

# What Exactly is the Store of the Future?

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## The Store of the Future

There's been some retail industry buzz of late about "The Store of the Future". At a retail conference recently, while participating in a roundtable discussion and commenting on points around customer experience, I was asked my perspective on the subject.

Honestly, I struggle with defining the "Store of the Future" as the future never comes. It's a bit like the movie plot for Back to the Future – some of the thinking will come together eventually, but largely only some of the activations will actually work because you're dealing with concepts that are not yet a reality.

## Is dreaming of the future retail space a waste of time?

Should we have thought leaders dreaming up store projects like this? Absolutely!

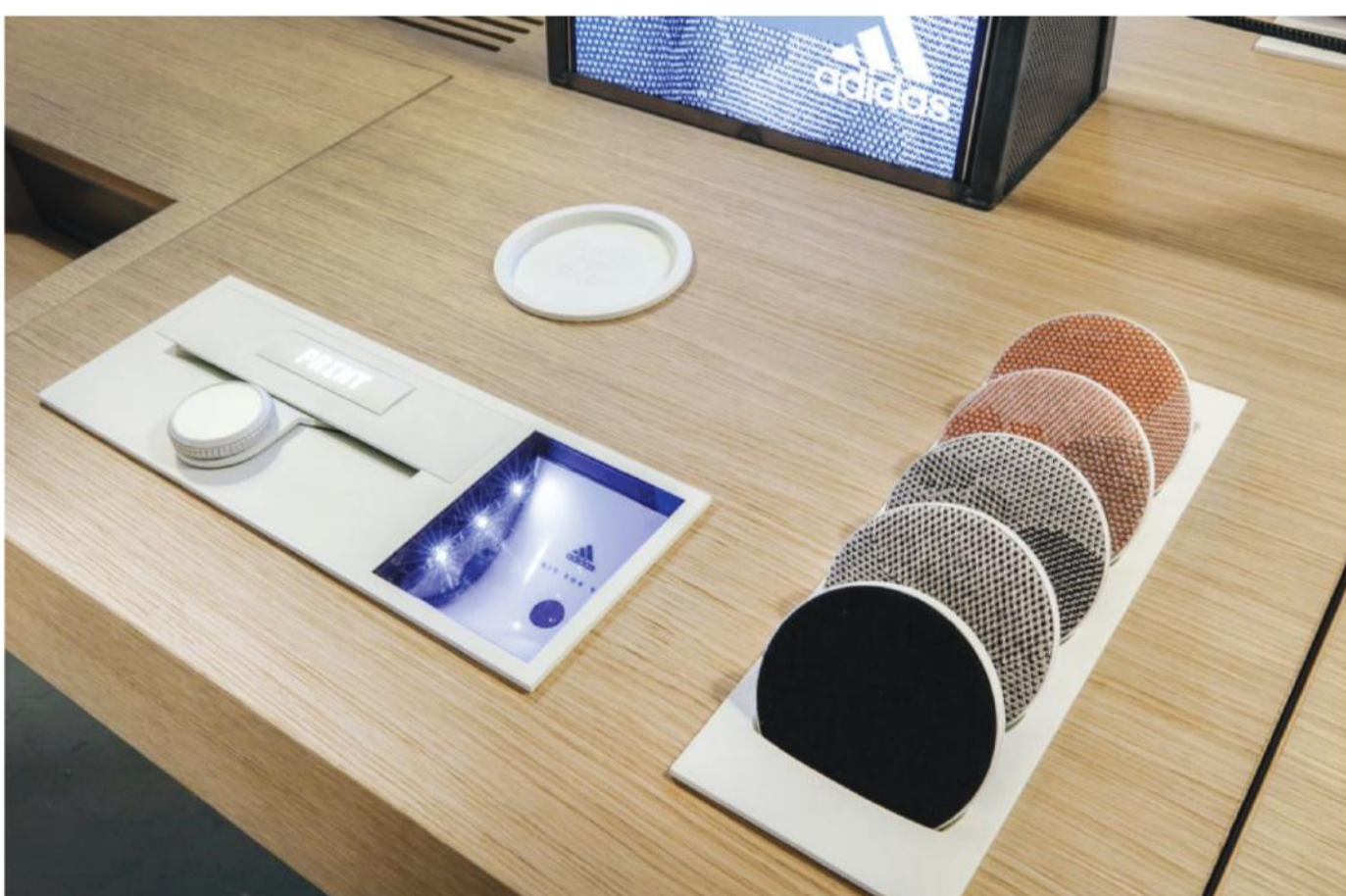
“ It's like Formula One and what the pinnacle of motorsport does for the automotive industry.

We wouldn't have seen half the technology in our everyday cars today if it wasn't for the development in F1 and how dynamically they push the boundaries.

The statement we use every week at Prospace Design/IA Hardware is: **"The Only Constant In Retail is Change!"**

Some of our clients have undoubtedly asked us for their "Store of the Future" and we've had to pare this back to a forward-thinking "Pilot Store". And this is part of our formula to creating a pilot store – a commercial space that is cutting edge, without promising elements that are not yet available (so you aim for F1 instead of Marty McFly's DeLorean).

- 1. Technology that is used, not seen.** From reactive point of sale to automated checkout; intuitive product selection to geo-fenced service; magic mirrors to projection mapping. All amazing technology, but the desired effect is to not feel like you are standing in front of a computer, or being served by a [ro]bot. The technology will assist you to navigate, select, purchase products without really knowing it's helped you!
- 2. Make UX the priority.** UX (User Experience, or more specifically Customer Experience) is at the forefront of retail, design and digital right now, and with good reason. In digital, if you're not investing in UX... you're not in business. It's a pity some retailers don't look at their physical stores in the same way! The in-store user experience is no different, it can be mapped and we can learn a lot about what happens when we understand customer flow. We see the Store of the Future will be so refined, this process will be less binary and more fluid.
- 3. Product your way.** Not only will the product you want be presented to you, delivered to your house or available where you need it when you need it, you'll be able to select the colour, cut, print and size along with a range of other variants that make it "Brand You".



## Leading the way in retail

The fundamentals of retail remain relatively unchanged, focused relentlessly on customer service, transporting you somewhere else within the environment, presenting a perspective on product that you as the customer can relate to and importantly; being where you want, when you want.

How does this relate to your store? This is an important question to ask yourself or your team. It's necessary to always think of what you're doing next. If you wait for that time to come around when you realise you should be delivering on a specific part of your store experience, chances are you're a year or two behind. By the time you budget for it, come up with the concept, ensure it works in the space, then develop the product to cater to it... too much time will have elapsed.

Constantly think about what you could do, what you would like to do – and plan for it. Create a 3-year plan. Before you know it, those ideas will start to become reality and your business's evolution will continue!

Don't be scared to research all the cool and directional things that are proposed around the "Store of the Future" as these will lead you to ask questions of your own business and how much your customer can tolerate. You want to push your customer, but not alienate them.

“ Staying abreast of the trends means you'll know what people respond to.

More than anything ensure your stores are current, engaging and above all else hero your product and brand!



Dan has over 20 years experience articulating brands within a physical space. With expertise across design and development, marketing, visual merchandising and retail operations, Dan's client side experience is a unique and valuable asset to our clients. He is an innovation specialist with an innate understanding of the design process, project management practices, procurement and construction. Dan's focus is ensuring that we deliver unparalleled experiences in every field of design.