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The advent of digital transformation self-service

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The advent of digital transformation <u>self-service</u> is happening at a faster pace than ever before. The rise of e-commerce and the development of artificial intelligence has made it possible for businesses to offer their customers a hugely improved experience.

Steve Osborne, Managing Director at Melford Technologies, explains why digital transformation is so important, and why business owners should take advantage to help their company stay ahead of the game.

Where do you see the biggest growth of digital transformation in self-service?

Customer service, marketing and sales in many organisations will drive the biggest growth of digital transformation in self-service. Customers are more demanding than ever, and they want to be able to communicate with companies in real-time, and get a response quickly. Likewise, businesses need a responsive, easy-to-use interface for communicating with their customers.

In this way, frictionless shopping is a key element of self-service digital transformation. It provides users with a seamless, streamlined experience that doesn't require them to think too much about what they want, or how much it will cost them.

We recently worked with Levy to introduce this idea at Leicester City Football Club. Customers scanned their bank card on entry to the food and beverage areas, picked up their items and walked out. The technology calculated which products had been selected and how much to charge their card. In short, bring the customer and product together; then get out of the way! Forget scanning through menus or waiting in line for an order to be taken.

It's so popular in the hospitality industry, that we've continued to roll it out to over 200 major venues across the UK.

What do you think is driving that growth?

It boils down to three things:

1. Expectation from consumers for an improved user experience.

2. Automation to streamline services - making them more efficient and positive for the environment.

3. Technology that improves the employee experience and helps attract and retain staff.

As consumers become more accustomed to the convenience of online shopping and more demanding in terms of their expectations for a streamlined shopping experience, businesses need to keep up. This means investing in automation - from supply chain to inventory management - to ensure your business can cope with changing consumer demands.

Businesses are also looking at ways they can improve their employees' experiences at work, as well as retain them by automating some of their routine tasks. This makes it easier to focus on higher-value duties, leading to increased productivity and satisfaction.

Which sectors do you think will benefit the most from the advances we're seeing in self-service technologies?

Self-service technologies are becoming a must-have for many sectors, but I think they will have the biggest impact in supermarkets.

We're already seeing self-scanners, and these are the future. Eventually, everything in trollies will be scanned by a camera, with no need for further checks.

The ability to quickly and easily provide customers with an improved experience is crucial, regardless of where they are in their buying journey – whether it's researching a product on mobile or desktop, or making a purchase. Companies like Amazon have shown that the more convenient you make the retail experience, the more likely it is customers will return.

Until now, this technology has been more relevant to larger organisations. How is it becoming more accessible to smaller companies?

The way businesses operate is evolving. As customers demand more convenience and control over their own experiences, companies are finding they need to adopt new technologies to meet those expectations. So, the way customers want to interact with retail and hospitality businesses is making self-service more relevant to smaller companies. They can't afford not to offer self-service as an option. If your clients want it, you need to be able to provide it.

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There is a perception that self-service technologies are cost-prohibitive for smaller businesses but that is no longer the case. The technology behind these machines saves businesses money, making it a more compelling proposition.

Isn't self-service technology simply a way to reduce operational costs?

No. If that were the case, companies would just hire a group of people and put them in front of computers. It's not that simple, though.

Self-service technology is about empowering employees and giving them the tools that they need to do their jobs better. Making sure they have access to the information they need, when they need it - and allowing them greater autonomy.

It's not all related to saving money, either. It also comes down to increasing revenue by allowing customers to get what they want, more quickly than ever before!

What are the opportunities for any business adopting this technology?

With the emergence of digital transformation self-service, many businesses have seen a huge increase in their revenue and customer satisfaction scores. The biggest growth is coming from companies that have been able to use their data to improve their customers' experience. They are now able to provide a personalised shopping experience for each individual, leading to higher sales and lower costs. Other key benefits include increased productivity and improved employee retention rates.

The ultimate benefit is that it allows businesses to save time and money by shifting more of the everyday workload away from human employees and over to technology.

It's moving forwards all the time, as with all technological advancements. However, as more companies embrace it and learn, digital transformation in self-service will become even easier for businesses to implement.

Where do you see the market in five years?

I see the market of self-service technology growing rapidly in the next five years.

We have seen self-service retail grow from a niche concept to a full-blown phenomenon in just two decades, and I predict that this trend will continue to develop as we move further into the 2020s.

In my opinion, this will be due to several factors: the increase of online shopping; the continued emergence of new technology; and the fact that people are getting more comfortable with using their devices for transactions.

I believe that we will see an increase in self-checkout stations in retail stores, as well as more opportunities for consumers to use their mobile devices to pay for goods and services. In addition, we will likely see more people using facial recognition software instead of conventional methods, such as credit cards or cash.

The future looks bright for businesses that are willing to take advantage of this fantastic technology.

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