

EDGE COMPUTING: ACHIEVING CONTACT-MINIMIZED COMMERCE

EDGE TECHNOLOGIES ARE STREAMLINING COMMERCE, POWERING REAL-TIME RESPONSIVENESS, AND DRIVING BETTER CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES.

When the coronavirus hit Italy in early 2020, ecommerce activity in the country skyrocketed 81% in a single month.¹ In the United States, by April Amazon had announced it would field 175,000 additional employees as online sales swelled.²

Yet there was already a clear trend toward contact-minimized commerce – that is, transactions either conducted online or carried out with little or no direct physical touch.

“Even after the pandemic is behind us, many customers will continue to prefer contactless commerce,” predicts Gary Wood, vice president of Intelligent Edge for Computacenter. “Businesses across a number of industries were already moving in this direction, because contactless commerce simply provides a better customer experience.”

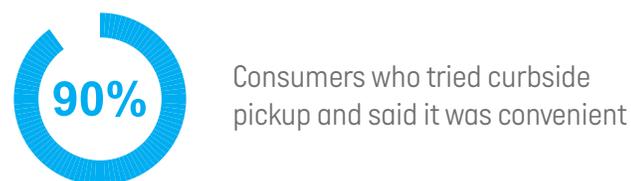
In fashion, luxury brand Gucci has rolled out an augmented-reality service that lets customers “try on” shoes on their smartphone.³ In grocery, high-end purveyor Whole Foods is moving to deploy Amazon’s Go contactless-checkout technology.⁴ And in auto and real-estate financing, remote online notarization (RON) has soared as consumers choose to complete transactions virtually.⁵

While contact-minimized commerce can transform your business, it needn’t require an overhaul of your operations, according to Wood. But you might need to embrace new mindsets, reimagine processes, and deploy new technology. “Edge technologies in particular will enable not only contactless commerce but also real-time data analysis and better customer experiences,” Wood says.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES AT THE EDGE

Demand for contact-minimized commerce began with online shopping and accelerated with rapid merchandise delivery. Once retail game-changers like Amazon achieved reliable two-day delivery, the next logical step was buy online, pick up in store (BOPIS), for an ecommerce experience with same-day fulfillment.

FIGURE 1: CURBSIDE CONVENIENCE⁶



The pandemic extended BOPIS to curbside pickup, which is here to stay. [See Figure 1.] Three-fourths of the top 50 U.S. store-based retailers now offer curbside pickup, and “what started as a coronavirus stopgap is likely to have a permanent impact on the way people shop,” reports the New York Times.⁷

Going forward, businesses will use edge technology to enhance the shopping experience, whether it’s augmented-reality displays, curbside pickup, mobile payment, or another contact-minimized variation. How? By performing data analysis and taking data-driven actions at the point of transaction.

“Once you extend data processing to the edge device, you can make commerce contact-minimized in a broad range of scenarios,” says Milan Djukic, director of Intel Smart Edge product, business development, and operations for Intel, a strategic partner to Computacenter in contactless commerce. “You can also add functionality for a richer customer experience.”

For example, Intel is working with partners to develop a contactless mobile payment solution. What’s unique about the technology is that key data processing takes place at the edge. That capability enables retailers to not only reduce average transaction processing time – a key consideration for quick-service restaurants, for instance – but also deliver offers in real-time.

“Let’s say you’re at your favorite café, where you usually purchase a coffee and muffin,” Djukic explains. “But today you only bought a coffee. The solution could present a coupon for a muffin in real time to convert the sale.”

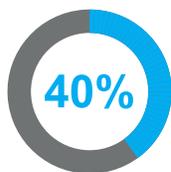
In a traditional transaction, data analysis would take place in the cloud, and there’d be no way to make the offer before the transaction was completed. But because processing occurs at the edge, very low latency enables the retailer to engage with the customer in real time.

EDGE-ENABLED BUSINESS MODELS

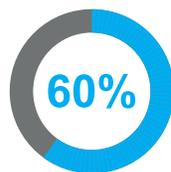
Edge technology isn’t revolutionizing commerce only in retail. In the healthcare industry, consumption of contact-minimized care doubled this year. [See Figure 2.] Going forward, edge devices and connections will make telemedicine more capable, flexible, cost effective, and easy to consume.

For example, “virtual rounding” solutions enable healthcare professionals to effectively monitor patient health in exam rooms and other hospital areas without direct contact. Proven deployments include easy-to-use mobile devices and secure network connections that can be rolled out in just days. The approach enables physicians to see more patients and consult with remote peers on the fly, and it provides patients with a safer and more convenient experience.

FIGURE 2: THE RISE OF REMOTE MEDICINE⁸



Consumers who have used telemedicine for remote care, compared with 19% before the Covid-19 crisis.



Consumers who plan to continue using these services after the Covid-19 crisis.

Contact-minimized commerce can deliver advantages to your business and your customers alike. You can make transactions faster and more convenient, with new capabilities that enhance the customer experience. And by eliminating the latency of cloud-based processing, you can serve more customers to capture greater revenue.

What's more, by processing data at the edge, you can lower costs for data transmission. You can also improve security by avoiding interception of payment and other sensitive data as it travels from the point of sale to the cloud.

But contact-minimized commerce requires new thinking about how you interact with customers, Djukic believes. "It's not just about how you handle transactions," he says. "It's about adding value. One contactless capability has some value. Combining multiple services for richer user experiences delivers much greater value."

In fact, interacting with customers remotely can actually bring them closer to your brand. "Contactless experiences can become in-context experiences, because you're using data to understand where shoppers are in their journey, and you're providing seamless service throughout that journey," Djukic says.

Finally, in addition to new mindsets, you need the right technology partner. "Look for a provider that understands your business and what's possible," Wood concludes. "The right provider is one that can integrate a solution with your existing infrastructure and tailor it to your unique needs. Most of all, they should understand how contactless commerce can be transformative for your business."

GET IN TOUCH

Interacting with customers remotely can actually bring them closer to your brand. To learn more about driving better customer experiences, visit us at www.computacenter.com/us.

1 "Digital Payments Soar Amid Coronavirus Restrictions," Wall Street Journal, March 2020

2 "Amazon to Hire 75,000 More Workers as Demand Rises Due to Coronavirus," CNBC, March 2020

3 "Gucci Unveils 1st Global Shoe Try-on in Snapchat," Mobile Marketer, June 2020

4 "Amazon Plans to Roll Out the Tech It Uses at Its Go Stores to Whole Foods Locations in 2021," Business Insider, August 2020

5 "The Race to Embrace Remote Online Notarization ("RON") in Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic," National Law Review, March 2020

6 "How Retailers Are Adapting to Curbside Pickup," NRF, May 2020

7 "Customers Still Like to Shop in Person, Even if They Get Only to the Curb," The New York Times, October 2020

8 "IBM Study: Consumers Remain Unsettled Amidst COVID-19," Dealerscope, July 2020



Computacenter(US)
2 Bryant St, Suite 150, San Francisco, CA 94105

www.computacenter.com/us
1 800-228-8324

The Intel Partner Titanium logo, consisting of the word "intel" in a small, lowercase, sans-serif font, followed by "partner" in a larger, lowercase, sans-serif font, and "Titanium" in a smaller, uppercase, sans-serif font to the right. The logo is set against a dark grey background with a lighter grey vertical bar on the right side.

intel
partner Titanium