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# WHY ARE CUSTOMERS WALKING OUT WITHOUT BUYING?

Retailers are facing a silent crisis. Shoppers still love physical stores, but many, **80% on average**, leave without making a purchase. (Source: Retail Touchpoints)

**Why? Because the in-store experience often fails to meet their expectations. Customers crave more than just a transaction; they want meaningful interactions, personalised service, and a reason to return. Yet, too many retailers still treat stores as product warehouses rather than engagement hubs.**

I'm frequently engaged to do mystery shopping across multiple retail sectors, and I see this first hand, all the time. Store staff are either being asked to do too much and often with the wrong tools or, there aren't enough staff to serve in the first place. Either way, way too many customers walk out empty-handed because there was no one to serve them in a relevant way.

It's also important to note that the rise of e-commerce has fundamentally shifted consumer expectations. Customers have become accustomed to the seamless, hyper-personalised experiences offered by digital platforms, where recommendations are tailored, checkout is frictionless, and engagement is continuous. However, the physical store remains an essential touchpoint, contributing to around 70% of total retail sales (Source: Retail Dive). Despite this, retailers are struggling to convert store traffic into sales, leading to **missed revenue opportunities and declining customer loyalty**.

In-store experiences today often fall into one of two extremes: either they are impersonal and transactional, where customers browse without assistance, or they are overly aggressive, with associates pushing products instead of fostering genuine connections. Neither approach builds long-term customer relationships.

Instead, modern consumers—particularly Millennials and Gen Z—seek experiences that blend technology with human connection. They want store associates who understand their needs, recommend products tailored to their preferences, and provide value beyond what they can find online.

At the heart of this challenge lies an opportunity: **clienteling**. Retailers who embrace clienteling don't just drive immediate sales; they cultivate lasting relationships that increase customer lifetime value (CLV).

The data supports this shift—brands leveraging personalisation see a **15% boost in revenue and a 30% increase in customer loyalty** (Source: McKinsey). Moreover, **75% of consumers are more likely to buy when they receive personalised recommendations** (Source: BCG), proving that tailored engagement directly influences purchasing behaviour.

Having spent my career working with and advising some of the world's biggest retail brands, I've seen firsthand that the best retailers don't just sell products; they build relationships. **Clienteling isn't a luxury reserved for high-end brands—it's the foundation of modern retail success.** Those who fail to adapt will struggle to retain customers, while those who embrace clienteling will turn browsers into buyers and customers into lifelong advocates.

This white paper explores why traditional retail strategies are no longer effective, what's missing from most in-store experiences, and how retailers can use clienteling to transform their business. **The retail world is shifting—clienteling is no longer a "nice to have." It's a must.**

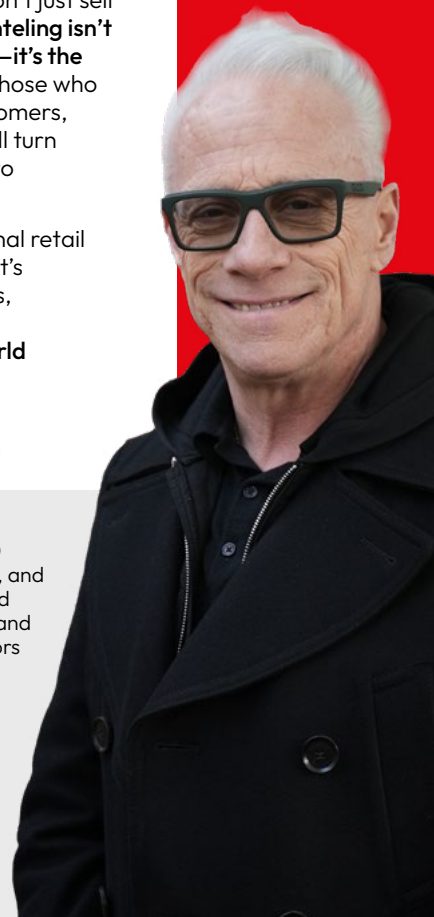
**Martin Newman**, Consumer Champion

**Martin Newman** is a globally recognised expert in customer-centricity with over 40 years of experience in retail, e-commerce, and consumer-facing industries. He has worked with iconic brands like Burberry, Harrods, and Intersport, helping businesses across sectors drive growth through customer focus.

