your home network and can be controlled by your virtual assistant.

Our entire physical world will soon become an extension of our devices. As data providers, telcos are in a great position to inject themselves at the centre of this connected universe. Telcos should look for ways to partner with white-label IOE product companies to inject themselves into this world now. If they don't jump on this early, telcos



may be excluded entirely and risk becoming that **dumb pipe** that everyone fears.

2. Devices

Devices themselves are also expected to change dramatically. In the past, the only decision we had to make was which brand and colour we wanted – that was it.

As Gen Z's are buying their first devices, they will have no problem finding something that suits their tastes. With a range of screen sizes, luxury levels and accessories, there is more choice than ever before.

According to GSM Arena, as of December 2018, there are 113 mobile phone brands, with a total of 113,418 devices.

Although there are seemingly endless device options, some telcos may benefit from different feature sets or price points. Original Device Manufacturing is a way to fill that gap. By producing their own range of devices, telcos can expand their product lines with devices that suit the unique requirements and economics of their market.

Even with the wealth of choice, pre-set devices still won't be suitable for the Alphas. Much like their Converse shoes, the Alphas will want everything to be personalized to their tastes.

The concept of a customizable phone is one that several manufacturers have already attempted, albeit unsuccessfully. Google's **Project Ara** was a fully modular phone where parts could be swapped out like Lego blocks. On the fly, users would be able to customize

their device with a speaker module, additional batteries, or a glucose sensor for diabetes testing. The Ara promised a lot, but it was ahead of its time and never moved beyond the concept stage.

Even though we don't have modular phones yet, it would be foolhardy to believe a custom phone will never emerge. With the rise of **3D printing**, it's not unrealistic that our devices could be personally built for us in the future. Imagine a phone where you can pick your components – your camera, your battery, phone size. There won't be phone models anymore – your tastes will dictate the features.

On a basic level, 3D printing is already available in some telco stores – there are many places where you can print your own phone case. Although the complexities of printing a phone may be too great in today's world, those challenges will certainly be overcome in 20 years from now when the Alphas are in their heyday.

Telcos need to remember that the desire for personalization will extend to everything, even the products they sell. Knowing this in advance will help remind telcos to jump on those opportunities as they arise.

3. Subscriptions

Subscriptions are a relatively new phenomenon. Instead of buying a fixed product, consumers now can pay an ongoing fee to gain access to that item.

Subscriptions are not unfamiliar in the telco world – consumers already subscribe to data, talk and text packages. And many telcos are now offering subscriptions to third-party



services that are billed through their mobile account, like [Spotify](#), [Netflix](#), [Deezer](#), and more.

Subscriptions aren't just limited to services. Singapore's [Singtel](#) is now offering phone subscriptions. With their [mobile leasing package](#), consumers can essentially rent a phone for a dramatically cheaper price than if they purchased it outright. Customers can choose to upgrade their phone every year or can buy it outright at any time.

subscription service based out of Atlanta, Georgia. A single monthly payment covers the cost of the vehicle, insurance, maintenance, repairs, and roadside assistance. Subscribers can access a car for as short as one week, or as long as they want.

As these types of services expand, imagine the possibilities for the Alpha driver. Instead of being tied to one vehicle, they can swap it out at their will. During the week, they could drive an environmentally-friendly electric car – and

trade it in for a Wi-Fi enabled camper van for their vacation road trip.

If the current demand for subscription services is any indication, the growth of these types of services is only going to expand. The reality is, future generations will prefer access over ownership.

To be successful in the future, telcos will have to consider how they can use subscriptions to help their customers access a wider

range of products than they would otherwise be able to. Phone rentals are a great place to start. Aside from benefiting customers, the frequent change of devices will result in more regular visits, upsell opportunities and accessory purchases, which will undoubtedly benefit the carrier.

Customer Experience

The last important element in telco sales is customer experience. Within this area, we'll



By the time the Alphas arrive, subscriptions will be everywhere, for everything. It will be the era of instant gratification, just change your subscription at will. This fits really well with the Alphas' desire for personalization. Subscriptions open up a whole new world of products and services that may have been previously inaccessible.

Some new interesting subscription services have appeared recently. [Flexdrive](#) is a vehicle



examine how the purchasing experience and education will change with future generations.

1. Purchasing Experience

Until recently, the concept of a purchasing experience didn't exist. Interactions were solely transactional, and only occurred in-store. Customers would visit a telco store to buy a device – and leave. Aside from having friendly, knowledgeable staff, and sufficient devices and accessories to show, there was little investment in anything else.

For many carriers, this experience is still the same today – the problem is, their customers aren't.

