



The Preference Paradox Every Partner Must Anticipate

By Christoph Schell, Chief Commercial Officer, HP

Right now, we are all eager to fully experience the world in person again. Forced by a global pandemic into isolated, digitally mediated lifestyles for more than 18 months, people everywhere say in-person experiences are a priority as circumstances and safety guidelines allow.

In regard to purchasing behavior, many crave a return to in-person shopping. In fact, nearly half of U.S. consumers said [they would return to brick-and-mortar stores “immediately”](#) after COVID restrictions relaxed. In the UK, 80% of online shoppers said [they missed at least one aspect](#) of in-store retail. And in China, where e-commerce is even more mature than many markets, [at least 80% of physical stores](#) had rebounded to some degree by late 2020 and have continued to show resilience.

While these trends refer to consumer sentiment, tech sellers focused on commercial transactions should prepare for the same shift in preferences among their business customers as the lines between consumer and commercial buying behavior merge. Over the past few years, business buyers have come to expect [a more “consumer-like” experience](#). And they’re even [more likely than consumers to take it personally](#) when a seller fails to adapt to their changing expectations.

This dynamic puts IT partners in a bind. Digital transformation has brought both efficiencies and incredible opportunities to the business of meeting customers where they are and doing so almost entirely online. But with the pendulum of buying preferences recalibrating to include more offline interactions, how can sellers meet their customers’ shifting needs without losing the momentum of digital commerce? The answer: with a deeper focus on data.

It’s easy enough to recognize a broad shift in buyer preferences. It’s harder to determine how to effectively transform your business to match their habits. And when we consider the preference paradox that arises when customers’ desire for human interaction converges with their demand for convenience, it gets even more complicated.

Partners who base their decision-making on the analysis of detailed data aren’t leaving their business’ future growth to chance. They are staying a step ahead of buyers and adapting with targeted, scalable changes. They are using analytics to sidestep preference paradoxes. That’s why HP is rolling out a new tool for its partners called HP Amplify Data Insights. The platform combines real-time updates of proprietary, third-party and partner data sets to glean insights that help partners connect with customers and drive growth on a level not previously possible. [HP Amplify Data Insights](#) enables partners to identify emerging trends and anticipate customer needs based on more than one billion concrete data points refreshed weekly.

At its core, HP Amplify Data Insights is a collaborative amalgamation of rich insights optimized to monetize data and supercharge long-term partner growth strategies. Partners feed into the platform with a data pack that includes anonymized data related to inventory, online-offline flags, sell-

in information and more. HP then combines and enriches the data pack with data from across our ecosystem including: sales data, market data, customer support interaction data and product technical information, among other inputs. From there, we apply deep analysis in order to yield descriptive, predictive, and prescriptive insights for our partners.

Of course, this approach is only practical if we protect privacy and ensure data security at every step. Partners must consent to sharing their data and can only view their own data and aggregated benchmark data—never the individual data of another partner. When a data pool is small, or one partner accounts for more than 20% of a data set, we anonymize partners by adding an additional layer of data.

The insights this process generates can help partners devote resources effectively and innovatively, even when the right course of action might not be intuitive. Let's say, for example, that offline interactions do indeed return with a vengeance in the coming year. The data may show that customers continue to complete the earliest steps of their buying journey online—a trend we saw growing even before the pandemic. In this case, a partner enhancing their digital presence may be the best way to attract and retain customers.

That's just one example. In every circumstance, data continues to generate new and creative possibilities for customer engagement—at a rate that outpaces what we could have imagined just two years ago. In fact, when businesses prioritize data at the center of their vision and strategy, they are [58% more likely to beat their revenue goals than non-data driven companies](#).

With sophisticated analytics, tech sellers can achieve an understanding of customer behavior that is more subtle and targeted. HP Amplify Data Insights places the transformative power of data in our channel partners hands, bringing a new level of precision and agility to their business decisions and helping them continuously reach their customers—wherever they are.