METRICS THAT MATTER TO RETAIL CXOS

retail TouchPoints™ E-BOOK

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INTRODUCTION

Empowered by mobile and the web, consumers are in the driver's seat as they enter the marketplace seeking products and brand experiences. This paradigm challenges the very foundation on which many retail businesses were built: a historical marketplace in which retailers controlled product assortments, information and channels. There's no question — the consumer is now in charge.

Recently, much of the focus in retailing has been on how to meet new consumer demands, as well as the IT and operational challenges of shifting to an omnichannel strategy. The infrastructure behind previously separate retail channels needs to be integrated so that consumers can seamlessly navigate from channel to channel while enjoying the unique benefits of each experience. This has been a major focus of retail investment over the past several years and will continue to be a focus in the near term.

The opportunities and challenges presented by this new retail paradigm surpass IT and operations. Changes ripple all the way to the C-suite, where new priorities and the need for better cross-departmental collaboration are expanding traditional roles. There are increasing demands on IT to help retailers understand customers more deeply, foster loyalty through personalization and execute omnichannel strategies. Because these activities are highly IT-dependent, every C-level executive's role now includes significant IT involvement.

This report features survey results from 169 retail executives — more than 70% with C-level or VP titles — representing retailers from a cross-section of vertical markets and company sizes. The important takeaway is a close look at how retailers are transforming their businesses into nimble, collaborative organizations better positioned to appreciate, analyze and respond to consumers' rapidly evolving preferences and behaviors.

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There are increasing demands on IT to help retailers understand customers more deeply, foster loyalty through personalization and execute omnichannel strategies. Because these activities are highly IT-dependent, every C-level executive's role now includes significant IT involvement.

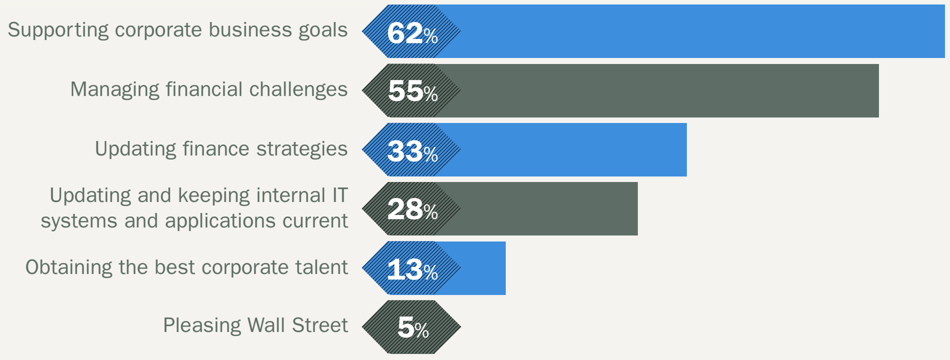
HOW RETAILERS ARE MANAGING TODAY'S BUSINESS PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES

C-level executives must act in the best interest of the business while satisfying diverse constituencies, from consumers and partners to employees and shareholders. As seen in Figure 1, today's senior retail executives place the highest priority on **Supporting corporate business goals** (62% ranked it 1 or 2 out of 7).

These efforts must be balanced with the second- and third-ranked objectives: **Managing financial challenges** and **Updating finance strategies**. The high ranking of these priorities reflects the significant challenges retail executives face in guiding their organizations to success while managing financial challenges.

Other goals taking priority for many retail executives include **Keeping IT systems current, Obtaining the best corporate talent,** and **Pleasing Wall Street**. Retail executives are charged with making these difficult financial choices in the midst of a still uncertain economic climate. Even small shifts in consumer confidence can have major budget implications. Today's business executives are acutely aware that although the economy is rebounding, they cannot be over-confident, which could lead to over-spending.

FIGURE 1
Which of the following organizational priorities are most important for your business today?
(Respondents chose 1 or 2 out of 7)



The critical **role of IT systems** in today's retail organizations makes it a top priority for executives in the C-suite, and not just the CIO (28% of executives ranked it 1 or 2 out of 7). Regardless of retailers' progress in attaining a fully omnichannel platform, IT work is never complete, as technology continually evolves. Retailers must meet evolving consumer expectations driven not just by their competitors, but by other industries such as banking, hospitality and entertainment.

A broad range of internal and external factors are challenging executives' ability to meet these objectives. Many relate to the shift to omnichannel retail.

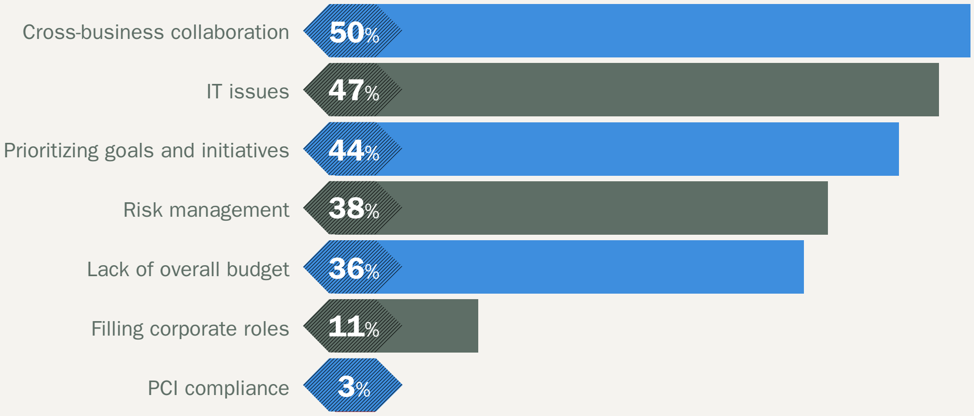
Demanding consumers seek one seamless brand experience and more personalized interactions. Shoppers want their favorite retail brands to remember their preferences and activities, and use the information to shape every point of contact. To attain that kind of level of personalization, retailers must shift from a largely siloed internal culture to one that is highly collaborative. Yet this shift is proving difficult: As seen in Figure 2, executives rank **Cross-business collaboration** as the number-one internal challenge retailers face (50%), at the same time they continue to struggle with the **IT issues** this transition poses (47%).

This challenge is reinforced in Boston Retail Partners' 2014 report, titled *Achieve Unified Commerce With the Right Technology*: "Retailers can no longer afford to operate from within silos, and must transform their organization, business processes and technology if they want to align with their customers."

Retailers able to make this transition quickly have the potential to yield considerable market advantage. A collaborative environment built with the customer as the central focus will ensure a complete and consistent customer experience, from segmenting and marketing all the way through customer purchase and post-purchase relationship-building.

With so much involved in shifting the retail culture toward omnichannel, executives are struggling to **Prioritize goals and initiatives** (44%). Many are also keeping a keen eye on **Risk management** (38%) and **Lack of overall budget** (36%).

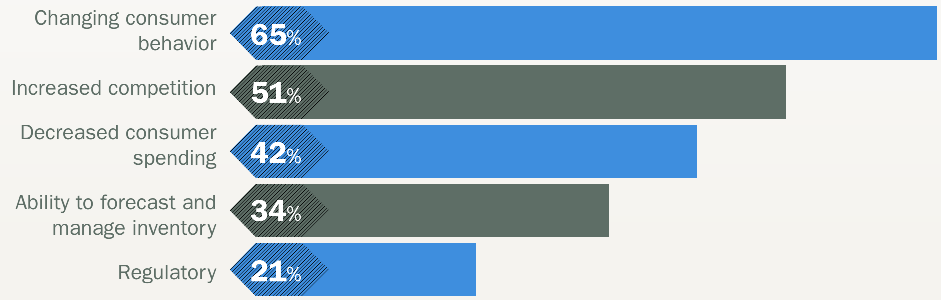
FIGURE 2
What are the key Internal factors challenging business goals from being achieved in your company?



