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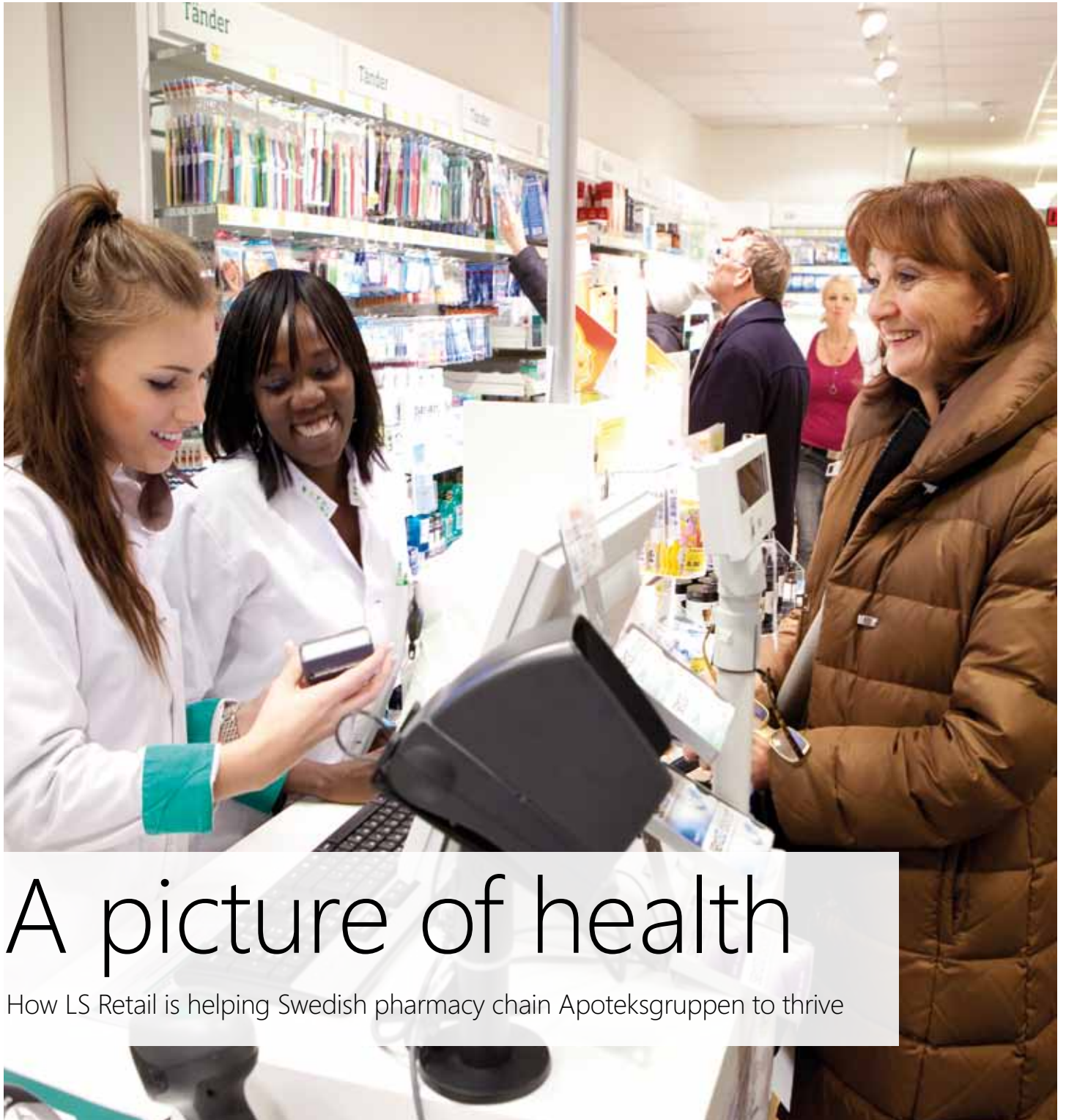
"For us, the cloud is about delivering a highly scalable, cost-effective way of providing computing power"

Stuart Simms, Rackspace



MICROSOFT TECHNOLOGY IN RETAIL, CONSUMER INDUSTRIES AND HOSPITALITY

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A picture of health

How LS Retail is helping Swedish pharmacy chain Apoteksgruppen to thrive

Summer 2011 £9



Cross-channel retailing | Creating a consistent experience
Retail operations | Connected, end-to-end systems
Cloud computing | Taking advantage of Windows Azure

MARKETWATCH

THE LATEST NEWS IN RETAIL, CONSUMER INDUSTRIES AND HOSPITALITY

€233

Distribution, retail and hospitality sectors could gain more than €233 billion through the adoption of cloud computing by 2015

Source: EMC's Cloud Dividend Report 2011

JustEnough celebrates customer success

US alcoholic beverage speciality retailer Beverages & More (BevMo!) has achieved a 30 per cent reduction in time spent on replenishment after implementing software from JustEnough. The retailer selected JustEnough Replenishment to help it forge a path for growth and the solution was successfully implemented in eight weeks.

