

March Retail Sales Indicate Confident, but Cautious Consumer, According to NRF

by: National Retail Federation

From clothing and electronics to home furnishings and building materials, retail sales in March increased across the board for the ninth straight month. According to the National Retail Federation, retail industry sales (which exclude automobiles, gas stations, and restaurants) for March increased 0.6 percent seasonally adjusted from February and 3.9 percent unadjusted year-over-year.

“Shoppers last month were eager to take advantage of retailers’ spring promotions on everything from apparel to outdoor furniture,” said NRF President and CEO Matthew Shay.

“While current indicators point to a more confident consumer, increasing gas prices and a cramped job market could hamper consumer spending during the upcoming summer months, a key time of year for retailers.”



“Improving financial situations including the temporary payroll tax cut, wage gains and a strengthening labor market likely supported March spending gains,” said NRF Chief Economist Jack Kleinhenz. “If gasoline prices can stabilize over the next few months, consumer spending may continue to grow, but it remains to be seen what consumers will cut out of their budgets because of the cost of filling up their tank.”

March retail sales released today by the U.S. Commerce Department show total retail sales (which include non-general merchandise

categories such as autos, gasoline stations and restaurants) increased 0.4 percent seasonally adjusted over February and 7.3 percent unadjusted year-over-year.

Warmer weather helped building material, garden equipment and supplies dealers see increased sales last month, increasing 2.2 percent seasonally adjusted from the previous month and 5.5 percent unadjusted over last year. Consumers also stocked up on new spring attire, boosting clothing and clothing accessory stores sales 0.6 percent seasonally adjusted month-to-month and 3.4 percent unadjusted year-over-year.

Electronics and appliance stores also saw solid gains; sales increased 2.1 percent seasonally adjusted from the previous month and 3.6 percent

unadjusted over last year in those stores. Sales at grocery stores increased 0.3 percent seasonally adjusted month-to-month and 4.1 percent unadjusted year-over-year. Health and personal care stores sales increased 0.7 percent seasonally adjusted over February and 5.1 percent unadjusted over last year.

Also benefitting from warmer weather, furniture and home furnishing stores sales increased 3.6 percent seasonally adjusted month-to-month and 3.8 percent unadjusted year-over-year.

4 Online Retail Expansion Tips



by: Daryl Des Marais

Tip 1: Quality Content, Quality Pictures and Descriptions

The content and the quality of what is displayed is what will sell. Always keep in mind shipping concerns and cross promotions with in-store availability.

Tip 2: Great selling sales page design

Knowing how to capture the short attention span of the reader and get them to sign up or make a small initial purchase will be the key to continued success. Offering a follow up and after sales service with easy contact information will be the kicker to further successes.

Tip 3: Highlight Unique Benefits

As consumers shop more online, benefits will have to differ between providers in more than just price and exclusivity. Offers, discounts, and coupons will push buyers in a certain direction. Offering unique value to them will be key to expanding your customer base.

Tip 4: Offer Incentives for Customer Loyalty

Give incentives like free offers and gift cards with purchase. Create an online loyalty program designed around your company and its select promotions. Accentuating these with repetition and will provide perceived value and increase customer retention.



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Limited Time Offers

Get PCI Compliant Credit Card Processing

Existing Retail Pro customers that own PC Charge, PPM or Credit Pro EFT licenses (these EFT links are not or, in the case of PC Charge version 5.82, will not be, compliant with PCI standards and have been discontinued by Retail Pro – with no further support or upgrades being provided), and who are current on Software Assurance (SA) can get their PC Charge, PPM or Credit Pro licenses replaced with a current Retail Pro PCI/PA-DSS compliant EFT link, **at no additional charge** for the replacement Retail Pro EFT link licenses.

Update your Software Assurance Today!

Retail Pro V7 customers with expired Software Assurance

- > 50% of their reinstatement fees waived with the purchase of a new 2 year SA plan or
- > 70% of their reinstatement fees waived with the purchase of a new 3 year SA plan.

Retail Pro V8 or V9 customers with expired Software Assurance

- > 60% of their reinstatement fees waived with the purchase of a new 2 year SA plan or
- > 80% of their reinstatement fees waived with the purchase of a new 3 year SA plan.

