

# PRODUCTIVITY, COLLABORATIVE TOOLS FOR RETAIL, HOSPITALITY & TOURISM



AUGUST 2018 TECH BRIEF FOR RETAIL, HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

## Four Ways to Improve Employee Productivity

All managers intuitively know the optimal way to maximize workforce productivity is to hire the right people in the first place. But there are [strategies and tools](#) available – particularly in the retail, hospitality, and tourism space – that can centralize and optimize the training, documentation, recognition/rewards and collaboration capabilities necessary to ensure your work groups are performing at top capacity.

## Labor Force Takeaway

Managers are generally aware that soft skills and people skills are in high demand at this time. As technology begins to assume repetitive and rote functions traditionally occupied by less skilled associates, the need to upskill and professionalize employees to take over the customer experience is critical. This is especially true in the retail, hospitality and tourism vertical, where often the client experience **IS** the product you offer.

The credentials needed in this area are varied, and available through a number of well-known providers, and are often available in online modalities. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) offers a number of credentials (CP – Certified Professional, SCP – Senior Certified Professional) for managers of people, and team leaders, or those who aspire to be, in both face to face and online delivery systems. These associates are key players in coaching and supporting line workers, and can leverage learnings across entire teams of people, providing a great return on investment.

Many community colleges also offer classes, certifications, and even degrees in Hospitality, Hospitality Management, and Customer Service. The Disney Corporation, the de facto leader in managing and elevating the customer experience, offers online professional development certifications in areas like Leadership, Employee Engagement, Quality Service, and Business Excellence, to ensure both an exceptional customer experience and sustainable results.

# Enabling, Measuring, and Reinforcing Productivity

Managing and supporting employees in the Retail, Hospitality and Tourism space has often been about checklists – ensuring daily, repetitive tasks are managed timely, and with standards. Supervisors stayed very close to the line workers, inspecting work output, and coaching for compliance. It was a non-stop job function, and one – given high turnover rates and seasonal employees – that yielded few long-term gains. The same skills were often coached and re-coached.

With the advent of technology, and specific software and hardware tools, some of these functions became easier to implement from a speed perspective, however, software “islands” developed, with tools carrying the same or similar information that didn’t share with one another. Employees were often tasked with having to work with multiple tools, competing for kiosks to access onsite applications (not web-enabled) and the result was often less productivity rather than more.

**Savvy companies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can “white glove” the customer experience best by enabling and empowering employees, virtualizing service and support and providing the tools – digitized and automated workflows – to ensure an executable and sustainable process.**

Key employee measurements include things like sales per linear foot, or square foot (in the case of floor sales), inventory performance by department and/or category, turnover, GMROI (Gross Margin Return on Investment), items sold per transaction, sales per employee, and accessory percentage (profit that comes from the second items sold, not the first). But gathering information for the computation of these metrics often required pulling information – which was often delayed and dated - from accounting tools, HR tools, and manual checklists, to arrive at calculations. Even with all this manual manipulation, the results are often not driven down to the employee (unit) level, because items were not counted or reported at that level of detail. So individual management, a function assumed by supervisors was necessary for accounting and reporting.

As a result, integrated tools that combine training, reporting, collaboration, time management, and yes, even checklists, needed to be developed to address these issues. Luckily, tools like this are now available. Further, the combination – and proliferation - of web enablement and smartphone/PDA apps have greatly improved access to these newer tools, increasing the likelihood that employees will use them in real time, and with better results.

Workflow management tools such as Idonethis, KnowledgeSync, TimeCorder, and even Cisco Cimpres as well as Workforce Production for Retail bundle modules with POS and accounting to advance operations. MBO management, 360 feedback, recognition and rewards, service productivity, operational productivity, and task administration give employees a way to actively engage in workflow management. They can accept tasks, report on objectives completed, receive training, and obtain feedback in a common portal. Supervisors similarly can inspect performance through video capabilities, push information and obtain reports, and measure performance through a series of dashboards that give them real time visibility of team activities and performance in a single tool.