"The ideal solution for BevMo! had to offer best-in-class capabilities, as well as integrate with our existing enterprise resource planning system. Additionally, our users needed to be trained to use the system within a very short timeframe," said Carrie Smith, BevMo!'s senior vice president of planning and strategy. "That's why we really liked JustEnough's Replenishment solution. Not only does its functionality allow us to get more granular in regards to how we replenish to individual stores, but its graphical user interface is very simple to use and understand. If you can run Microsoft



Bob's Stores is now benefiting from a fresh approach to replenishment

Excel, you can run JustEnough."

Apparel and footwear retailer Bob's Stores had similar success when it implemented JustEnough Demand Forecasting and Replenishment in 2009. Within the first year of the rollout of the solutions, Bob's Stores

reduced average inventory ownership by 12 per cent. The following year, that figure dropped another 4 per cent. The number of apparel and footwear assortments that have met the company's in-stock goals increased by 9 per cent during that same timeframe.

Agentrics redesigns PLM

Agentrics, a global retail and supply chain solutions provider, has launched new product lifecycle management (PLM) software to help retailers overcome the complexity of managing an increasing number of product launches and own-label products.

PLM Active, will allow retailers to quickly adopt IT best practices and processes, which will simplify and increase the speed of new product launches. Currently, product launches can take anywhere between 20 and 80 weeks to prepare because of the vast quantities of information and numerous suppliers involved. Using the solution, retailers can provide details on everything that goes into a product, from the idea stage right through to the shelf.

Jeremy Whinnett, director PLM at Agentrics, explained some of the benefits: "PLM Active

allows retailers to substantiate any claims made, whether it's to verify products' ingredients, labelling or supply chain details. Everything becomes so much more transparent and easier to use with a centralised database of pertinent information at your fingertips. With a single glimpse, retailers get a holistic view of all products throughout their entire life, giving rise to considerable cost savings and faster time to market."

The company's strong partnership with Microsoft was an important part in delivering this solution, as Whinnett highlighted: "We worked very closely with Microsoft and the company helped us redesign this PLM solution. It was very much based on Microsoft processes and principles and that has had a very beneficial effect on the use of the system."

Movers and shakers

- **Retail industry and IT services** veteran has joined Junction Solutions as retail product director while Lori Seal has joined as vice president of e-commerce
- **Paul Coby has been appointed** the new IT director of UK retailer John Lewis. He joins from British Airways
- **Sir Terry Leahy has stepped down** as CEO of Tesco after 14 years in charge. Philip Clarke has now taken over the reigns
- **K3 has acquired managed services** and solutions provider Panacea.



How to plan effective assortments

Peter Leith offers three strategies to help retailers drive sales, increase margins and satisfy customers

The saying, 'you can't please everyone', does not stop today's retailers from trying to do just that. But consumers are not making it easy. Increasing emphasis on customer centricity has affected a retailers' ability to plan effective and profitable assortments like never before.

Today, retailers must plan their assortments right from the start – especially because they drive the business for months or even full seasons at a time. That means finding the balance between the assortment's width – the number of products within a category – and its depth, which is defined as the number of units for each one of those products. Failing to do so typically results in one of two problems: either the assortment is too narrow and doesn't offer the range of products consumers expect, or the assortment is too broad. If it's the latter, the retailer runs the risk of product obsolescence and paying the ultimate price in the form of markdowns. Having to slash prices can have a significantly negative impact on margins.

So, how can retailers plan their assortments so that their products sell at full price in order to maximise margins? At JustEnough Software, we recommend three strategies to help retailers plan effective assortments without overspending on inventory:

Keep customers coming back for more. The number-one rule in retail is to ensure that shoppers can find what they want on the store shelves. Planning assortments that are wide enough and deep enough to meet local customer preferences is the goal of every retailer. In order to accomplish this, they must know who their shoppers are by store or store grouping. This will help them determine if one store group should focus more on product range, while another should focus more on product depth;

and which stores in particular need to keep a fresh mix of inventory on hand or more products in one category over another. But these are questions that can only be answered when the retailer has lower-level visibility into its customers' buying behaviours. Advanced technology today can help the company develop and implement lower-level assortment planning strategies that balance the width and depth of the product selection. As a result, even the most demanding shoppers will find what they want, when they want it.

