

IDEAS

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THE TECH BEAT | BY JAMES HARDING

THE TABLET GAME

It's no secret that the explosion of mobile devices over the past few years has changed the way retail works in just about every sector of our economy. Instead of ignoring this trend or dreading the necessity of learning yet another new piece of technology, we should warmly embrace the mobile movement. Here are five ways iPads are already changing the music business:

Customization. It's impossible to carry everything. No retailer can afford to stock every model and every color of a given SKU. Now, with an iPad, your associates can not only show customers every option available, they can also work with savvy manufacturers to build a "create your own" experience. Imagine how exciting it would be for your customers to purchase their own, customized items from you! In the meantime, why not use an iPad to show your customers every option and every option-enhancing app available? Your sales will rise along with your customers' opinion of your retail authority.

Corporate Training Materials. One of the trickiest things our industry deals with is information distribution. Having the most current, most accurate version of a



How iPads help us cut costs and simplify the work load

flyer, promotional offer or product availability report is critical — yet we all struggle getting the most up-to-date information from our vendors or company leaders. Using an iPad simplifies this process greatly. Now, vendors, company leaders and financing institutions can email us or send us info via a cloud service — giving us the most current and most accurate information without the delays or expenses associated with printed materials. Thanks to iPads, we can all afford to be "on the same page."

Off-Site Data Capture. If

you've ever done a sale or promotional activity outside of your store, you know how much work it is to enter all the paperwork you generate from prospect data and off-site sales. With an iPad, I can have clients enter their data into my Constant Contact app and when I get back to the office, that data is automatically uploaded to my email marketing program. It saves me hours of work and prevents "human error" from creeping into the process. It's also great if I'm evaluating a used instrument for purchase or repair. I can fill out a digital form and even take photos or video of the ailing instrument. I get better data — and more data — with less time and expense.

Point of Sale. Thanks to apps like Square, I no longer have to flood my store with expensive, space-consuming registers. My entire service team uses Square as their sole payment collecting resource in the field. I get an instant notice when the money is applied to my account. Also, when the network goes down in my store or the register is on the fritz, we can use Square as our backup. No more writing paper receipts. That's why so many companies, such as Starbucks, are switching to Square.

You get better feedback, provide faster customer service and your staff isn't chained to a register.

Customer Service. Every retailer's goal should be to constantly improve their customers' experience. With an iPad, providing after-the-sale service is easier than ever. Take my Roland digital pianos, for example. Thanks to my iPad, I can go to a customer's home and have every training or troubleshooting resource I need at my fingertips. I can even email instructions or links to YouTube video training while I sit with my client. I can share documents easily, including photographs or videos and even integrate materials from my mobile-friendly website. I never have to make two trips anymore. Everything I need is in my iPad.

As mobile use continues to grow, so too will the number of resources we have to meet our customers' needs. Let's embrace this trend warmly and watch as the iPad helps us cut costs, simplify our work load and delight our customers with the thing they want most: better, more personal service. **MI**

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