

No one can predict the future.

No one can predict consumer habits.

However, by understanding where today's consumer mindset is along with current technologies, and how our customer sees our operations, we can better understand how to position ourselves for the future.

S T A N D A R D S



POS



Excellent
Products &
Services



Happy Staff



Free WiFi

Many would consider **future-proofing** the acts of updating hardware, holding regular staff meetings, updating your website and Facebook page and constantly improving on these areas. And that's partly correct.

But here's ~~5~~  additional ways to
“futureize” your store.

①

Share

“If it was not shared on
a social network, did it
really happen?”

Consider the number of social networks and who uses them *(as explained to me by a 23-year-old)*

Facebook - For your parents and their friends

Instagram - For selfies

Yo - Let's you "Poke" others with the word "Yo"....

Slack - For work stuff

Telegram - "It's like, super secret" *(it's encrypted)*

Snapchat - "If you're over 30, don't attempt using it"

Twitter - For younger people and athletes

GroupMe - Messaging for groups

WhatsApp - For overseas sharing

Employees should be actively engaged in helping develop shareable content for any of the social networks or apps that you want to use. They can also assist in identifying which of these works best for your business.

However, sharing is not limited to just posting updates and announcements on social media.

You need to practice “social listening.”

What are your customers saying about your shared content? Are they reacting to your efforts? Are they promoting our brand?

Social listening extends to what your customer’s network is saying about a brand.

The successful retailer will use technology to blur the line between the online and in-store experiences while creating a conversation to promote the brand experience.



Get employees involved in social media campaigns, consistently share on these platforms, listen for customer feedback, act on it.

②

Educate

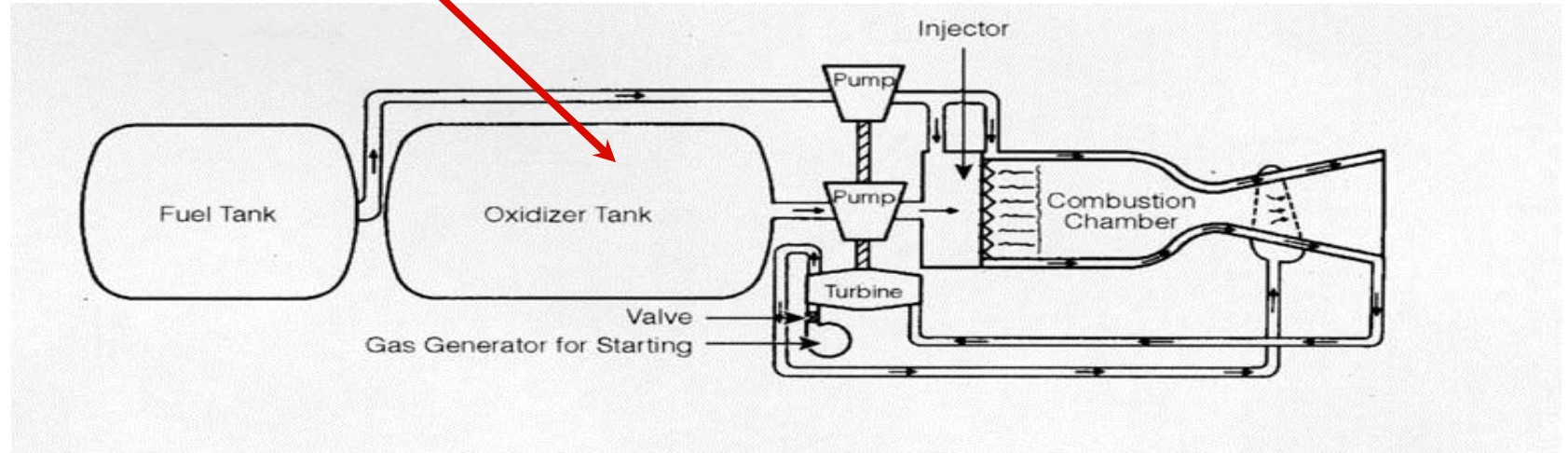
Today's consumer is
the most-educated and
well-connected in
history. However ...

... you must assume your customer has never heard of you or your products before. Always look for opportunities to educate them.