Stick to the budget. Before the economic downturn in 2008 and 2009, many retailers prescribed to a model in which their buyers had full control over the assortment planning process. Today, retailers can't afford to let their buyers purchase whatever they want without considering the impact their decisions might have on the bottom line; everyone in the organisation must work from one cohesive plan that meets the company's financial targets. Of course, retailers still need to make sure their customers are happy with the selection of inventory available in their stores. That's where technology comes into play: advanced planning solutions can help retailers better understand which category is delivering the highest margins, where they're seeing the best returns on their products, as well as which categories have the fewest markdowns.

Think about store sizes and layouts. One size doesn't fit all when it comes to configuring the assortment plan to accommodate varying store sizes, formats and fixtures. A retailer may want to stock 30 different styles of denim in its store, but if one location only has room for 10 styles, shoppers may be overwhelmed by the amount of inventory crammed into a small space. Typically, space planning is done at the category level while


"The number-one rule in retail is to ensure that shoppers can find what they want on the store shelves.

Planning assortments that are wide enough and deep enough to meet local customer preferences is the goal of every retailer"

assortment planning is done separately. Retailers that want to truly maximise their space and assortment plans to ensure customers can find exactly what they want on the store shelves must balance the width and depth of their assortments based on consumer demand, and then integrate that with their space plans. The result? A better, more efficient customer shopping experience that will drive higher sales, reduce markdowns and increase margins.

Retailers that adopt these strategies to optimise the width and depth of their assortments, work from one plan that keeps financial targets at the forefront and remember to integrate their assortment plans with space plans, will not only maximise sales and margins, but they'll also provide their loyal customers with a positive shopping experience. As such, they'll prove that it is possible to please everyone all of the time.

Peter Leith is director of professional services, retail planning and execution at JustEnough



Have your
cake and
eat it...

Today's consumers want it all. They expect the same levels of product and service from a store as from the internet, a call centre, catalogue, mobile phone, kiosk or franchise, and they expect to be able to mix and match these channels as they please.

Lindsay James finds out what this means for retailers

The vast majority of retailers today are embracing the move towards multi-channel. According to recent research from Aberdeen Group, 69 per cent have had a multi-channel initiative for at least a year, with 84 per cent taking advantage of online opportunities. This is followed closely by investment in the bricks and mortar store and call centre channels. Despite this, however, the research titled *The roadmap from multi-channel to cross-channel retailing: the true ROI of unified customer experience*, goes on to say that 74 per cent of these multi-channel efforts happen in separate and siloed channels.



I want it all

“As retail cautiously moves into the second year of this decade, retailers of all sizes increasingly understand that multi-channel retailing is the optimum strategy for surviving and growing in a market driven by changing customer needs,” explains Tony Bryant, head of business development at K3 Retail. “Simply put, retailers need to be open for business whenever and wherever customers want to shop. Despite this widely acknowledged perception, the majority of retailers still do not have an integrated multi-channel operation.”

For today’s customer-focused retail operation, this

disconnect presents a huge barrier to success. The time-starved and digitally-inclined customer of the moment wants to shop at a time and a place suited to them, whether it be in store or online, at home or via their mobile. Not only this, but they expect to mix and match these channels to fit their needs, maybe conducting research online before going into the store, or even using their smartphone in the store, reading online reviews before they buy. They might come into the store to see a physical product, but then go home and order it online. Or they might place an in-store order for a product, but have it delivered at home. They

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might even place an order in a store via their mobile while standing inside a competitor's outlet. This behaviour is usually sporadic and unpredictable, yet to succeed, a retailer must be able to cope with it, delivering consistency of brand, price and overall experience across all channels.

"Consumers want to be able to review consistent and relevant information on product and price promotions, complete purchases, receive deliveries and process returns at the locations that are most convenient to them," says Rick Chavie, vice president of retail marketing at NCR. "However, the reality today is that online and 'click and collect' shopping services are often executed through multiple organisational units."

Javed Sikander, Microsoft's solution architect for the retail industry, agrees, adding that traditionally, multi-channel was about a retailer deciding to sell its products on the internet by developing transactional e-commerce websites in addition to stores

and/or a catalogue business. "But today's consumers are fluid," he explains. "They may research a product online on e-commerce sites, read reviews on Facebook, receive input from their friends on Twitter, do price comparisons in-store using their mobile phones and finally purchase the product via a retail app on their mobile phone. For a retailer, these fluid shoppers present opportunities and challenges. Shoppers are making increasingly informed purchase decisions and so it is imperative for retailers and brand manufacturers to engage with shoppers on multiple touch points, fully understand their intent, and influence their buying decisions to enable the cross-channel scenarios that shoppers desire. Retailers who cannot do this run the risk of ending up as expensive showcases for their online, cross-channel competitors."