A best-selling author and trusted advisor, Martin sits on multiple boards, leads a customer-centricity mini MBA, and regularly works with brands such as Toyota, The Tate, and The Perfume Shop. His mission is simple: put the customer at the heart of every decision.

## 75%

of consumers are more likely to buy when they receive personalised recommendations (BCG, 2024)





# THE RETAIL CHALLENGE. CUSTOMERS EXPECT MORE

Despite the explosive growth of e-commerce, **70% of retail sales in the UK still happen in-store** (Source: ONS). Customers love the immediacy, the ability to see and touch products, and the human interaction. However, expectations have evolved. Today's shoppers demand much more than just a well-stocked store. They want seamless, intuitive, and highly personalised experiences that mirror the convenience and relevance of their digital interactions.



# THE RETAIL CHALLENGE. CUSTOMERS EXPECT MORE

## 01 THE NEED FOR HYPER-PERSONALISATION

Consumers are bombarded with choices, and personalisation has become the key differentiator. 71% of shoppers want personalised interactions (Source: McKinsey), and 75% are more likely to buy when the in-store experience is tailored to them (Source: BCG). Yet many retailers struggle to deliver this due to siloed data, outdated engagement models, and lack of the right tools. Without a unified customer view, store associates are left guessing—leading to impersonal and ineffective service.

## 02 THE DEMAND FOR MEANINGFUL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

Modern shoppers don't just buy products—they seek experiences. 91% prefer brands that offer memorable, personalised in-store interactions (Source: Accenture). The most successful retailers create immersive moments—like exclusive launches, styling sessions, and community-driven events.

Luxury brands have long excelled at this, but it's no longer their domain alone. Mid-market and mass retailers must also deliver curated experiences that make customers feel valued—or risk losing them to more engaging competitors.

## 03 HUMAN CONNECTION IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

While automation has its place, 79% of customers still prefer speaking to a store associate for high-consideration purchases (Source: Retail Dive). They want knowledgeable staff who can offer expert advice and build real connections.

But many retailers don't equip associates with the tools or insights to deliver this. Without access to customer history or preferences, personalisation falls flat. Clienteling bridges the gap—giving staff the data they need to create meaningful, relationship-driven experiences.

## 04 SEAMLESS OMNICHANNEL INTEGRATION IS EXPECTED

Retailers can't treat online and offline channels separately—customers expect a seamless journey across all touchpoints. Frustrations like missing inventory, disconnected promotions, or poor cross-channel communication lead to lost sales.

In fact, customers who shop across multiple channels have a 30% higher lifetime value than single-channel shoppers (Source: Harvard Business Review). They value experiences where store associates can reference their online activity and offer relevant, connected recommendations.

## 05 CUSTOMERS HAVE MORE CHOICE—AND LESS PATIENCE

With more choice than ever—from DTC brands to instant delivery—consumers won't hesitate to switch if expectations aren't met. One in three will leave after a single bad experience, and nearly 60% won't return after multiple (Source: PwC).

To stay competitive, retailers must shift from product-centric selling to relationship-building—focusing on trust, seamless service, and experiences that make customers feel valued.

# 71%

of shoppers now expect personalised interactions (Source: McKinsey).

# 75%

In fact, 75% of consumers are more likely to buy from retailers that personalise their in-store experience (Source: BCG).



# CLIENTELING IS NO LONGER OPTIONAL — **HERE'S WHY**

Clienteling is the key to overcoming these retail challenges. It transforms customer engagement by equipping store associates with the tools, insights, and confidence to create genuine, personalised connections. When executed well, clienteling delivers measurable business outcomes, including increased conversion rates, higher average order values (AOV), and stronger customer loyalty.



# CLIENTELING IS NO LONGER OPTIONAL — HERE'S WHY

## 01 TURNING BROWSERS INTO BUYERS

Clienteling helps convert intent into action by equipping store teams with insights like past purchases and preferences. This enables personalised recommendations that drive results:

- +15% higher in-store conversion
- 9x greater repeat purchase likelihood
- Up to 88% conversion from styling appointments

(Sources: Proximity; McKinsey; Bain)

## 02 STRENGTHENING CUSTOMER LIFETIME VALUE (CLV)

Clienteling builds lasting relationships beyond the sale. By following up, sharing tailored recommendations, and offering exclusive experiences, retailers drive emotional loyalty and long-term revenue. Results from brands using Proximity include:

- 5x increase in VIP sales (Source: Paul Smith)
- 80% WhatsApp response rate (Source: Paul Smith)
- 45% response rate to personalised messages (Source: Multiple brands using Proximity)

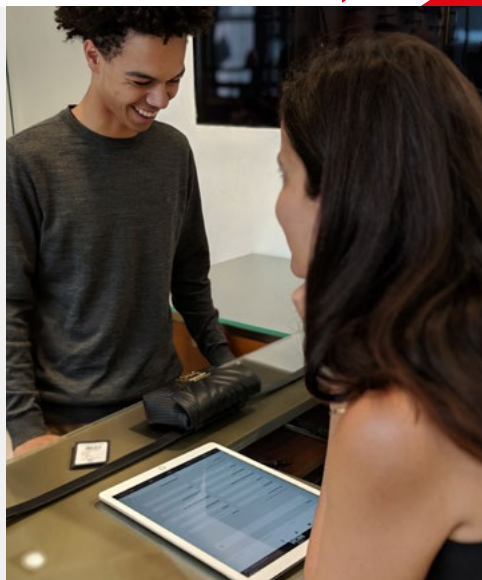
## 03 ENHANCING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AND EMPOWERMENT

Clienteling benefits more than just customers—it turns store associates into trusted advisors. With real-time insights, they can offer tailored recommendations, build stronger rapport, and deliver more meaningful experiences. The result: a 20% boost in performance. (Source: Deloitte)

## 04 DELIVERING SEAMLESS OMNICHANNEL EXPERIENCES

Clienteling ensures that customer engagement is consistent across all touchpoints—online, in-store, and beyond. By integrating digital behaviours with physical interactions, brands can:

- Offer real-time inventory visibility, allowing customers to purchase seamlessly across channels.
- Create frictionless shopping journeys, where online browsing history informs in-store recommendations.
- Build customer profiles that persist across touchpoints, enhancing personalisation at every stage.



# 9x

higher repeat purchase from customers who experience relationship-based selling (Proximity, 2024)

# 80%

WhatsApp response rate (Paul Smith, 2024)



# TRANSFORM YOUR RETAIL STRATEGY TODAY

Successfully implementing clienteling requires more than just giving store associates access to customer data. It demands a strategic, technology-driven, and human-centric approach that aligns with evolving consumer expectations. Retailers that effectively integrate clienteling into their operations will not only see increased sales and loyalty but also a fundamental shift in the way they engage with customers.



# TRANSFORM YOUR RETAIL STRATEGY TODAY — **HERE'S HOW**

## 01 INVEST IN THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY

Clienteling starts with unified data. Retailers need a platform that brings together customer information from all channels to create a 360° view. This includes:

- Purchase history and browsing behaviour
- Customer preferences like size, style, and past interactions
- Engagement touchpoints (emails, SMS, appointments)
- Real-time inventory visibility for seamless recommendations

With a powerful clienteling platform like Proximity's Retail Super-App, associates can access and act on this data in real time—delivering personalised experiences that drive conversion.

## 02 TRAIN AND EMPOWER STORE ASSOCIATES

Technology alone isn't enough—store teams must be trained to use clienteling tools with authenticity and impact. To achieve this:

- **Show the value:** Educate on how relationship-building drives sales, satisfaction, and better career growth
- **Use real scenarios:** Teach associates how to initiate conversations, using data insights to personalise, and then following up post-purchase
- **Enable decision-making:** Empower associates to offer tailored incentives, VIP experiences and early product access based on customer loyalty and purchase behaviour

Well-trained teams deliver stronger engagement and higher sales, with greater confidence on the shop floor.

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# TRANSFORM YOUR RETAIL STRATEGY TODAY — **HERE'S HOW**

## 03 PERSONALISE CUSTOMER OUTREACH

A key pillar of clienteling is maintaining an ongoing relationship with customers beyond their in-store visits. This means proactively reaching out with:

- **Tailored product recommendations** based on browsing and purchase history
- **Exclusive invites** to store events, or VIP experiences
- **Timely follow-ups** after major purchases to ensure satisfaction and encourage repeat visits
- **Personalised birthday or anniversary messages** to strengthen the emotional connection

## 04 CREATE SEAMLESS OMNICHANNEL EXPERIENCES

Customers expect a consistent experience across all channels. Retailers must integrate clienteling efforts across physical and digital touchpoints to create a frictionless journey. This means:

- Allowing customers to start their journey online and complete it in-store (or vice versa)
- Enabling live virtual shopping experiences, where store associates can provide real-time advice via video chat
- Offering cross-channel loyalty rewards, ensuring that engagement in any format contributes to customer retention

Retailers that execute strong omnichannel strategies see a 20% increase in customer retention and sales uplift. (Source: McKinsey)

## 05 MEASURE AND OPTIMISE PERFORMANCE CONTINUOUSLY

A successful clienteling strategy is data-driven and continuously refined. Retailers must:

- Track key metrics, including conversion rates, repeat purchase frequency, and customer engagement scores
- Use AI-driven insights to understand which clienteling tactics are working best
- Solicit direct customer feedback through post-interaction surveys
- Adapt and evolve based on real-time consumer behaviour trends

Brands that implement a test-and-learn approach to clienteling improve both employee performance and customer satisfaction, ensuring that they stay ahead of evolving expectations.



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INCREASE IN CUSTOMER RETENTION AND SALES UPLIFT (MCKINSEY).



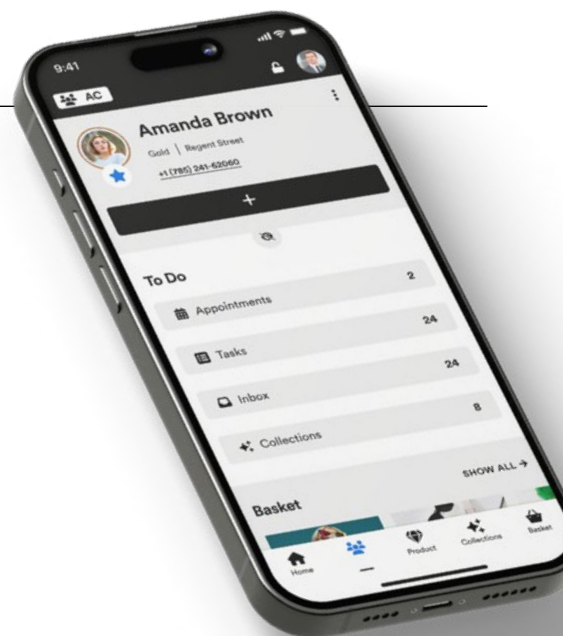
# THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW

The retail landscape is evolving at an unprecedented pace. Consumers are demanding more from their shopping experiences, competition is fiercer than ever, and technological advancements are reshaping the way brands engage with customers. Retailers who fail to adapt will be left behind as more agile, customer-focused brands seize market share and build stronger relationships with their audiences.

**The time to act is now.**

Clienteling is no longer a future consideration—it is a present necessity. Falling short means lost sales and loyalty. Here's why clienteling can't wait:

- **Competitors are already investing:** Leading retailers use data, AI, and in-store tools to drive repeat purchases and increase lifetime value.
- **Differentiation is shrinking:** As clienteling becomes the norm, those who act fast will gain a clear competitive edge.
- **Delays cost revenue:** Every unengaged customer is a missed opportunity to boost AOV, retention, and brand advocacy.



## NEXT STEPS

- 1 **Assess your current in-store experience:** Are your store associates equipped to engage with customers beyond transactional interactions?
- 2 **Invest in a clienteling platform that delivers real results:** Choose a solution that provides a 360-degree customer view, seamless omnichannel integration, and easy-to-use associate tools.
- 3 **Train and empower your staff:** Give your employees the skills, confidence, and autonomy to personalise interactions and build customer relationships.
- 4 **Measure impact and iterate:** Use data and insights to track conversion rates, customer retention, and engagement levels, and continuously optimise your approach.
- 5 **Commit to customer-first retailing:** Shift your strategy from simply selling products to building long-term, meaningful customer relationships.

### Take the First Step with Proximity

Proximity specialises in helping retailers implement effective, scalable clienteling strategies that drive measurable results. Their Retail Super-App empowers your store associates with the tools they need to create exceptional, personalised shopping experiences that keep customers coming back.

By integrating customer insights, AI-driven recommendations, and seamless omnichannel engagement, they help retailers transform the customer experience—turning transactions into relationships, and shoppers into lifelong advocates.



# BOOK A DEMO. SEE HOW PROXIMITY CAN WORK FOR YOUR BRAND



**GET IN TOUCH.**  
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