It's a constant struggle to keep up with today's technologically savvy connected consumers. Not surprisingly, the majority of executives cite **Changing consumer behavior** as the greatest challenge, internal or external, with 65% calling this a factor preventing business goals from being achieved (see Figure 3). There is a great sense of urgency to figure out how to effectively satisfy shoppers, because if you don't, your competitors will. **Increased competition** is a concern for more than half of survey respondents (51%).

A recent report from Accenture emphasizes the importance of meeting the needs of today's savvy shoppers. "Retailers...must meet the expectations of consumers accustomed to buying goods online at competitive prices and having them delivered quickly," stated the 2013 report, titled *A New Path for Growth: How to Stay a Step Ahead of Changing Consumer Behavior*. "And they must do so while creating offerings that are distinct enough to address individual preferences while still meeting expected standards of social and environmental responsibility. The answer lies in responding to change with analytical skill, an adaptive mindset and an agile organization — successfully wedding the scale advantages of the large with the tailored approach of the small, the traditional benefits of the old and the cutting edge of the new."

FIGURE 3
What are the key external factors challenging business goals from being achieved at your company?



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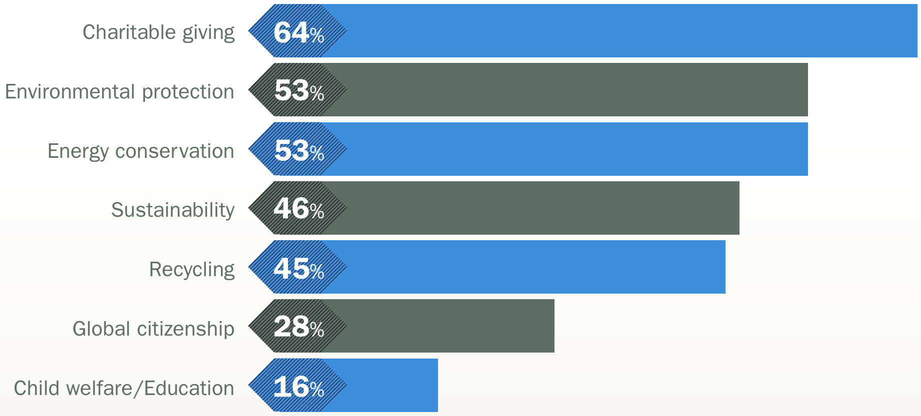
*65% of executives cite **Changing consumer behavior** as the greatest challenge, internal or external, that prevents business goals from being achieved.*

A retail brand is not built on its business prowess and operations alone; it is also shaped by the company's role as a corporate citizen. C-suite executives oversee a wide variety of environmental and charitable activities on behalf of their brands. As seen in Figure 4, **Charitable giving** tops the list (64%).

FIGURE 4
Which environmental and charitable initiatives are in place at your company?



Retailers are realizing they can improve overall operations while establishing better relationships with their most loyal consumers when they participate in improving the environment. Retail organizations are taking action in a number of areas, including **Environmental protection** and **Energy conservation** (each 53%), **Sustainability** (46%) and **Recycling** (45%). These efforts continue to drive retailer investment in greener buildings, product development, and business practices such as lowering the carbon footprint of their supply chains.

Tweet

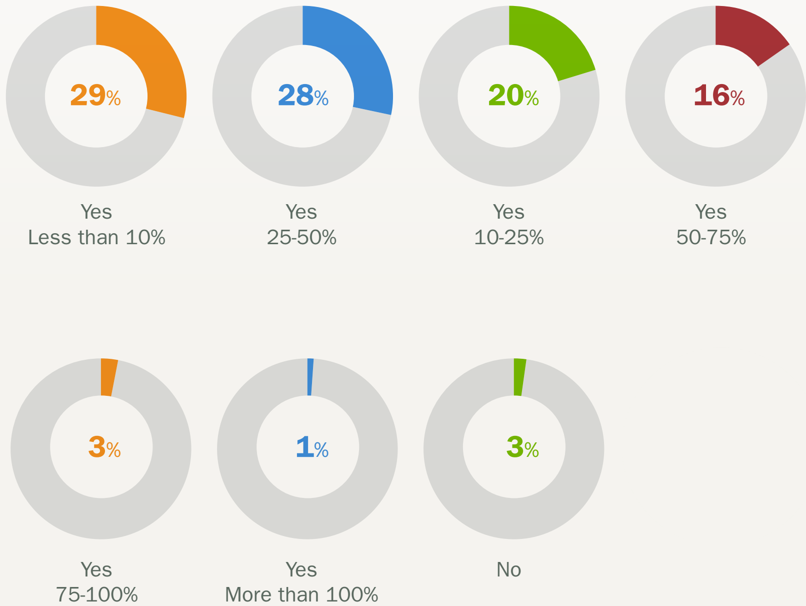
64% of retailers have implemented charitable giving programs.

FACTORS IMPACTING OVERALL GROWTH: ECONOMY, BUDGETING, GLOBALIZATION

The fact is that many retail organizations are struggling to find new space to add more stores, so they are looking for alternatives to guarantee business growth. Global expansion, a focus on e-Commerce and growing the current shopper base are some of the alternatives making headway in addition to adding square footage.

While the vast majority of respondents report plans to grow, the projected pace of growth varies significantly (see Figure 5). The largest group (29%) expect growth of 10% or less, the next largest (28%) is projecting 25% to 50% growth, and one in five is budgeted to grow 50% or more.

FIGURE 5
Yes or no: "Our company is budgeted to grow this year."

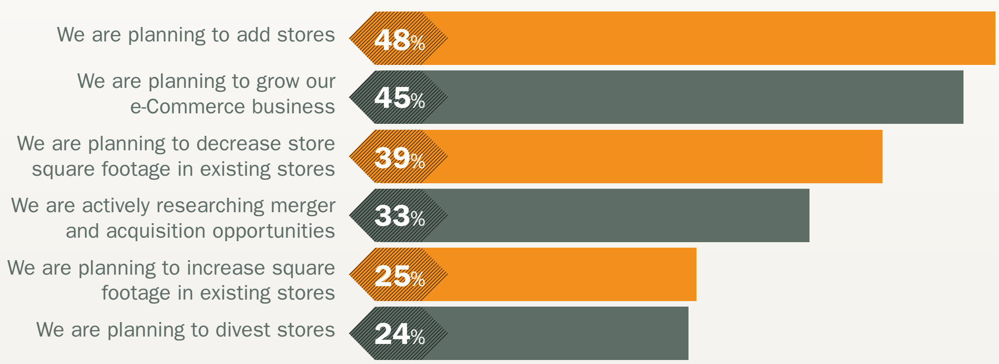


Retailers are taking different routes to attain this growth. As seen in Figure 6, twice as many retailers plan to add stores (48%) than divest them (24%), confirming the brick-and-mortar store is not being eliminated, as some industry experts have predicted. However, retail is in the midst of a trend toward smaller formats, with Wal-Mart, Kohl's, Target and Wegmans among the many developing smaller-footprint stores. Up to 39% of respondents plan to decrease square footage in existing stores, while 25% plan to increase it. Smaller formats not only drive down real estate, inventory and labor costs; they also enable large-format retailers to enter new markets, such as urban settings experiencing population growth. Digital channels and endless-aisle capabilities help offset the loss of SKU selection by making available additional items not displayed in stores.

As many as 33% of respondents are seeking merger and acquisition opportunities, part of a rising trend in retail to grow by buying versus building. This trend is being driven in part by oversaturation of stores, weak consumer spending and strong competition. Recent high-profile merger and acquisition activity includes Men's Wearhouse and Jos. A. Bank, Office Depot and OfficeMax, and the anticipated merger of Family Dollar and Dollar Tree.