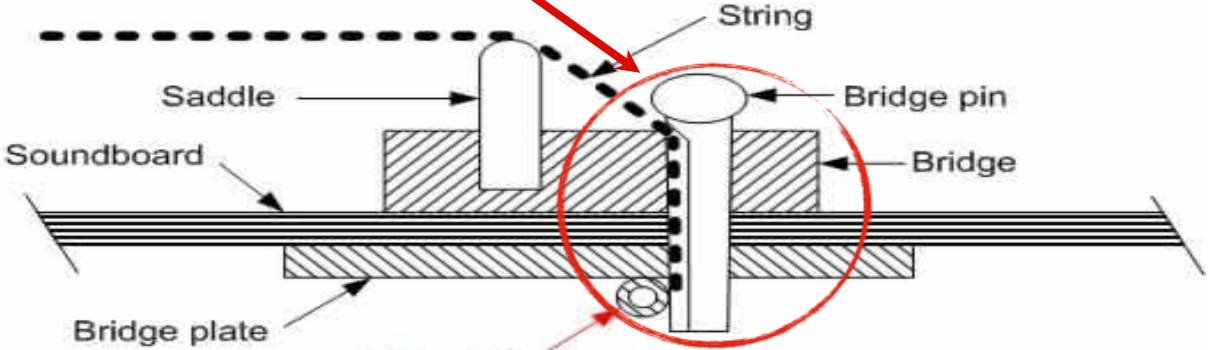
You have to assume that the consumer who's just starting out doesn't know a bridge pin on an acoustic guitar from an oxidizer on a rocket propulsion system.

Oxidizer On Propulsion System



Bridge Pin On Acoustic Guitar

Ball end correctly seated against the bridge plate



Ball end tight against the bridge plate

You must also educate your customers where it's most meaningful. In other words, you can't send out your message and expect all your customers to be on the same place and experience the same message the same way.

If your message is not delivered at the right time, in the right place, to the right customer, it doesn't matter how good the message is.



Identify your methods of engagement, be consistent. Educate the customer in at least one area.

③

Relationships

Consumers want relationships (even with the ease of online ordering).

However, it's important to remember that you can manage the customer relationship but you can't control it.

Captivate through solid relationships.

Do not try to control.

Good relationships return dividends for
years.

The customer who feels valued through ongoing, sincere, captivating relationships will be your greatest brand ambassador.



Develop a customer-centric environment that builds strong relationships.

④ Visit

What's your competitor doing right now?

Is your competition using the latest technology?

Have they recently redesigned their stores? Website?

Are they communicating with your customers online?

How are their lessons?

Is their store staff knowledgeable? Friendly? Outgoing?

What's their latest promotion?

Are they carrying a new line or a line you have in your stores?

Are they on the show floor now scouting out the latest gear?



Visit one competitor once a month.

⑤

Innovate

Innovation is more than a new sales strategy. To be truly inventive you must look at the long-term horizon.

Innovation Checklist

Is it:

- sustainable
- profitable
- scalable
- responsive
- customer-driven
- employee-driven
- trackable
- easily understood
- easily advertised
- a problem solver





Brainstorm 6 new innovative strategies. That's one per month, or half a year's worth of promotions. Refer to Innovation Checklist.

⑥

Connect

Connections have many tentacles. You connect with your customers, your customers connect with you and your staff, those connections reach others to create new connections. This directly relates to numbers 1 (**S**hare) and 2 (**E**ducate).



Connect with 5 new people per
week.

⑦

Experiences



**THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT
SEGMENT OF THIS ENTIRE
SESSION!!!!**



Experiences should be

4 to 1



For every one guitar, drum set, bass, amplifier or instrument sold, you should have 4 experiences to offer the customer.

Experience examples:

How To Use It - free classes, set-up sessions, etc.

Digital Signage/Proprietary Mobile App

(relates back to #1 Share - blur the line between in store and online)

Augmented Reality (AR) - digitally change the instrument color or add accessories, create an AR video for your store (Google Cardboard)



Retailing can be the closest thing to
show business.

Create the experience for your
customer.



Create one program to enable an experience that entertains and engages consumers through a proprietary experience.

In the end, the 7 Future-Proof Ideas I just outlined boil down to one word: **SERVICE**

1. **Share**
2. **Educate**
3. **Relationships**
4. **Visit**
5. **Innovate**
6. **Connect**
7. **Experiences**



It will be imperative that
you continue to offer
spectacular service
over everything else.

In Summary

Future-Proofing is about managing your customer's experiences through what you **S**hare online while **E**ducating them to build solid, long term **R**elationships. This process also includes **V**isiting your competitors regularly to understand what's happening on their turf, **O**ffering **I**nnovative concepts, making daily, weekly, monthly, yearly **C**onnections and offering amazing customer **E**xperiences.

If you're not, someone else is, and they will have a very bright, profitable future.

Thanks for attending!

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Be sure to read Billy's column, The Retail Doctor, in Music Inc. magazine

