

# Staying Ahead of the Pack: Retail Trends to Adopt in 2018



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As marketing and advertising professionals, it's not only our job to excel at driving results in the current landscape, but to also look at the future and try to anticipate the next big opportunity for success. Consumer habits are constantly evolving in a number of ways. These changing behaviors play a significant role in how we reach consumers, and in order to ensure our clients are capitalizing on these trends, it's important to proactively anticipate what's next and implement strategies that are in line with consumer expectations. As we continue into the new year, here are four trends we expect to make waves in 2018:

## **Small and local businesses need to prepare for voice search**

If you were one of the reported millions who purchased an Alexa device during the 2017 Black Friday holiday shopping weekend, it should come as no surprise that voice search is taking over. Even though the usage of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered devices is up (Google reports nearly 20 percent of mobile queries are voice searches), that doesn't mean that everyone should jump on the bandwagon quite yet.

Small and local businesses need to first ensure their digital

presence is ready to handle new technology like artificial intelligence. Because search engines source data and information from sites like Yelp, and Google My Business Listings, businesses will need to be increasingly vigilant that their website, location and contact information is up to date on these third-party tools. Whether or not companies can capitalize on voice search will depend on the organization's ability to build a 'digital doorway' that is easy for consumers to find and access across AI-powered devices – and that begins with optimizing websites (both mobile and PC) and company listings. This will guarantee the company is easily found by consumers, and search engine crawlers responding to a voice inquiry.

### **Local businesses need a holistic approach to video advertising**

While the advertising world is betting big on Facebook, organizations will lose out if they put all their eggs in one basket. Today, one platform or ad format isn't enough. Businesses must focus on more deliberate and connected campaigns in the new year. When considering where to place your client's next video advertisement, be sure to think about the end goal of the campaign and then determine what channel will best support you in achieving that goal. For example, when determining the strategy for a campaign, audience should be the number one consideration factor.

### **Businesses will learn to adapt to the changing video market.**

As the industry continues to shift away from TV advertising, most are struggling to tell the same story on digital platforms. Many marketers have grown accustomed to telling their story through a 30-second ad spot on TV. Now, they face the challenge of conveying similar messages in a shorter amount of time (ideally six seconds in length) and with an arguably less captive audience. That becomes exceptionally difficult when attempting to repurpose the exact footage and storyline from a TV ad for one on Facebook or YouTube. In the

age of short attention-spans, we must spend some time in the new year brainstorming and configuring new ways to tell the right stories on the right platforms – and quickly.

**Developing store “communities” will win over customers in 2018.**

Enhancing the in-store experience is critical, and brands and retailers need to come up with creative techniques to elevate this experience in 2018. Recently, we’ve seen many successful businesses leverage their physical stores for community events, finding ways to connect with the customer beyond the shopping experience. For instance, some auto dealerships have begun hosting community movie nights on days when the business would typically be closed. Others are offering their space to local charities or non-profits for fundraisers or events. By turning the dealership into a community space, dealers are strengthening their bond with current and future customers. Across all industries, retailers should emphasize the online and community experience in 2018.

While consumer buying trends continue to shift on what might seem like a daily basis, local and small businesses can stay ahead of the pack through targeted marketing efforts. As businesses look to increase overall revenue in the new year, capitalizing on these trends can make all the difference between success and failure.

***About the Author:** A successful entrepreneur, Bill has amassed over a decade’s worth of e-commerce and online marketing knowledge. He steers client campaign performance processes, working closely with the client services & product teams. In the past, Bill was the President of Cordless Workz, an online e-commerce business that provides consumer electronics to consumers, he was a Co-Founder of multiple specialty e-commerce websites – built & implemented the online marketing growth strategies and he developed early*

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