Retailers are focusing on both stores and websites when it comes to overall growth plans. Forrester Research forecasts a compound annual growth rate of 9.5% for U.S. e-Commerce through 2018, when it will yield approximately $414 billion and account for 11% of total U.S. retail sales. This confidence shows up in retailer strategies: 45% of respondents plan to increase their e-Commerce business.

FIGURE 6
Please describe your company's growth plans.



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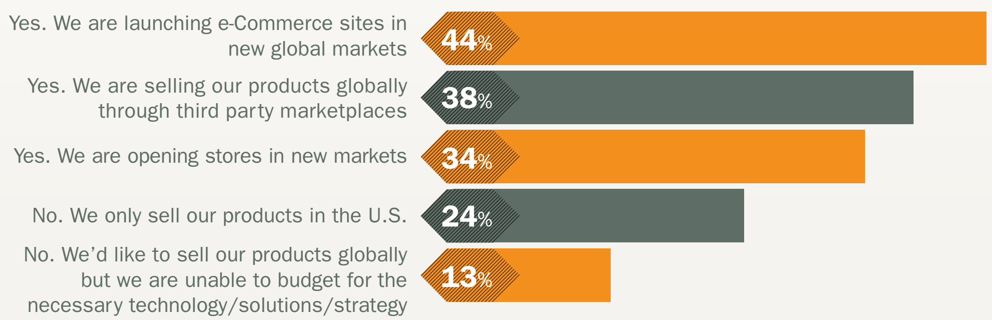
33% of retailers are seeking merger and acquisition opportunities.

With opportunities becoming increasingly limited within the U.S. borders, many retailers are looking overseas for new growth opportunities. In many cases, e-Commerce is the easiest way to enter new foreign markets. For nearly half of respondents, retail growth includes **Launching e-Commerce sites in new Global markets** (see Figure 7). Somewhat fewer, 38%, are expanding by selling products globally through **Third party marketplaces**, and 34% are **Opening stores in new markets**.

But to be successful across borders, retailers must strategize effectively. For as many as 13% of respondents, a desire to expand globally is being thwarted by an inability to budget the necessary technology, solution or strategy. In a study analyzing the most successful strategies for global expansion, Deloitte notes that "creating a plan that incorporates the nuances of each market and provides methods for reacting to unexpected challenges is a fundamental aspect of global expansion." The report, titled *Global Retail Expansion: A Recipe for Creating Shareholder Value?*, recommends that retailers leverage their strengths and select markets, entry methods and a global operating model with care: "A well-developed roadmap and executable strategy are two keys to growth abroad. The retailers that can achieve this can deliver improved shareholder value creation, outperforming the typical return retailers have seen thus far."

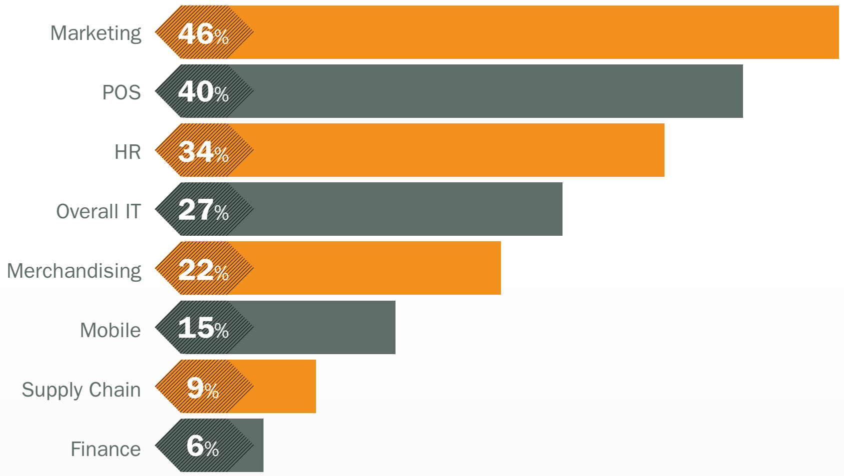
FIGURE 7
Yes or no: "We are expanding our global commerce efforts."
(Respondents checked all that apply)



In the effort to meet consumers in the channels and communications media they prefer, retailers are increasing budgets in a number of areas. As seen in Figure 8, **Marketing, POS** and **Human Resources** are three of the areas most likely to see budget increases this year, as well as the **Overall IT** spend. All four are key components of developing closer relationships with the customer by collecting data, then leveraging real-time analysis to deliver personalized offers and experiences. Interestingly, **Mobile** looks to be receiving one of the lesser increases in spending in 2015, which could indicate that it had a bigger boost in previous years.

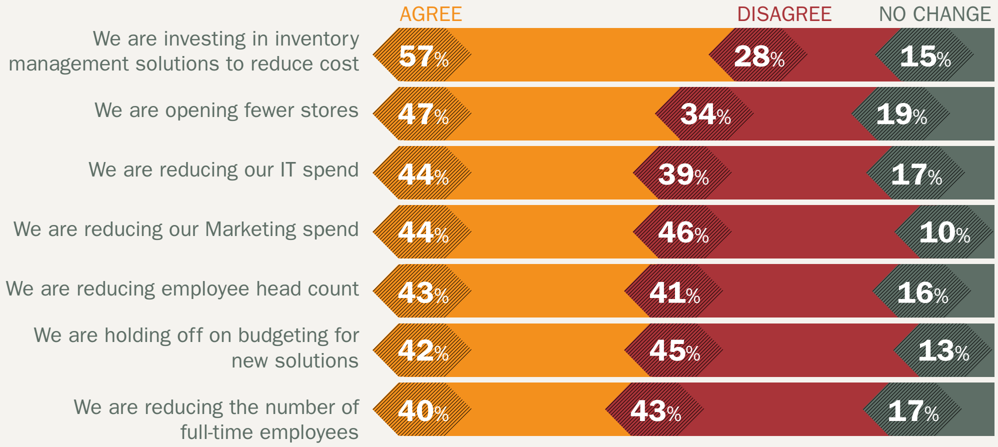
Many merchants are focusing their efforts on POS as they face an October 2015 deadline when liability for fraudulent credit card transactions shifts to the merchant unless the merchant has upgraded to terminals that are compliant with EMV standards. (EMV, an acronym for Europay, MasterCard and Visa, is a global standard for integrating chip cards and authenticating credit and debit transactions.)

FIGURE 8
Which of the following business priorities are receiving the greatest budget increase in 2015?
(Respondents chose 1 or 2 out of 9)



A major factor influencing both consumer behavior and retailer growth strategy is the state of the economy. Retailers continue to consider new investments carefully, with the Great Recession of 2008 still relatively fresh in their minds. In an effort to balance growth and economic challenges, retail organizations are not strongly favoring one particular strategy over others (see Figure 9). While 57% are investing in inventory management solutions to reduce costs, five other strategies are popular options for just under half of retailers: **Opening fewer stores, Reducing IT spend, Reducing marketing spend, Reducing employee head count** and **Holding off on budgeting for new solutions**. The least-used strategy, reducing the number of full-time employees, is still considered a viable option among 40% of survey respondents.

FIGURE 9
How is today's economic climate affecting your business strategies?



RAMPING UP INTERNAL BUSINESS COLLABORATION TO IMPROVE RESULTS

From an IT perspective, enacting an omnichannel strategy requires coordinating data and functionality from different channels to form a cohesive whole. Employees must follow suit. Cross-functional collaboration is essential to delivering the consistent end-to-end brand experience that consumers demand, by ensuring all components of the organization are operating in sync.

Because of this, C-level executives must become educated in new disciplines and projects that may have previously been considered outside their scope. For example, **Data collection and analysis/business intelligence** were once the sole responsibility of IT and a dedicated group of analysts. But now, 51% of retail executives have seen their roles expand to include strategic involvement in these activities (see Figure 10). They are also increasingly involved in **Mobile advancements** (43%) and **Marketing and promotional plans** (42%), with slightly less additional involvement in risk management, sales strategies, IT priorities, and supply chain and merchandising priorities.