Gen Z's live in a connected, instantaneous world. For most of their lives, they have been able to buy pretty much whatever they want, whenever they want it – and have it shipped to their home the next day.

Except, of course, if it's a cellular device. Even though they're buying the most advanced technology in the world, many are still forced to buy their devices at a physical store. Gen Z's live their lives online – and want to shop there too. They want to be able to buy a device using their carrier's self-care app. They want to be able to schedule appointments, so they don't have to wait in the store for service. They want to be able to get help through their device. They want the power to change their own phone plans themselves, without having to go in store to do so.

Does this mean stores are doomed to disappear?

It's the opposite actually. As much as Gen Z's love their apps, they also love a good in-store experience; even telco's most progressive customers still want the ability to interact with the items they buy. Telcos need to create an in-store experience that's as efficient as shopping online, with the added benefit of personal interaction.

That said, customers will no longer settle for the "standard" retail experience. They expect their visit to be personal, fast and efficient, with dedicated areas that help them get in and out quickly. They expect stores to leverage digital technologies, like queuing, digital contracts and interactive exhibits.

Telcos that can offer this experience and make their stores a compelling place to shop will win the hearts and minds of their youngest customers.

Leading manufacturers, like Apple and Samsung, have already capitalized on this idea. Their flagship stores are more about entertainment than device peddling. With virtual reality demonstrations, concerts, and interactive displays, these brands have created a place where people want to gather. Their stores are a place for brand-building – which leads to incredible loyalty. The aforementioned [AT&T flagship store](#) is another great example of a carrier successfully using this experiential model.

The Alphas desire for personalization will take this to another level. They too, will appreciate online and offline experiences. In-store, they will demand a more individual experience.



Alphas will also be keenly aware of when they're being sold to. Instead of salespeople, they will prefer a personal vision coach that will help them achieve their dreams and visions. The difference is subtle, but Alphas will expect a more tailored, in-depth experience that deeply considers what they are trying to achieve.

Going forward, telcos need to put their customers in control of their retail experience – wherever that happens. Telcos must make their stores a source of entertainment and start providing a personal experience that flows to every channel – whether that's in-store, or online.

2. Education

Education may seem like an area that will no longer be needed in the future. After all, Gen Z's have never lived without technology and are more competent than any other generation before. And the Alphas will have mastered technology since before they could walk.

While all of this is true, the Z's and Alpha's won't be telco's only customers; there are plenty of folks of an older generation that represent a significant opportunity.

By 2020, 10,000 [baby boomers](#) will turn 65 every day. There's an immediate opportunity for telcos to expand their education services now.

And just imagine if the concept of a phone changes radically to something like a [wearable](#) – even the Alphas might need a little help with that one. But like everything else, they will want that help in a way that makes sense to them, whether it's in-store or through their device.

In-store gurus and workshops are a great place to start. It's a quick win that builds brand loyalty, and not enough telcos are doing it today.





Futre-Proofing Telco Systems

There's no question that telcos have a lot of work ahead of them if they're going to impress Generations Z and Alpha. The oldest Gen Z's have already purchased their first devices, and there are legions of young people right on their heels.

At Maplewave, one of our specialties is telco customer experience. After seeing telcos from every corner of the world, it's fair to say that many are struggling in this critical area.

The reason?

Outdated retail systems and experiences.

The Need for Digital Transformation

How complicated can it be to buy a new phone? Often, it's more than it should be.

Customers have to go to a physical store, fight to get a salesperson's attention, enter the same information over and over again into multiple systems, and sign a stack of papers before they can leave with their device. Although many customers have put up with this type of experience for years – Gen Z and Alpha will have no part of it. Telcos themselves know it's a problem, yet it persists. Why? The answer is disconnected legacy systems.

The Burden of Legacy Systems

The reality is, as much as telcos want to deliver a compelling experience, they are handcuffed by their legacy infrastructure. Over the years, they have cobbled together disparate systems into a delicate balancing act. Between the point of sale, billing system, inventory and miscellaneous integrations, it's not uncommon for a telco to use up to 30 different systems to process a simple sale.

These systems don't talk to each other well, if at all. That's why it can take up to three times



longer to provision a device than it should. Disconnected systems cost more than time – they negatively influence customer experience, productivity, sales performance, and NPS scores.

The Digital Transformation Dream

In a world where literally everything can be bought instantly online, a 45-minute sales process just doesn't cut it anymore. Fortunately, telcos are starting to realize the benefits that digital transformation can bring.

Digital transformation has many implications, but fundamentally it's about incorporating digital technologies into your business to radically change how you operate and deliver value to your customers. It also about expanding services into new digital channels so customers can be served in new ways.

