

The Biggest Changes in Retail Today
Robin B. Wilson, Owner of Robin B. of East Greenwich, RI
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Summary by Molly Gram

The retail environment is always changing and because of this, companies need to adapt their products and services to meet the needs of the consumer. Robin Wilson knows the importance of flexibility and adaptability in the retail world. With over 20 years of experience at all levels of fashion, from Victoria's Secret to her own small business, Wilson has proven her ability to stay relevant on consumer needs.

Today, technology plays a key role in allowing retailers to reach their customers. Companies that properly utilize these resources will continue to be successful. Retailers like Macy's and Crocs are closing stores due to unproductive locations. Demand is still there, however, for brick-and-mortar stores. Fifty-five percent of online shoppers prefer to buy from a merchant with a physical location. So while having an online shop for most businesses is important, it is equally beneficial to have physical stores. Two out of three shoppers go online and then visit a store. This provides opportunities for retailers to gain brand loyalty through more than one channel. Retailers are strategizing to reach consumers and their shopping methods. Those who make these changes will stay relevant in the competitive retail industry.

Inspiring and innovative organizations have something in common, which is the golden circle. The golden circle consists of three questions, with *why* at the core, then *how* and *what* on the outside. Few people know why they do what they do. In order to be successful, retailers must understand their purpose, cause, and beliefs so they have a clear, unified message to share with their audience. Why should we care? Why should consumers care? Retailers who successfully connect with their consumers work the golden circle from the inside out. Start with why, then move on to how and what. People buy *why* you do something. This relates to the concept of lifestyle branding that many retailers have utilized to gain loyal customers. Retailers like Petsmart, Lowe's and Apple know why they sell their product and manage to create a unified message to consumers. Lowe's incorporates fresh thinking with technology and customer needs with their home goods. They cater to the female shopper and always keep that in mind when deciding on product decisions, advertising or promotions. Apple is always looking to do things better and innovate something that is different from the current market. With their store set up, product and marketing, Apple stays true to their brand and purpose, which is why they continue to be one of the best known successful retailers around the world.

Online stores are making waves and the strategy is meeting changing demands of consumers. The pattern with many retailers today is to start online, gain influencers and establish a stable business to then move into brick-and-mortar stores. It allows companies to test the market and find their niche before investing in a physical store. Robin B Clothier, Robin Wilson's clothing and accessories store, has managed to create a lifestyle message that is similar to Wilson's personal beliefs and values. Robin B. has American-made essentials with an emphasis on fit, fabric and construction; the merchandise is targeting consumers who want ethically made, quality product. With the utilization of social media, Robin B. is adapting to the changing retail environment.