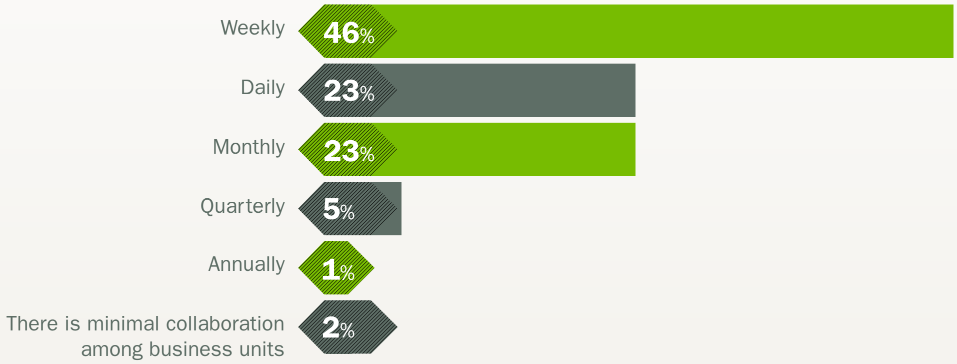
FIGURE 10
What are some of the key areas you have become involved more in strategically within the company in the past year?

This type of collaboration delivers results, according to IBM in a 2013 report titled *Exploring the Inner Circle: Insights from the Global C-Suite Study*. The study found that C-suites characterized by great collaboration and "purposeful partnerships" outperform others, and that 50% of CEOs call collaboration the most important attribute for success.

Additionally, organizations that focus on collaboration beyond the C-suite are reaping the benefits. As many as 46% of respondents report that business units collaborate on a weekly basis in their organizations (see Figure 11). Another 23% collaborate on a daily or monthly basis, while the remainder meet less often.

Research by Accenture, for example, found that "marketers and IT professionals are eager to work together to address enterprise challenges and create exceptional customer experiences. As many as 83% of IT execs want to interact with their company's marketing department, while 69% of marketers want to interact with the IT department," according to *Cutting Across The CMO-CIO Divide*, from 2014.

FIGURE 11
How often do your business units collaborate today?



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46% of retail executives report that company business units collaborate on a weekly basis.

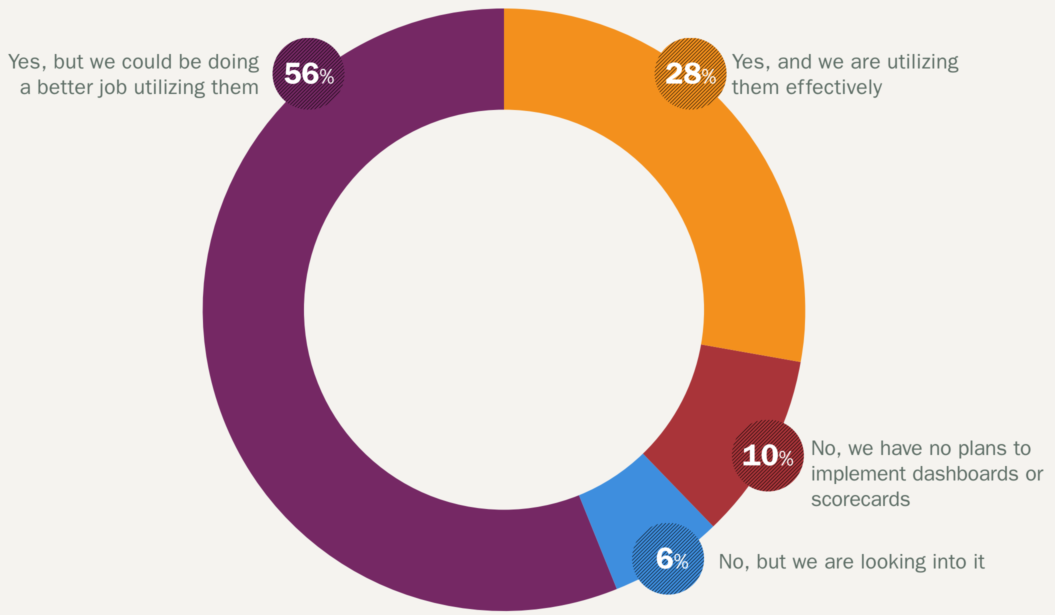
BUSINESS ANALYTICS IN TODAY'S RETAIL ENTERPRISE

To better manage and monitor the information coming into the organization, retailers are implementing more effective dashboards and scorecards. But retail executives see significant opportunity to make better use of the data they already own to manage their businesses and better understand their customers.

The majority (84%) of respondents use dashboards or scorecards to monitor their performance against business goals, with another 6% considering it (see Figure 12). But of that large group, just 28% report they are using these tools effectively. The remaining 56% feel they could be doing a better job in using dashboards and scorecards.

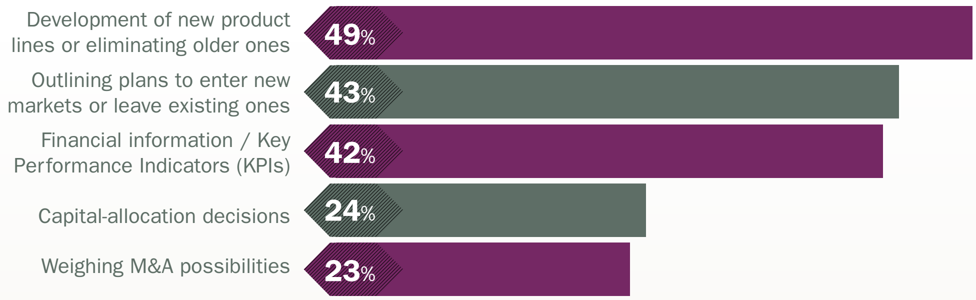
According to research by PricewaterhouseCoopers, issues with data quality and uncertainty about which data is useful impede executive use of data in driving business decisions, as explored in the 2014 report *Are You Prepared to Make the Decisions That Matter Most? Decision Making in Retail*. Top strategies that retailers are implementing to address issues with effective use of data include creating a dedicated data insights team; using enhanced analytics techniques such as simulation, optimization and predictive analytics; and changing the way data and analytics are presented to management.

FIGURE 12
Are you using dashboards or scorecards today?



Respondents report they use dashboards most often to monitor the development of new products or the elimination of outdated items, as shown in Figure 13. Other common uses include outlining plans to **enter new markets** or **leave existing ones** (43%) and **monitoring financial information and key performance indicators** (42%). All of these uses enable retail executives to closely monitor progress toward corporate priorities and business goals.

FIGURE 13
Which business goals are you focusing on in your dashboards?