The Store's New Role

Even telco's most progressive young customers will still want the ability to interact with the items they buy. Telcos need to create an in-store experience that's as efficient as shopping online, with the added benefit of personal interaction.

Customers will no longer settle for the "standard" retail experience. They expect their visit to be fast and efficient. They want to be greeted when they enter, and to be served quickly without needing to wait – even better if they can schedule an appointment online beforehand! They appreciate when the store has specific areas for quick transactions, like bill payments, so they can get in and out quickly.

Customers want sales staff to be friendly, experienced and helpful. They should be able to help the customer find what they want quickly and explain how the product will improve their lives. And they want interactive product demonstrations – no dummy devices here!

Customers expect that contract signing and other forms are digitized. They appreciate that they save paper, and love receiving a digital copy of documents that they've signed. Digitizing the Walk Out Working process ensures the customer's device is completely set up, and pertinent information is reviewed before they leave.

And remember – stores also need to be a place where people gather to be entertained. Carriers need to aspire to the flagship stores of Apple, Samsung and AT&T. Make your store a place where people want to gather, and you will build incredible loyalty.

All-Channels

Physical stores clearly benefit from digital transformation, but it also opens up new channels for telcos to capitalize on. The Z's and Alphas want to shop how and when they want – whether that's in-store, online, or from their couch at home. By replacing outdated systems with digital infrastructure, telcos can expand their sales reach into channels like e-commerce, self-care apps and kiosks. New technologies open up a new world of interaction.

- ✔ **Self-Care Apps:** Because the telco's systems are now connected, customers can shop through the internet and apps.



They will be able to see current inventory levels, device features, recommended add-ons, and more. If they already have a device, they will be able to view and modify their current plan and add-ons. If a purchase is made, the device and SIM are delivered to their home. A new offer is available? Now this ad can be sent directly to the customer's device. These channels bring the complete telco store experience to the customer – but deliver it in the online world.

- ✔ **Kiosks:** For telcos that use kiosks, their kiosk staff will now have access to the same information and tools as the regular store, making “pop-up shops” highly effective. This will open up many opportunities for telcos; they will be able quickly set up presences in areas that may be underserved, or at time-limited events.
- ✔ **Door-to-door:** Field sales are also transformed. Typically, field sales agents are burdened by paper processes, and have no connection to real-time information. Because they have no inventory visibility, they are forced to sell a limited set of products that they carry with them. With the power of a traditional store in a small package, your field sales team can deliver the same efficient experience in any environment. This flexibility allows them to offer a full product set without having to carry inventory; they simply schedule home deliveries of products.

At the end of the day, telcos need to create an unbreakable bond by serving their customers in ways that make sense for them.

The Cycle of Disconnection

The multi-channel environment offers incredible opportunity, but the proof is in the details. Many telcos have rushed to capitalize on the digital market by buying piecemeal solutions for each channel. Unfortunately, they have put themselves back in the same predicament with different systems that don't or can't talk to each other.

Instead of buying separate retail products, telcos need to choose a digital platform that gives a consistent experience in every channel. Platforms also give a 360-degree view of all customer interactions, making it possible to use data to generate personal offers that resonate.

Systems Checklist

To meet the expectations of the Z's and Alphas, telcos need to ensure their commerce systems support the following basic functionality:

- ✔ **Transactions from Anywhere:**
Today's customers shop how and when they want. Can you give them the same experience whether they're shopping in-store, at a kiosk, or even from their couch? Good commerce systems ensure a consistent experience in every sales channel. Be sure to seek out self-care apps that expand your reach into the online world – it's where your young customers will be, after all!
- ✔ **Queuing:** Today's customers expect a seamless store experience. Are you able to greet customers and place them into a queue so they can be served more



effectively? This is part of that personal, efficient experience that young customers want.

- ✔ **Flexible POS:** Can you use a tablet to start a transaction in one area of the store, and finish it in another? Today's customers want processes to work for them, not the other way around. The best systems support this seamless movement through the store, across many types of technology, including tablets, fixed terminals, and more.
- ✔ **Inventory Control:** Inventory control is one of the biggest problems telcos have. Get it wrong, and you don't have the products you need, or tie up millions in unnecessary stock. The right inventory system provides stock visibility across the entire estate and can prepare orders automatically based

on algorithms and your sales history. They can also track movements down to the serial number give complete visibility and control over your inventory.

- ✔ **Paperless Contracts:** Not only do paperless contracts save up to 80% of your contract costs, they also give customers the experience and green incentive they're looking for.
- ✔ **Purchase History:** The best systems track device purchase history so it's easy to know when to offer tailored upgrades. This is a fundamental feature that will enable those smart AI offers.

