

C-store Digital Transformation

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WHAT IT MEANS AND HOW TO ACHIEVE IT

C-store Digital Transformation

trans·for·ma·tion

/ˌtrɑːn(t)sfərˈmɑːʃ(ə)n/

noun

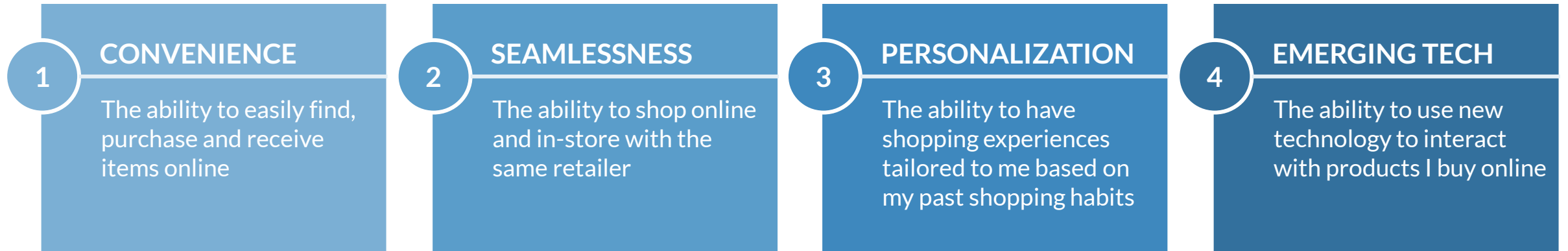
a thorough or dramatic change in form or appearance.
“its landscape has undergone a radical transformation”

The trouble with transformation is that it is, by definition, dramatic. Successful businesses often desire to maintain status quo; after all, it is the past activities that have led to success in the first place! But over the past year, brands have learned that status quo translates to underperformance and a continued downward slide in sales. So, what does digital transformation look like for c-stores? And how can your brand embrace this transformation to meet the needs of your customers and business?

In 2021, consumers want digital interaction to follow a few key principles:

- 1) They want each experience to be **convenient**
- 2) They want it to be **seamless**
- 3) They want it **personalized** to their interests
- 4) They would like to use **emerging technology** to access your brand in way that makes sense to them

Four Pillars of Transformation



Our research suggests that the ranking above is accurate. However, focusing on just one of these pillars is not enough. Brands must meet consumers in all four areas, which means delivering a fast, easy, and custom experience across all platforms.

Embracing these pillars is about more than just updating your mobile app or launching a new interface. It is about taking the time to fully understand how consumers interact with your c-store brand, and then identifying how you can meet those needs in a personalized manner.

1

Convenience

Consumers want flexibility and are unwilling to compromise when it comes to easy access. Fortunately, these are principles that c-stores are designed around. Finding ways to fit a brand into consumers' lives is at the very core of digital transformation. If your process feels inconvenient or overly burdensome, they will quickly move on.

Recent data suggests that nearly 30% of consumers will abandon an online shopping cart if they feel the process takes too long.



C-stores need to understand how to get consumers into the store, get them what they need, and then quickly get them on their way. Marketing enhancements including Google My Business page management strategies, combined with a robust paid and organic search strategy, can increase the perception of convenience for any c-store. It also means having an easy-to-use and engaging mobile app to speed the order ahead process. Convenience improvement is a never-ending process that requires regular maintenance.



2

Seamlessness

Friction in the digital checkout process is absolutely devastating to conversion rates. We think about in-store friction all the time - it is what customers feel when the line is too long, or not enough registers are open when they are just trying to buy a soda. But it is even more critical in the digital world. While convenience makes you accessible, seamlessness keeps consumers gliding smoothly through their purchase process regardless of whether that journey is completed online or in-store.

When consumers encounter barriers in their journey, they are more likely to abandon that journey and find one that feels more comfortable to them.



To improve seamlessness, brands must manage expectations and deliver on speed. This includes everything from curbside pick-up experiences to website page load speeds. Being seamless requires identifying all the ways people want to interact with the brand and creating consistency across all those touchpoints.



3

Personalization

As data management advances make true one-to-one marketing more feasible, personalization is taking center-stage. Personalization is about creating unique environments for consumers based on the information they share with your c-store brand. And shoppers *want* you to use this information to improve their experience.

42% of consumers are annoyed at impersonal content, because it communicates to them that a brand is not paying attention to their needs. This is especially true if they have taken the step to join your loyalty program.



Of all the pillars of transformation, personalization seems to need the most improvement. Too many brands collect everything they can on customers when they might only need a few key data points to enhance a customer's experience. Simple improvements can range from making daypart-appropriate product suggestions (coffee in the morning, soda in the afternoon) to identifying when a consumer is near a store. Truly personalized messaging (through the services of a Customer Data Platform or Data Management Platform) will engage consumers with a suggestion that is unique to their desires or based on historical purchases. Hard-coding personalization into consumer communications has been shown to yield **sales growth of 20% or more**, making this investment well worth the effort.



4

Emerging Technology

Underpinning all these important changes is the constant churn of technology. While brands cannot embrace every new tool that comes out, using tech that enhances customer experiences through convenience, seamlessness, and personalization will reap significant rewards for c-stores.

This requires leaning into things like voice activation, smart car technology, and other emerging interaction points.



Remember, c-store brands need to always look for ways to intercept consumers at the right time, with the right message. Consumers don't expect that brands will have new technology mastered on day one, but they do reward brands that find unique ways to improve their experience by learning from each visit and brand interaction.



At Harmelin, we encourage our c-store clients to embrace these pillars and we help them navigate these challenging waters.



The pace of digital transformation and shift to eCommerce have only been accelerated by the pandemic. This is a time for all chains to quickly assess where they stand on the four pillars of transformation and take dramatic action to improve in the areas that are lacking. It's not an easy process, but the positive returns we're seeing for our clients indicate the investment is well worth it to future-proof each business.

About us



Harmelin Media specializes in strategic media solutions and has more than 38 years of experience helping clients navigate a rapidly changing media landscape across digital, traditional and lifestyle forms. The firm has grown with a diverse client roster including many Fortune 500 companies across a diverse array of industries and is now one of the largest independent media service firms in the United States.

Harmelin's expertise is in managing the massive data sets that our clients and campaigns generate to develop strategic, channel-agnostic recommendations that generate business results and positive return on investment. We accomplish this while maintaining a long-term business focus, providing superior customer service and operating with 100% transparency in our operations. Our approach has resulted in unprecedented retention rates with both employees and clients.

Harmelin's current media billings exceed \$800 million across all digital and traditional channels on a local, national and international basis. We are a Google Premier Partner, Facebook Marketing Preferred Partner and proud member of the ANA.

For more information, please contact info@harmelin.com or visit www.harmelin.com.