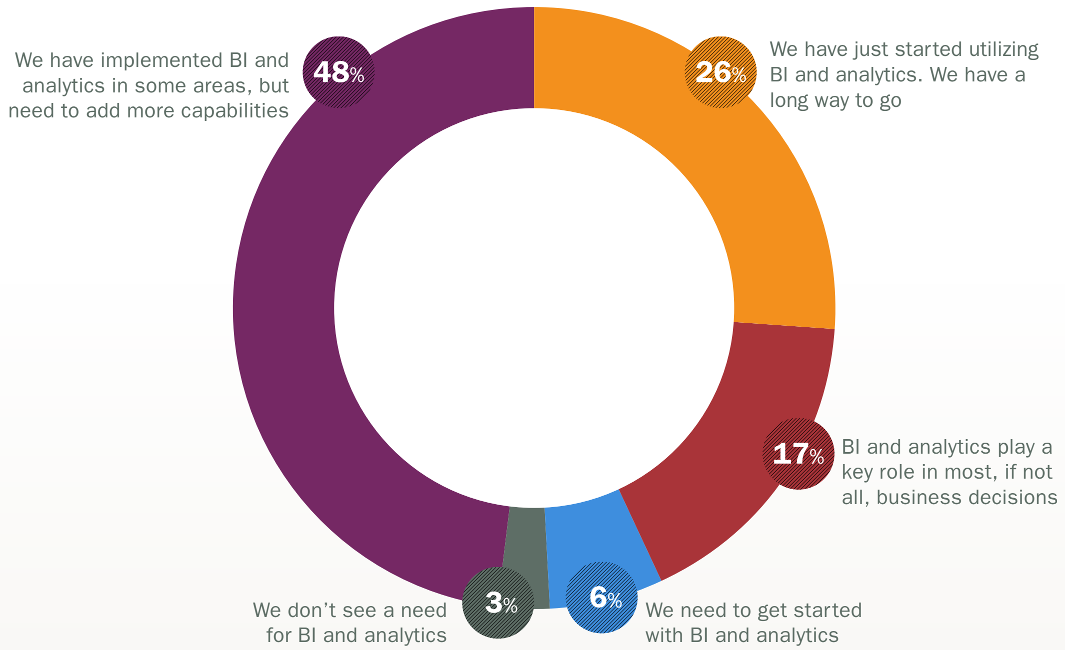


Respondents have similar opinions about their organizations' level of maturity in the use of business intelligence and analytics (see Figure 14). Just 17% report that BI and analytics play a key role in most, if not all, business decisions. Nearly half have these in place but see the need to expand their capabilities, while 26% say they are just starting and have a long way to go.

Tweet

49% of retailers use dashboards to focus on developing new product lines or eliminating older ones.

FIGURE 14
How would you rate your business' maturity in the area of business intelligence?



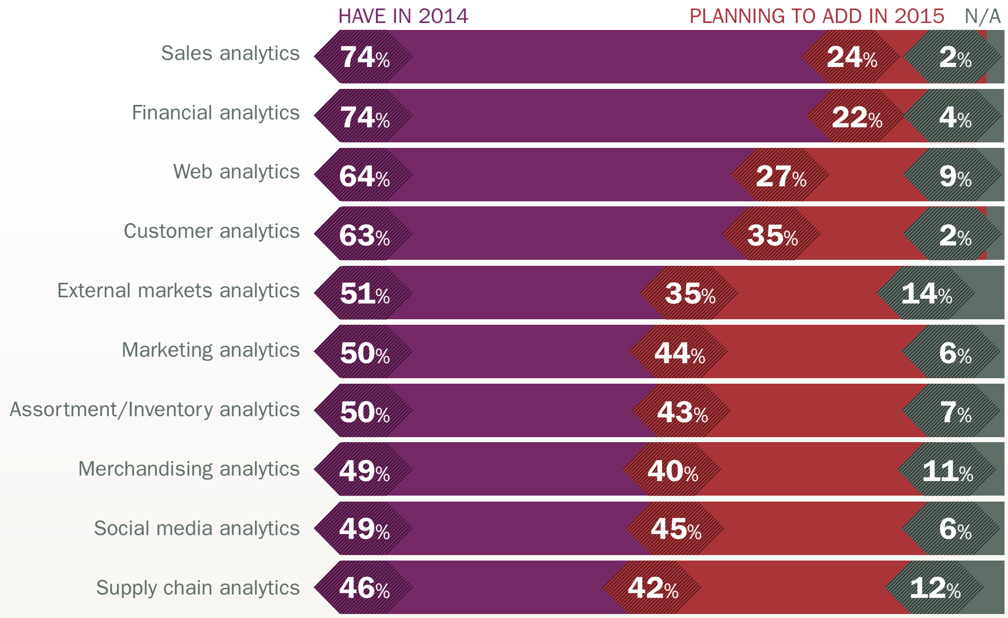
Many retail advisors and analyst firms tout **analytics as the key to unlocking the mysteries of consumer behavior**. Analytics and business intelligence tools are being applied to every facet of the business to increase understanding and shape operations, promotion, merchandising and other decisions. According to a survey in 2013 by *Accenture, Seamless Analytics: Three Imperatives for the Retail Digital Marketplace*, 49% of retail executives say they are committed to more enterprise-wide strategic analytical decision-making, and 43% report that more decisions are now based on complex data analysis than was the case two years ago.

Tweet

48% of retailers have implemented BI and analytics in some areas but see the need to add more capabilities.

As seen in Figure 15, up to 75% of retailer respondents have applied analytics technology in each area of the business listed, led by **Finance** and **Sales** (74% each) and then **Web** and **Customer analytics** (64% and 63%, respectively). To date, **Supply Chain Analytics** has the lowest rate of adoption, at 46%.

FIGURE 15
What types of analytics are you using?



Many retailers will spend this year filling the gaps. By the end of 2015, the vast majority of retailer respondents expect to have analytics in place across the enterprise.

"Retail practitioners tell us that analytics has arrived, is in wide use and has strong C-suite support," stated the Accenture report. "The greatest returns on analytics investments will go to those retailers who focus first and foremost on business outcomes."

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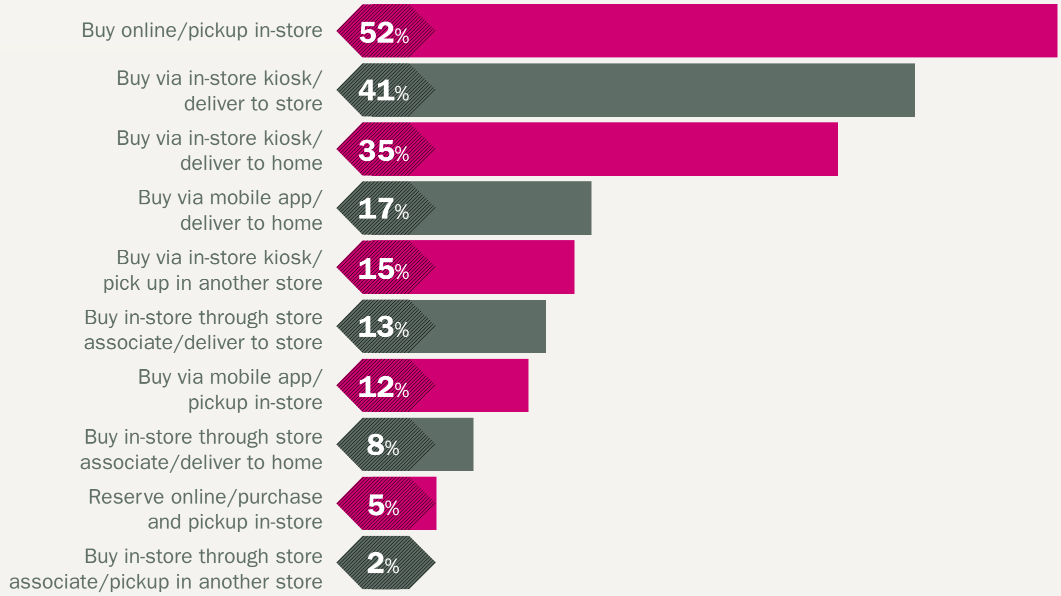
45% of retailers plan to add social media analytics in 2015.

INCORPORATING 'OMNICHANNEL' INTO INVENTORY FULFILLMENT

Omnichannel strategies apply to the entire retail enterprise, including customer relationships and marketing. But arguably, these strategies' foundation begins with inventory fulfillment: ensuring consumers can buy, receive and return items from any channel and to any channel. To be successful in this omnichannel environment moving forward, retail organizations must implement effective but flexible fulfillment strategies that support movement to and from any channel.

