

THE RETAIL DOCTOR | BY BILLY CUTHRELL

Device Addictions

In my consulting work with retailers and businesses around the country, I often hear the same complaints of “device addiction” being at the center of many issues in the retail environment. We’re simply competing more and more with those small screens. In my shops, we ditched traditional cable TV, not necessarily because of costs, but mainly because we noticed no one was watching the TVs in our waiting areas anymore.

We placed Google’s Chromecast device on our TVs and now stream our YouTube channel, seeing a little more engagement from those people in our waiting areas watching our in-house content while giving us another advertising opportunity, but it’s just that: a little more engagement. So why do these same customers watch our channel but not traditional shows on cable TV?

The answer is in changing consumer behaviors. Companies, both online and not, are scrambling every day to figure out new ways to grab our attention and stick to our ever-shrinking attention spans. Our cellphones and the apps we download onto them are designed to be addictive. So how do we make *our* industry stick?

MORE THAN SOCIAL MEDIA

Consider that Facebook is no longer a company that shares your status updates and owns the top image sharing service, but a data mining empire. Facebook recently announced it’s working on controlling computers from your brain with a “brain mouse,” developing a social virtual reality app, and continuing to make massive inroads in artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR).

Just as Apple changed the cellphone industry forever in 2007, the company continues to plow money into diverse segments other than hardware and iPhones, making deeper inroads into our lives and becoming harder to replace. As I write this, it’s being revealed that Apple has been

granted permits by the California Department of Transportation to test self-driving cars. As Apple moves deeper into the services

sectors, they will no doubt look at other areas they can reimagine.

Imagine if these tech giants made instruments. Just a couple of years ago, the mere mention in the news of Apple designing TVs or making an Apple Car turned those respective industries upside down. Even though a physical set-top box never came to light, did that make companies like Vizio or Samsung step their game up? You bet it did.

MI INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT

A sales rep visiting my shops once said to me, “It took a non-MI company to get more people involved in picking up an instrument when Guitar Hero and Rock Band were released. Wouldn’t it have been great if those were made by actual companies within our industry and not a video game developer?”

Both individually and as an industry, we should all be on high alert asking, “What non-industry company will come along catching us off guard and putting us all on notice by introducing yet another distraction?”

Better yet, has our industry already changed and we didn’t even notice? **MI**

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Due to changing behaviors, dealers and suppliers need to search for answers to make the MI industry stick with consumers