Contact your Account Manager at 800.513.5917 **before May 30th** to take advantage of these limited time promotions!

COUNTERPOINT

Get CP Online FREE!

CounterPoint Online (CPOne) from Radiant Systems is an ecommerce and web-hosting service designed exclusively for merchants using Radiant Systems' CounterPoint SQL. With easy set up, flexible configuration, and powerful retail functionality, CPOne can help you quickly extend your product offering to the web.

\$590 Value!

From now until June 30th, obtain **CPOne FREE** with the purchase of your CounterPoint POS System. In addition, this promotion allows customers to use CustomerConnect and Smart Alerts free for 60 days.

Offer valid for new CounterPoint customers and CounterPoint V7 to CounterPoint SQL upgrades only.

Get in touch with your Account Manager today to get your store on the web with **FREE** CP Online!



Product Spotlight

Store Credits in Retail Pro

Issuing A Customer Store Credit

- Open a new receipt.
- List the customer on the receipt - use the "Bill to Cust#" field.
- Find the customer by sorting by last name
- If this is a new customer, click on new to create the new customer.
- Click on the side menu to assign existing or new customer to the receipt.



- Create your return receipt the way you normally do.
 - Go to tender - amount due will show as "overtendered."
 - Click on store credit tender button to assign the overtendered amount to the customer store credit value.
- #### Redeeming Customer Store Credit
- List customer on the receipt.
 - If customer has store credit, it will show in the store credit field.
 - List items on receipt that customer is purchasing.
 - When you click on tender, the system will ask if you want to use the store credit.
 - Select "Yes" or "No" as applicable. "Yes" will deduct store credit from total. "No" will not deduct anything from the total and customer must pay for purchase.
 - Finish the receipt as you normally would.



Product Spotlight

Promotions in Microsoft RMS

Promotions are a great way to reduce overstock, of course. At the same time that promotions help move particular items, they promote your store, promote customer visits, and promote customer relationships. All these goals become even more important during recessions and other slow times. Customers have less money to spend and are much more careful about spending it, so it's essential that retailers take the initiative to know their customers and provide the value they need and are searching for. Over the next few months, we will show you how to set up promotions inside of RMS.

Define a weekly schedule

1. On the Database menu, click Schedules.
 2. Click New.
 3. In the Description box, enter a name for the schedule; for example, Happy Hour or Lunch Special.
 4. In the Time Increments box, select an increment of 15 minutes, 30 minutes, or 1 hour. The grid will vary depending on the selected increment.
 5. On the schedule grid, click or drag to select the time periods you want to schedule. For example, if you want a sale price to be in effect from 10:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. on Mondays, drag to select the periods in the rows from 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM in the Monday column.
- Tip: To select all the periods for an entire column or row, click or drag the column or row headings.
6. Click Set. Store Operations will highlight the periods in red to show that they are part of the weekly schedule.
- Note:** To clear a time, select it and click Clear.
7. When you finish defining the weekly schedule, click OK to save the changes.
 8. Specify the items you want to put on sale and their sale prices.

Recognizing the Touch Points That Make Up the Customer Experience

by: Rick Segel

When a potential customer opens up a newspaper and sees an ad for your store, an impression is created that is recorded in the data base of the customer's mind. A sales associate who may not have any input at all on the advertising, they will be affected by that impression. These touches or points of contact between a business and a customer have been described as the Moments of Truth which have been documented in the book by the CEO of SAS, Jan Carlsson.

Some people describe these Moments of Truth as "when the rubber meets the road." However, the best description for the Moments of Truth has been documented by the author, Shep Hyken from St. Louis, who developed the terms Moments of Magic or Moments of Misery. Think about a time when you walked into a store and they were greeted with a big smile, an upbeat tone of voice and a non-threatening greeting, such as "good afternoon and welcome to Pam's Pet Emporium." That is a Moment of Magic. Think about the customer who comes in and isn't greeted, looks for a salesperson and then asks the sales associate "where is the dog food?" And their reply is either "over there" and they point or they say "I really don't know I think it's somewhere in the back." Those are Moments of Misery.