Buy online/pickup in-store was the first form of omnichannel fulfillment demanded by consumers, and as seen in Figure 16, retailers consider it the most important inventory fulfillment model when it comes to improving customer service (52% rating it 1 or 2 out of 10). Other important strategies tie fulfillment closely to kiosks, which are often used for endless-aisle applications to satisfy demand for out-of-stock products or those not typically carried in store inventory. These fulfillment options include buy at in-store kiosk/deliver to store, buy at in-store kiosk/deliver to home, and buy at in-store kiosk/pickup in another store.

FIGURE 16
Please rank the importance of implementing the following inventory fulfillment models to improve customer service. *(Respondents chose 1 or 2 out of 10)*

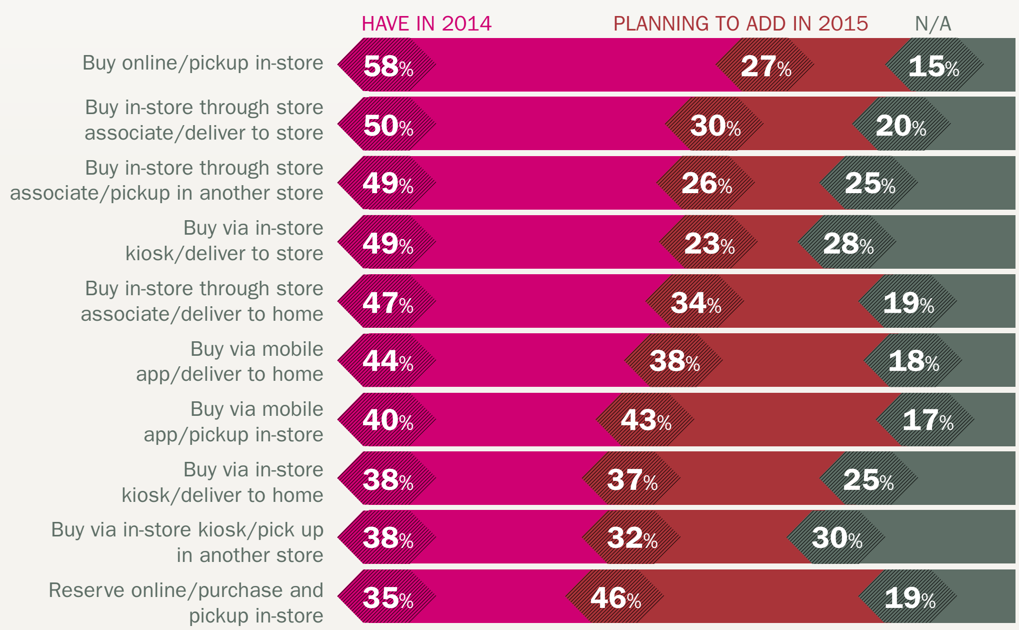


But some inventory strategies are harder to achieve than others, despite their impact on customer service. Perhaps that is why the number of respondents reporting that they currently offer each capability doesn't line up with the value they feel it brings to customer service (see Figure 17). Retailers report aggressive plans to catch up on options they don't currently offer, with 70% to 85% planning to have each option in place by the end of 2015. It's interesting to note, however, that despite the importance respondents place on buying via kiosk and then delivering to the store, home or another store, adoption plans slightly lag behind other omnichannel fulfillment models.

According to Retail Systems Research (RSR) in the report titled *Omni-Channel Retail 2014: Double Trouble*, "Retailers are scrambling to provide all these fulfillment options because they don't know how consumers actually want to take delivery of their purchases. It's better to plan for everything and be ready than be caught unprepared. Unfortunately, that prepared-for-anything approach is very expensive."

RSR's recommendation to avoid this broad effort focuses on better analysis and measurement of the business: "If retailers had better measures about how customers are actually crossing channels, the dizzying array of supply chain options needed to meet consumer demand would collapse into a simple, prioritized list: what do our customers want most from us? What does it take to provide that?"

FIGURE 17
Which inventory fulfillment models do you have in place today? Plan to implement in 2015?

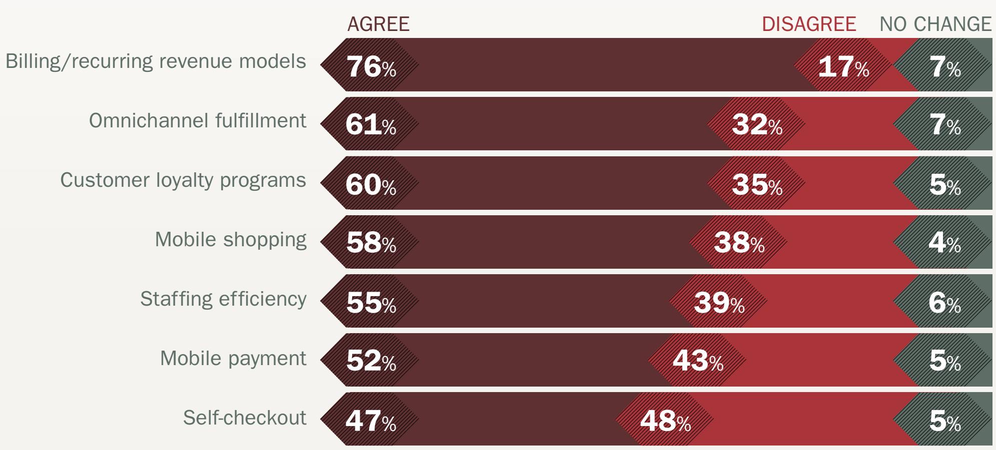


MOVING TO THE FUTURE WITH TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENTS

Given the economic, consumer behavior, financial and other challenges they face, today's merchants cannot be stagnant when it comes to new technology. Latecomers are likely to be left behind in a hyper-competitive marketplace. Intelligent retail organizations are leveraging advanced technology to gain deeper insights into their most loyal customer segments and to assess their budget and strategies.

However, retailers report greater confidence in some current IT capabilities than others (see Figure 18). Retailers are relatively confident their current solutions can handle changes in **Billing and recurring revenue models** (76%), but report slightly less confidence in the ability of their **Omnichannel fulfillment** and **Customer loyalty** programs to keep up with changes in the industry (61% and 60%, respectively).

FIGURE 18
Do you feel your current solutions are equipped to handle changes in the following areas?

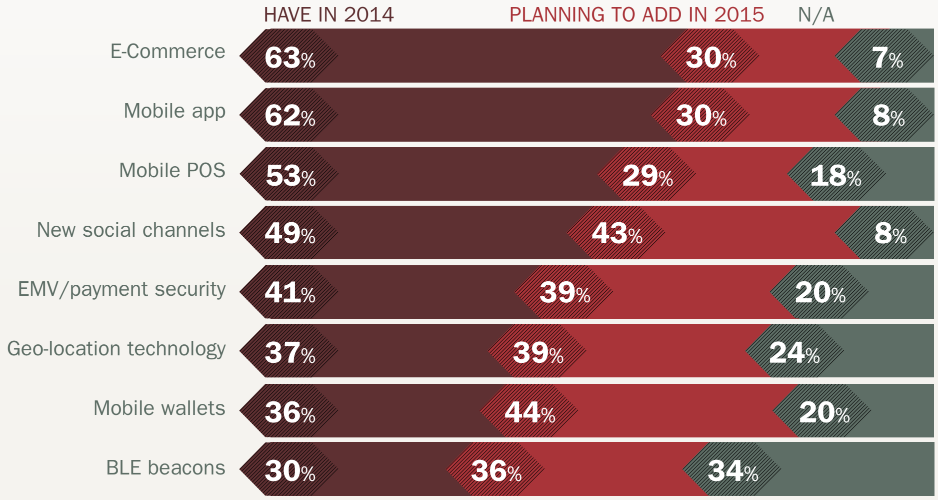


In other areas, retailers are split down the middle when it comes to confidence in Self-checkout models as well as **Mobile payment**. Self-checkout has been hit-or-miss for many merchants over the years in its ability to satisfy shoppers, and mobile payment is changing so rapidly, that it's easy to understand retailers' uncertainty about its capabilities moving forward. One area in clear need of upgrade in many retail settings is payment: Self-checkout and other POS terminals will need to be upgraded in advance of the October EMV compliance deadline.