These are just a few basic the things a good RMS must do. If your systems can't handle this, it's time to look elsewhere.



Conclusion

It's undeniable that today's young customers are changing retail forever, and telcos have a lot of work ahead of them if they're going to capture the hearts of their young customers.

Learning more about your customers' expectations is a good place to start (check!). This is also a good time to evaluate your retail systems. Are they able to support your customers expectations? Or will they hinder the compelling experiences that they desire?

We've put together a checklist of all the takeaways we've presented in this whitepaper. These are broken into things you need to do now, things that are coming up soon, and how the right retail technologies can support these goals.

Brand Relationships

- ✓ **Now:** Explore new methods of advertising, like influencer marketing.
- ✓ **Soon:** Look for ways to incorporate personalization in your brand and marketing.
- ✓ **System Requirements:** Look for connected retail systems that can leverage customer purchase history and AI to generate personalized offers.

Advertising

- ✓ **Now:** Explore location-based advertising for greater visibility.
- ✓ **Soon:** Leverage AI in advertising.
- ✓ **System Requirements:** Explore self-service apps that include geo-fencing capabilities; these apps can deliver push notifications when customers are near



certain geographical areas, such as near a store, or within a particular area once inside.

Social Awareness

- ✓ **Now:** Look for ways to reduce your environmental impact.
- ✓ **Soon:** Investigate ways to make positive social impacts, like partnering with charities.
- ✓ **System Requirements:** Invest in environmentally-friendly systems that digitize paper-based workflows, such as contract signing, walk out working and other forms, etc.

Connectivity

- ✓ **Now:** Sell more than devices – expand into the IOT with trackers and other smart-home products.
- ✓ **Soon:** Be an IOE participant – seek mutually-beneficial partnerships with IOE vendors to extend your reach and influence.

Devices

- ✓ **Now:** Maintain a full range of devices to suit personal tastes. Original Device Manufacturing can help expand offerings with different feature sets and price points.
- ✓ **Soon:** Explore opportunities for personalization, like phone-case printing, and eventually, device personalization.

Subscriptions

- ✓ **Now:** Explore subscription-based services,

such as phone leasing.

- ✓ **Soon:** Think about other products and services that could be offered as subscriptions.
- ✓ **System Requirements:** Phone subscriptions encourage more frequent upgrades. Be sure your retail systems can recommend compatible accessories and upsells to get the most value out of every interaction.

Purchasing Experience

- ✓ **Now:** Expand your presence into digital channels and ensure your customers receive the same experience no matter how they interact with you. Be sure to transform your in-store experience to be efficient and entertaining – the right systems and store designs will be imperative to your success.
- ✓ **Soon:** The role of your store staff will change to be more focused on providing a personal experience; new success metrics and training methods will be imperative.
- ✓ **System Requirements:** Choose a system that enables transactions from every channel and offers a consistent experience in each. Self-care solutions are imperative for young customers – make sure you have one! For your in-store experience, leverage technologies that make customer visits more efficient and personal, such as queueing software, paperless contracts, mobile POS tools, etc. Investing in the supplemental store technology, such as smart displays and footfall counters, can compliment your



store design and solidify the experience your customers are looking for.

Education

- ✔ **Now:** Expand in-store education services, such as workshops, gurus, etc. Make education a part of your walk out working process to start customers on the right foot.
- ✔ **Soon:** Expand education into all channels so customers have multiple options for receiving support, whether that's in-store or online. Be sure your education services grow accordingly as new types of products enter the marketplace.
- ✔ **System Requirements:** Self-care apps play a large role in education. Choose one that provides on-device support, conducts automated health checkups to prevent issues (and support calls), and connects users to support personnel from within the app.





About Maplewave

Maplewave builds technology that powers telco innovation. Their products and services unite all aspects of the telco environment for a true “transact-anywhere” experience; whether customers are shopping in-store, or provisioning a new device from the beach, they get a consistent experience regardless of which channel they interact in.

Specializing in digital transformation, customer experience and inventory management, Maplewave has the solutions and expertise to solve telco’s most pressing issues. Today, Maplewave’s software is used in over 30 countries; in certain places, you can’t buy a mobile device without it.

As telco specialists, Maplewave intimately understands telco’s sales strategies and retail models better than anyone on the planet. With global experience that spans nearly every aspect of telco operations, Maplewave’s consulting team uses their industry knowledge, solutions and partnerships to overcome any challenge while vaulting their clients to the top.

Headquartered in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada, Maplewave’s global footprint includes offices in South Africa and the U.K. To learn more, visit www.maplewave.com