



BOSTON RETAIL PARTNERS

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Retailers Report a 550% Increase in the use of Social Media for Merchandise Planning

According to BRP's 2014 Merchandise Planning & Allocation Benchmark Survey, Retailers Recognize the Value of Social Media to Enhance Merchandise Planning Processes

Boston, MA – November 3, 2014 – According to a survey released today by Boston Retail Partners (BRP), retailers are focused on expanding their use of social media and technology solutions to deliver the products consumers want in a seamless shopping experience. BRP's [2014 Merchandise Planning and Allocation Benchmark Survey](#) uncovers considerable windows of opportunity for retailers to optimize business processes and leverage advanced technology to enhance the effectiveness of merchandise planning and allocation decisions.

Today's consumer demands an instantaneous unified retail experience, whereby all of a retailer's physical and digital selling channels converge to provide one easy, expedient and cohesive shopping experience. These unified commerce shopping concepts have grown significantly, requiring retailers to expand their functional capabilities to support consumers' elevated expectations for the shopping experience. With dozens of emerging technologies and techniques to support and expand business, retailers have the tools they need to optimize merchandise planning and deliver the products and experience consumers demand.

The 2014 survey of top North American retailers explores the current state of the industry and how technology is shaping retail capabilities, highlighting the priorities, processes, tools and strategies of today's retailers.

"Effective merchandise planning and allocation processes are critical to success of selecting the right products, in the right quantities, for the right locations and at the right time. Many selling seasons have been won or lost through planning and allocation decisions," said Walter Deacon, principal, Boston Retail Partners. "While some retailers rely on very basic tools like spreadsheets to manage their merchandise planning processes, progressive retailers are leveraging sophisticated business intelligence and predictive analytics to further enhance merchandise planning processes and decisions."

Key Survey Results

Key findings that demonstrate the achievements of retailers leveraging technology to improve their merchandise planning processes include:

- *Nearly 50% of retailers have integrated business processes and systems across channels*
- *31% of retailers utilize a single inventory across channels*
- *26% of retailers have real-time visibility of in-store/online inventory*

Retailers are focused on these areas of improvement to enhance their assortments:

- *33% of retailers utilize CRM data to feed their business intelligence tools*
- *39% of retailers use social media to facilitate planning within product development, a 550% increase over last year's social media analytics*

“While the usage is still primarily among early adopters, according to our survey, there was a 550% increase in the utilization of social media to facilitate planning for product development,” said Ken Morris, principal, Boston Retail Partners. “It is refreshing to see more merchants tapping customer insights from innovative sources to optimize their assortments and planning processes.”

The 2014 Merchandise Planning & Allocation Benchmark Survey gold sponsors include [7thonline](#), [Epicor](#) and [Logility](#) and the silver sponsor is [JustEnough](#).

To download the complete 2014 Merchandise Planning and Allocation Benchmark Survey, visit: <http://bostonretailpartners.com/resources/2014-merchandise-planning-allocation-benchmark-survey/>

About Boston Retail Partners

Boston Retail Partners (BRP) is an innovative and independent retail management consulting firm dedicated to providing superior service and enduring value to our clients. BRP combines its consultants' deep retail business knowledge and cross-functional capabilities to deliver superior design and implementation of strategy, technology, and process solutions. The firm's unique combination of industry focus, knowledge-based approach, and rapid, end-to-end solution deployment helps clients to achieve their business potential. BRP's consulting services include:

Strategy | Business Intelligence | Business Process Optimization | Point of Sale (POS)
Mobile POS | Payment Security | eCommerce | Store Systems and Operations | CRM
Unified Commerce | Customer Experience & Engagement | Order Management
Merchandise Management | Supply Chain | Information Technology | Private Equity

For more information on BRP, visit www.bostonretailpartners.com and follow the BRP Retail Insights Blog at www.bostonretailpartners.com/blog.

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