Retailers see investment in critical technologies as important enablers of their growth strategies, building on or upgrading current infrastructure. Not surprisingly, **e-Commerce** (63%) and **Mobile apps** (62%) lead the list of technologies currently in place in respondents' businesses (see Figure 19), and just over half have mobile POS. Retailers will be most aggressive in their adoption of **Mobile wallets** (44%) and **New social channels** (43%) in 2015, but many plan to invest in a broad range of solutions. Even the relatively new Bluetooth low-energy beacon has 30% current adoption and another 36% planned for 2015.

With a plethora of exciting new technologies showing potential, KPMG cautions retailers to maintain a focus on the customer experience. "One common reason new technologies fail to fulfill expectations is that management did not fully think through how best to integrate them into the business. The success of many of these initiatives will not be determined by glamorous technology or software, but by the robustness and efficiency of the process that ensures the consumer is not only satisfied, but delighted with their purchase," stated KPMG's 2013 report *What's In Store: How Technology is Transforming the Retail Industry*.

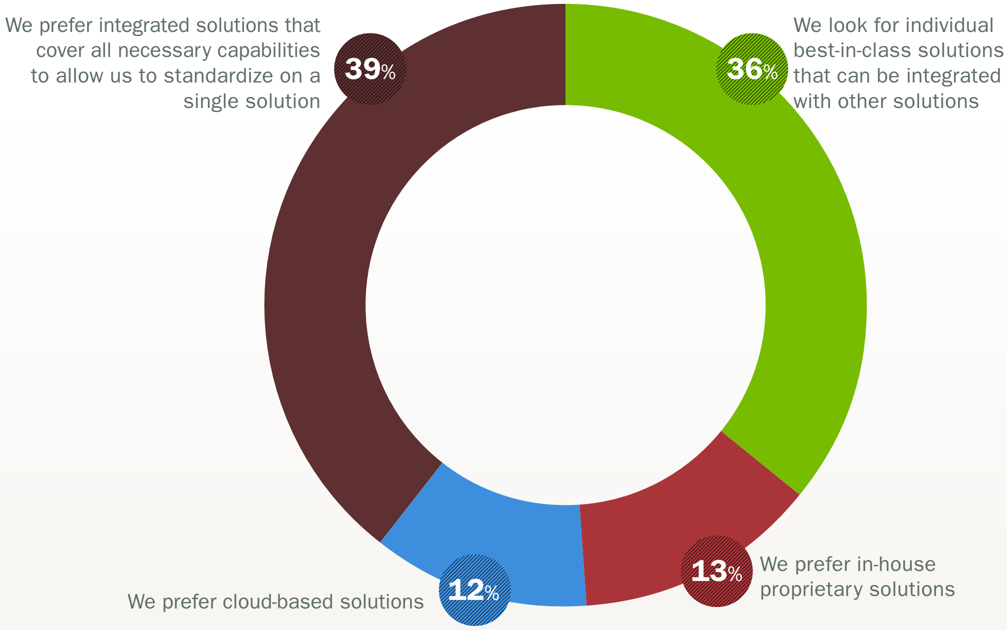
FIGURE 19
Which of the following technologies have you implemented or are planning to implement?



When preparing for omnichannel and reviewing ways to implement new, innovative solutions, many retailers are trying to simplify their processes. That could mean leaning away from homegrown, customized solutions in favor of a full suite of solutions from one provider. A growing number of merchants also are considering cloud-based opportunities as a way to ease cost and integration issues.

As seen in Figure 20, 39% prefer integrated offerings that allow them to **Standardize on a single solution**. Only slightly fewer (36%) favor individual **Best-in-class solutions that can be integrated with other solutions**. A small but significant 13% choose **In-house proprietary solutions**, while **Cloud** has captured the allegiance of 12%.

FIGURE 20
Describe your strategy when it comes to choosing solutions.



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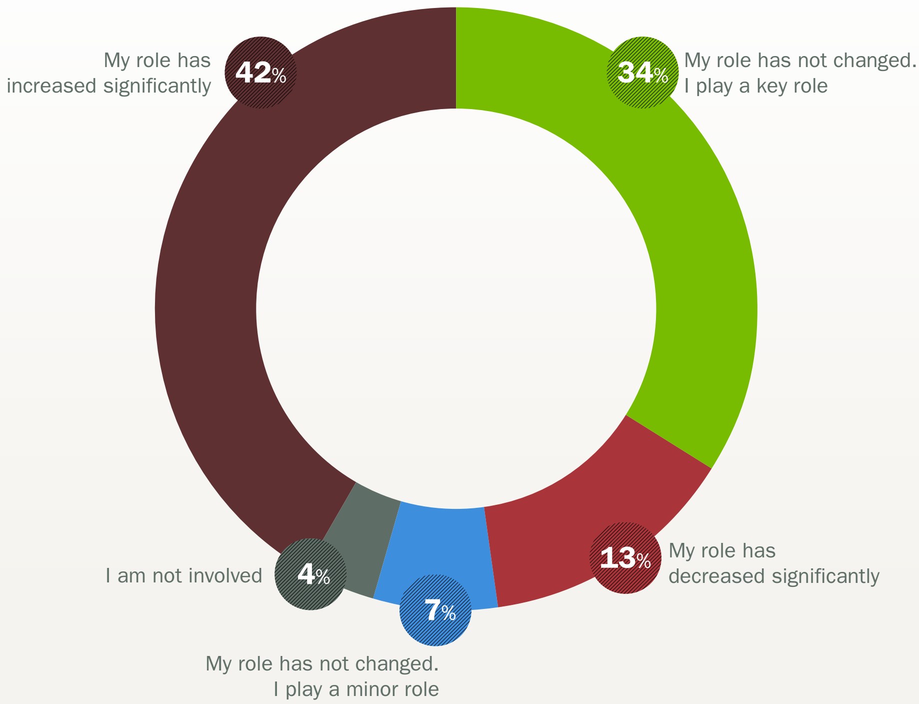
39% of retailers prefer to implement integrated solutions that allow standardization on a single solution.

Retailers' sober assessment of their current IT capabilities and aggressive plans to fill the gaps attest to the critically important role IT plays in all facets of retailing. While IT at one time didn't even have its own seat at the C-suite table, today most C-level jobs involve finding ways to collaborate with the IT team to better understand and run the business.

The proof is in the statistics: 42% of retail executives report that their role in identifying and selecting technology solution providers has increased over the past 12 to 24 months (see Figure 21), in addition to the 34% who were already playing a key role in the selection process and continue to do so.

FIGURE 21
How has your role in identifying and selecting technology solutions providers changed over the past 12 to 24 months?



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42% of retail executives report that their role in identifying and selecting technology solution providers has increased over the past 12 to 24 months.

CONCLUSION: EMBRACING THE CHALLENGES

The retail industry must transform itself at an unprecedented pace to meet the demands of an empowered consumer in the midst of an uncertain economy and a highly competitive marketplace. Those conditions are forcing radical change in retail business models, company culture and operations practices.

Nowhere is this transformation clearer than in the C-suite, where requirements for collaboration and heavy IT dependence are blurring the lines among once-distinct functions. Retailers are implementing a wide range of must-have technologies as well as deep analytics capabilities while simultaneously leading the cultural and operational changes needed to best leverage their brand value. It all adds up to a long list of competing priorities, but also represents tremendous opportunities for retail executives able to find a path through the challenging landscape.