Our goal is to turn those Moments of Misery and the unmemorable moments and experiences into Moments of Magic. This is a much easier task than you might think. The reason for that is that all we have to do is to determine what the customer expects and then analyze what we are doing and exceed those expectations. There is one other element that must be considered in the equation, and that is what our competition is doing and the amount of competition we have. The more choices the customer has the more we must do in order to have the upper edge.

The other lesson that we all need to understand is the core belief of the Disney philosophy of customer service and expectations. It is summed up in just two words EVERYTHING SPEAKS. That means that the smallest detail is noticed by the customer even though we might ignore it because we see it so often. The dirty cage that needs attention is noticed by the customer, the nametag on crooked is noticed by the customer, and the smile because you are so busy is noticed by the customer. It truly is the little things that make the big difference and are all components of the customer experience.

Defining what the customer expects

Think of yourself as a customer and ask yourself "what would you expect when you enter a shop?"

- > I expect the signs on the outside to be clean and readable
- > I expect the front door to be clean
- > I expect to see an interesting display within the threshold area
- > I expect to be greeted and welcomed into the store by a neat and clean and upbeat sales associate
- > I expect the sales associate to be there when I need them
- > I don't expect to be hounded when I am just getting my bearings
- > I am willing to be engaged with interesting conversation but not bothered with stupid questions like "how are you?" – they are not my doctor
- > When I ask for assistance in finding what I am looking for I want them to know
- > If I ask a question about a product I want them to be the expert or find the expert for me
- > I also expect to be escorted to the section of the store where the merchandise is I am asking about --I don't want to hear "it's over there"
- > I expect the sales associate to suggest other items that will accessorize or enhance what I am purchasing
- > I expect this entire experience to be fun, upbeat and entertaining
- > I expect to be dealing with a pet person or a dog person or a reptile person or a cat person – I want a specialist
- > I expect the store to accept my credit cards
- > I expect the store to process the sale as quickly as possible
- > I expect a refund policy clearly posted
- > I don't expect to have a hassle if I have to return a product in a timely manner
- > I expect that if I am in a hurry I want the sales associate to speed it up
- > I expect to see the type of merchandise that I want and believe the store carries
- > I expect to see reasonable prices - good buys – and merchandise that will WOW me
- > I expect to have a restroom that is neat and clean
- > I expect the store to be online
- > I expect the store will have some type of loyalty program I can benefit from
- > I expect EVERYTHING because I am the CUSTOMER

Now think about your customers and ask yourself what do your customers expect and what are you delivering to them.

Get to know Radiant Systems' COUNTERPOINT

Part 3



This article series will cover some of CounterPoint's Features and why its a great choice for Retailers of all sizes.

INTEGRATED E-COMMERCE

Connect your CounterPoint system to your online store with CPOne, our powerful and affordable web-hosting and website creation service.

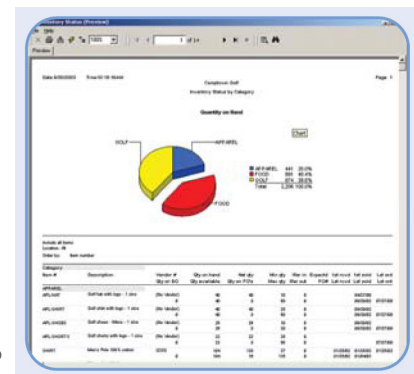
- > Expand your business to the web with minimum effort and expense
- > Items, prices, and customers come directly from CounterPoint
- > Eliminate costly double entry – import orders to CounterPoint SQL
- > Built-in marketing tools help you reach new customers



REPORTS LIBRARY

An extensive library of built-in reports gives you the information you need to run your business successfully.

- > Hundreds of built-in reports and journals
- > View current conditions as well as historical details
- > Modify parameters to analyze the data your way
- > Print Quick Reports from any LookUp
- > Powerful Merchandise Analysis Report and Sales Analysis by Group
- > Report let you analyze your inventory in hundreds of different ways



Next month's Get to Know Radiant Systems' CounterPoint will cover General Benefits of purchasing the solution for your retail operations.

RETAIL OPTIMIZER

Editor/Design: Laura Gonzalez
800.513.5917 ext.124
LauraG@RetailTechnologyExperts.com