

COLUMNS

Mobile transformation must start in stores

July 11, 2017



Makeover: How Mobile Flipped the Shopping Cart, by Stephan Schambach

By [Stephan Schambach](#)

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

The relationship between store associate and consumer can make or break a sale. What is more, it can make or break a consumer's loyalty to a brand or retailer.

The fact that 90 percent of store associates are discouraged from possessing a mobile device in-store blows my mind.

Sales associates take pride in their work, not to mention that they are already trained experts in using mobile technology.

The combination of sales associates and smartphones will be the winning combination for brands who want to achieve omnichannel success.

Here is part 1 of an excerpt from my new book, "[Makeover: How Mobile Flipped the Shopping Cart](#)," about how mobile transformation must start in stores, with store associates.

It might seem obvious that store associates must participate in the transformations of their stores, but if you walk into many stores today and look around, you might think mobile had not been invented yet.

In most stores, you will see plenty of desktops at the point-of-sale. You might even see screens in other public-facing departments such as customer service or returns. But you can cruise the floor for hours in most major retailers without seeing a single associate with a mobile device in his or her hand.

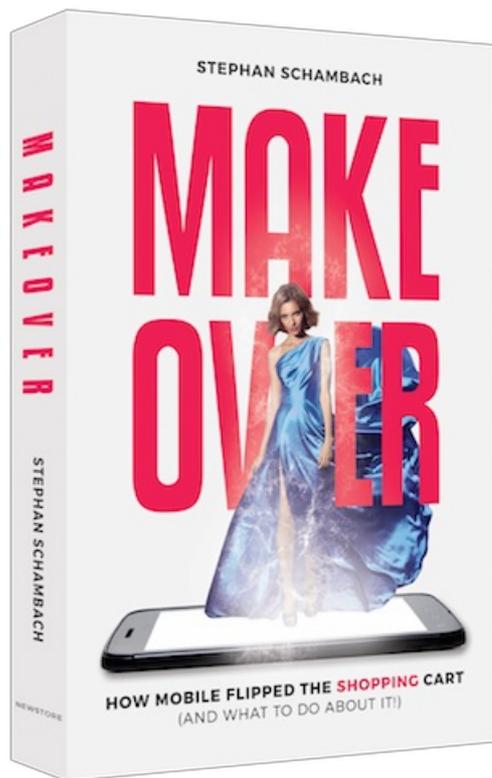
Our [Mobile Retail Report](#) revealed that only 33 percent of retailers had mobile devices in use by their associates; about two-thirds of the associates had visibility into customers' past purchases.

If retailers seem to think their stores should be mobile-free zones, it is clear their customers disagree.

While associates might have parked their phones in the break room, shoppers are carrying them onto the sales floor. They have got them in hand when they browse, cross-check prices, post to social media, and chat with friends.

As far as shoppers are concerned, entering a store is no reason to turn off their smartphones; our research suggests that 90 percent of shoppers not only have their mobile devices with them in stores but also use them [in stores].

If this is the case, why are so many store associates empty-handed? The answer is simple: many retailers still manage their associates like it is 1999.



Makeover: How Mobile Flipped the Shopping Cart, by Stephan Schambach

Associates would love to go mobile

This attitude had a significant impact on associates' workdays.

As noted, only 33 percent use mobile devices on the job. If you are a member of upper management, this might seem like a good thing. Perhaps you imagine you have cleared your associates to better do their jobs.

In fact, a mobile-free sales floor is a danger sign. Associates who are asked to leave their mobile devices behind are being removed from the customer experience.

When customers carry their mobile devices into the store but associates have been forced to leave theirs behind, it creates a disconnect.

Imagine that a customer walks in and asks about a product promoted in an application.

If the associate has no access to this app, the two now have a problem. These two groups should be in sync to execute a great shopping experience. Instead, associates are banned from participating.

Retail management needs to come to terms with a key reality of mobile commerce: store associates are mobile retail transformation's front line.

These are the individuals who will take the concept of mobile retail and make it happen in the real world, for real customers.

These are the people who will take a retailer from the status of "mobile enabled" to "mobile engaged."

These are the two necessary stages in the process of transformation for the mobile age, and it is not unusual to see a company stuck at this juncture. It is often what happens when companies that have put true effort and resources into mobile transformation leave out the crucial last step of the process.

Retailers might be "mobile enabled." They might have invested appropriately and hired the right staff and outside vendors to craft and launch mobile shopping, but until they create that moment of connection for customers in the real world, "enabled" falls short of "engaged."

Retailers that are mobile engaged have the technology up and running, with the full organization reaping the many benefits of the mobile system.

"Enabled" means you have the ability to execute. It means you are ready. The word "engaged" is active you are already doing it.

Think of this in terms of car ownership. If you own a car, you are transportation enabled, but if you do not know how to drive, that is where the experience ends.

You need the skills and also permission to get into that car and drive. Otherwise, the car sits in your driveway, and you are probably frustrated because you have spent a lot of money on that car, yet you are not going anywhere. It is maddening.

That is where many retailers and brands are today sitting with their mobile-enabled process in their driveways but not yet allowing anyone to drive that brand-new car.



Stephan Schambach is founder/CEO of NewStore

Stephan Schambach is founder/CEO of [NewStore](#), Boston. He is the author of "[Makeover: How Mobile Flipped the Shopping Cart](#)." Reach him at schambach@newstore.com.

© 2020 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.