Tweet

Retailers are implementing a wide range of must-have technologies as well as deep analytics capabilities while simultaneously leading the cultural and operational changes needed to best leverage their brand value.

This survey was conducted in November and December 2014, and circulated to retail executives representing companies in a wide variety of vertical markets and company sizes. Following are the demographics of the survey respondents.

FIGURE 22
Respondents' vertical markets

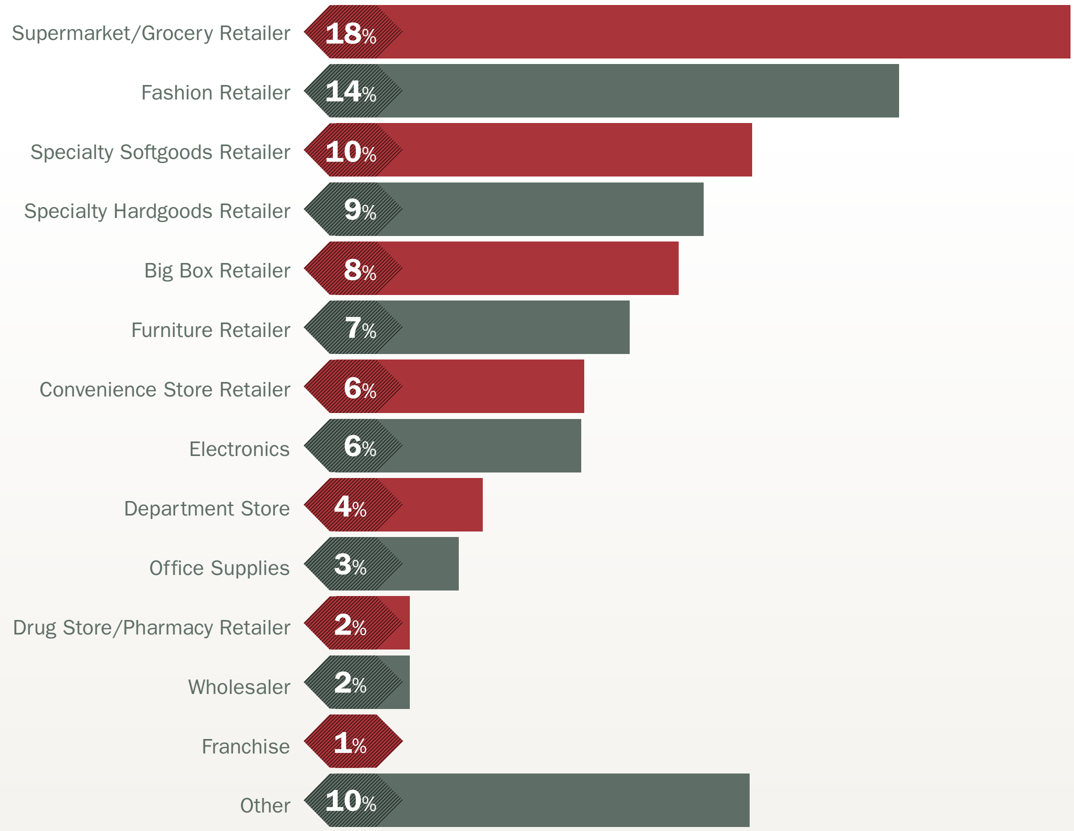


FIGURE 23
Company size, by number of stores

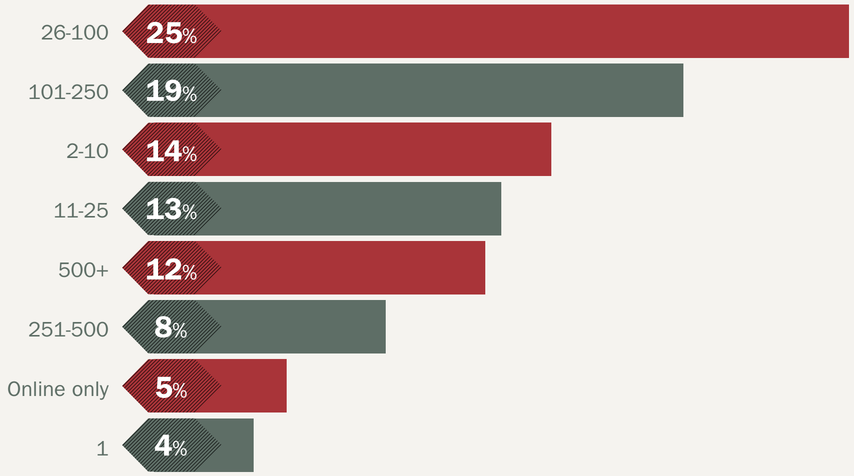


FIGURE 24
Annual revenue

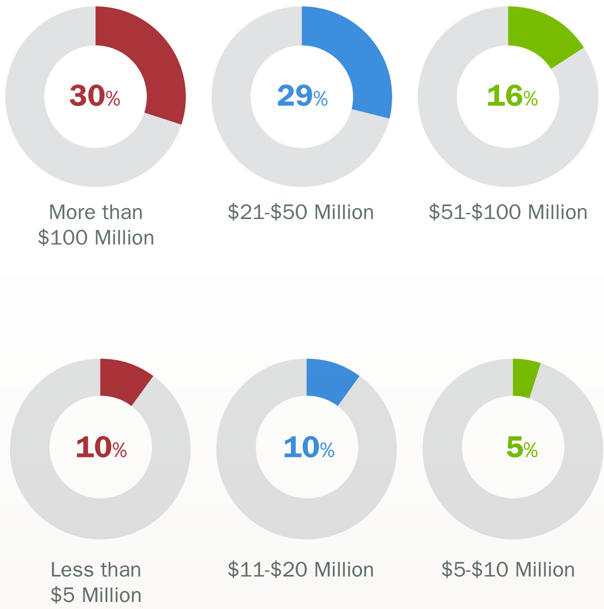
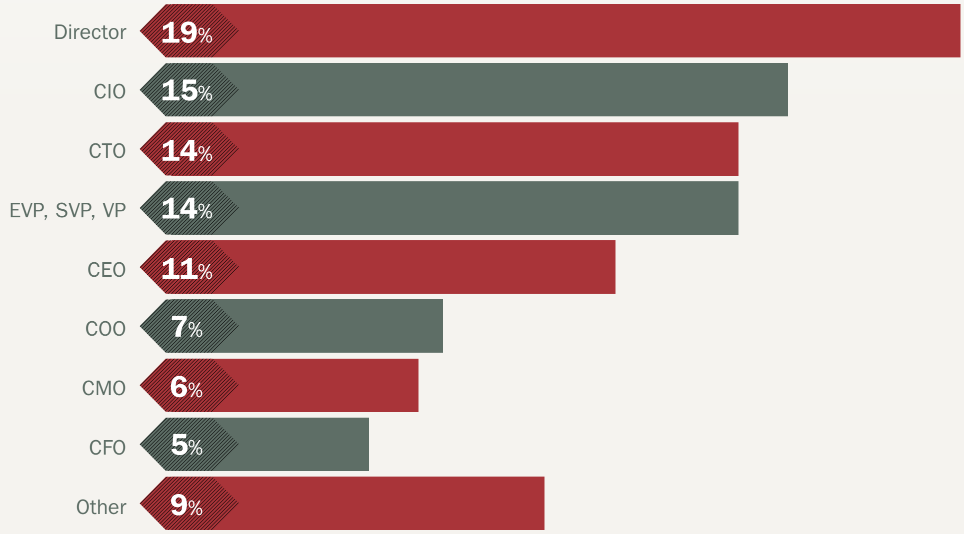


FIGURE 25
Respondents' titles



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