Q: It's been suggested that wearables could prove to be revolutionary for retail. What are some of the enhancements wearables can make possible for retailers down the road?

We at Chetu are very interested to see how the future of wearable technology will shape every industry, but within the realms of the retail landscape we believe that retailers can leverage location-based marketing services on wearable devices by using geo-fencing and beaconing technology to facilitate customer engagement. Geo-fencing is a technology that enables contextual marketing to users within a certain external perimeter. While geo-fencing is mainly concerned with externally creating a demand and bringing consumers in, it is supplemented with on-site proximity services called beaconing. Integrating location aware marketing mediums with CRM platforms helps deliver highly targeted contextual messages to users precisely at the right time. Although this tactic is not exactly the cutting edge in technology nor marketing, making use of the Heads-Up Display (HUD) seems promising. We do believe that retailers should plan ahead and target wearable innovators with a pilot program to refine a strategy for when there is mass adoption.

Q: Realistically, what can retailers expect to gain from integrating wearables over the next year or two?

The overall benefit retailers can expect to gain by incorporating wearable technology is strengthening customer experience through streamlined interactions, and giving the customer access to more relevant information at the right time. With the challenge of separating oneself from the competition, retailers are looking to leverage a better customer experience and brand interaction. Streamlining payment processing and customer product inquiries, plus using timely, contextual alerts about new products, promotions, and other related data by utilizing wearables will increase the user experience a consumer receives when interacting with a certain brand.

Q: Do you see a future for Google Glass in general? What do you think its future is in retail?

At the time when Google Glass was making a solid buzz no one really saw a viable need to buy the expensive glasses beyond being an early adopter of innovative technology. We at Chetu are still remaining optimistic about the mainstream use of smart glasses. As a technology software provider we cannot help but wonder of all the possibilities that can become, if only it was embraced by the masses, and was seen as a lucrative venture by application proprietors. In retail specifically we believe in the augmented reality applications that can help retailers. The fundamental idea is superimposing computer generated graphics over the environment, as a consumer sees it, by using the camera function. It gives consumers a virtual “hands on approach” to shopping by manipulating reality to show how a need or want will be fulfilled.

Q: What about Sony’s SmartEyeglass? Do you think the tepid response to Google Glass will hurt it? Could it succeed in any ways that Google Glass has failed so far?

Unfortunately we do not see Sony’s SmartEyeglass going above and beyond the impact of Google Glass in terms of demand. We do like the idea of the augmented reality applications, but the bulky and unseemly look will likely throw off casual technology adopters. That may have been the fallacy with Google Glass, that people did not feel the glasses were aesthetically pleasing. Even if they were satisfied with the functionality, they had to be inclined to wearing the style that Google offered. Hence, we believe Sony has a solid idea with the SmartEyeglass Attach, which is hardware that adheres to a consumers own glasses. Although it is a single lens display, offering a product which snaps to glasses that consumers already find visually appealing may be the key. We are always curious which technologies are to gain mass appeal and we welcome the challenge to create innovative application solutions that will lend a hand to their continued success.
Q: The Apple Watch seems most likely to take hold in the mainstream. What impact do you think it will have on retailers?

The market for smart watches is still in its infancy, and it is unclear how much of an impact the Apple Watch will make. One thing is for sure, that if anyone is going to create a product that will give a certain technology a push in the right direction it will be Apple. Chetu cannot wait to develop a diversity of practical applications from software proprietors, who wish to make a mark on the retail industry. As previously mentioned we see location-based marketing being significant. Also, creating apps that facilitate operational functions, like Human Capital Management (HCM) applications are beneficial. For example, integrating alert and task setting modules, could utilizing an employee base more efficiently.

Q: Can the increase in popularity for mobile payments help drive adoption of wearables by shoppers?

Absolutely. Since Apple has come out with NFC inherent devices, we have seen mobile payments gaining some promising momentum. The ubiquity of smart phones and endorsement by popular retailers’ use of mobile payment ready POS devices in stores has created a strong current. Consumers who see the benefits of an all-digital wallet may be more prone to adopting wearables.

Q: How do you see retailers using wearables differently than they’re currently using mobile?

What we believe is that it is not how to use wearables differently than mobile devices, but rather how to synergize mobile with a proper wearable application. Obviously, there are some inherent limitations on wearable technologies. Creating applications that use the convenience, portability, and the HUD of wearable tech devices with the functionality of a mobile phone or tablet is the best way to maximize an applications potential.

Do you see wearable devices shaking up the retail space? Share your comments with us below or talk to us on Twitter @Chetulnc

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