

# Technology Helps Retailers Manage Through Labour Shortages



The retail world is dealing with unprecedented economic volatility and labour uncertainty. The US and many EU markets are experiencing record low unemployment and a shortage of workers. Retailers are struggling to fill frontline staff positions and labour turnover is high.

To address gaps left by labour shortfalls, retailers are turning to technology to operate their stores more efficiently. Mobility, artificial intelligence (AI) and self-service are three areas retailers are betting on to weather the storm.

## Retailers increase productivity with mobile devices

Leading retailers are increasing staff productivity by digitizing paper-based processes of stock-taking, planogram compliance, health and safety as well as workforce management. According to IHL, an industry analyst, deployment of mobile devices to retail frontline staff and managers is growing at 180% and 177% year-on-year respectively.\*



Able to take payments on tablets, such as HP Engage GO equipped with Ingenico Mobi 5500 terminal, retailers now have new options for customer check-out, reducing queues at the front of the store. Store associates can be more productive by using the same tablet to manage Buy Online Pick-up In Store (BOPIS) orders, re-order inventory or review product details directly from the aisle. Managers can check performance KPIs, monitor staffing levels or review security footage while on the go.

## AI transforms store operations



Harnessing the power of AI, leading retailers are automating their processes of inventory replenishment, payment acceptance and security. Automating these tasks not only reduces reliance on associate labour, but also improves retailers' capability to collect and analyze crucial data that can make stores more efficient.

According to Vispera, an AI-powered computer vision solution provider, retailers can spend more than 60 hours per week on inventory and planogram compliance activities. With the majority of stockout issues estimated to be linked to inefficient replenishment practices, using cameras to track on-shelf inventory provides retailers a significant opportunity to increase sales by reducing stockouts.

In fuel retail and quick-service restaurants, computer vision solutions are used to collect payments based on vehicle license plate information, making drive-through and fuel forecourt visits more expedient.

To power complex AI solutions, retailers must develop edge computing capacity at the store level. Capable of being deployed desk-side or in centralised data centers, HP Z Workstations are ideally suited for such demanding store applications.

# Retailers embrace self-service

Increasing customer self-service and reducing associate involvement at the checkout is a top priority for retailers. To reduce labour costs, leading retailers are investing in technologies ranging from micro-kiosks and self-checkouts to autonomous stores.

According to HP's Customer Engagement Technology Study, 47% of retailers believe that by 2024 self-service will be the ideal in-store check-out experience. At the same time, the install base of self-service kiosks is expected to top 70% year-on-year growth over the next 24 months. With consumers more willing to engage in self-service tasks and a single cashier able to supervise a bank of up to 6 self-checkouts, retailers are keen to take advantage of associated cost savings.



Eliminating the checkout process altogether, fully autonomous 'frictionless' stores are also gaining traction with grocery and convenience retailers. Relying on arrays of cameras and powerful data-crunching workstation servers to track customers and their purchases, autonomous stores eliminate the need for formal check-out process at the end of the store visit. Capable of running 24 hours and requiring only a minimal footprint, these formats offer retailers greater flexibility regarding where a store can operate.

From making store staff more productive with mobile devices, to empowering customers with self-checkout options, or using advanced computer vision and AI to automate routine processes, retailers must continue to rely on technology to maintain efficient operations and healthy bottom lines. Reach out to your HP Retail and Industry Solutions contact to learn more about specific solutions that can help your organisation manage through change.