With all this in mind, it becomes clear that retailers need to evolve their multi-channel efforts into true cross-channel efforts,

removing the technological barriers that are holding them back. "True cross-channel retailing is no longer just a nice to have – it's a must have," says Salvatore Cicero, chief technology officer at Servebase. "By connecting channels, retailers can not only better understand their customers, but serve them better and actively market to them, wherever they may be."

But for some retailers, creating this connected environment is a daunting task. From an operational standpoint, becoming a true cross-channel retailer – where customers can research, buy and acquire an item across multiple channels in a single transaction seamlessly – is easy to talk about, but hard to do successfully.

"It's a highly complex undertaking that can be expensive and requires a well-executed strategy," says Lindsay Carpen, retail practice director at Junction Solutions. "It also requires retailers to break down internal silos across the channels and avoid

Delving into digital

Microsoft's digital commerce solution set is far reaching. Javed Sikander, Microsoft's solution architect for the retail industry, gives us a quick rundown of the key elements:

Digital signage. This has evolved from simple information displays for products, price and promotions to interactive media that motivate customers, provide multimedia content about brands and allow them to interact with the content using natural user interfaces. Microsoft has partnered with NEC to offer a next-generation digital signage solution, which allows retailers to allow their customers to interact with their brands using gesture controls and intelligent video analytics through a virtual store environment projected on a display. Shoppers can directly interact with the merchandise using gestures. A camera mounted on the top of the display also leverages intelligent video analytics to deliver customer content based on the shopper's age and gender.

E-commerce. This is all about providing users with a personalised and easy-to-use shopping experience on the web where they can research, experience and purchase products. While the core transactional capabilities are required for a good e-commerce portal, a personalised and user-friendly experience is key to driving conversion on the web. Microsoft FAST Search Server 2010 for SharePoint provides capabilities for retailers to create personalised

and adaptive e-commerce portals. Using this technology, e-commerce sites can offer capabilities such as auto query completion, dynamic navigation and metadata creation, and flexible search results with image, text, videos and document previews.

Loyalty. Creating loyal customers requires one-to-one or personalised marketing that rewards customers with special, relevant offers and promotions, never with email blasts and never with gimmicks or irrelevant offers. Microsoft and its partner Retalix offer a complete cross-channel loyalty engine that can be used to create loyalty programmes, enrol members and allow them to check and redeem their loyalty points. The solution includes a powerful promotion engine that can be used to create offers for loyal customers that are automatically applied at the checkout. Intelligent business rules automatically select the best set of offers at the POS to maximise the benefits to the consumer while adhering to the business rules set by the retailer.

Digital clienteling. Digital clienteling is the application of digital marketing sciences to the age-old practice of clienteling. Merchants and marketing professionals are empowered by a new generation

the disparity between, say, the store and the website and operate 'above the silos' to focus on what the best way is to service their customers, across all channels."

However, Carpen says that with the right technologies retailers can overcome all of the above challenges. "Retailers need to consider technology that supports and enables their ability to be a true cross-channel retailer and better serve their customers more efficiently. Solutions such as JunctionMCR, our retail solution set that is built on Microsoft Dynamics AX, can help deliver a fully functional, cross-channel platform for retailers. This solution provides channel awareness across the in-store POS, call centre, e-commerce and mobile commerce systems. The result is a 360-degree view of customers, orders and supply chain information that provides customers with multiple options for information search, order points and delivery choices. All of this is fully integrated into the flexible Microsoft Dynamics ERP platform to



of technology that provides visibility to marketing impact across consumer response, preferences, attitudes, intent, conversion, satisfaction, referral, and re-purchase. With digital clienteling solutions, sales associates have customer and product information at their fingertips to drive the personalised experience for the customer in the store. To be effective, digital clienteling has to be multi-channel allowing sales associates and brand managers to engage with customer in store, online or on a mobile device.

Customer analytics. Gaining and leveraging business insight about customers enables retailers to create long-term loyalty for their products. Segmenting customers based on the data they have trusted and shared allows retailers to understand the customer's value and then treat each segment according to their preferences. This insight allows retailers to run targeted campaigns and effectively measure their value to the customer. Microsoft SQL Server provides a powerful engine for customer analytics. Partners like Aldata provide the deep experience and domain expertise in business intelligence and customer analytics. Retailers need actionable and timely

business insights from POS, supply chain and customer behaviour data. Microsoft SQL Server 2008 R2 Parallel Data Warehouse and its massively parallel processing architecture allow retailers to gain scalable performance, flexibility and hardware choices with the most comprehensive data warehouse solution available.

Campaign management. Retailers need to create and run integrated campaigns, analyse their effectiveness, and adapt and manage brand experiences across multiple channels closely. Effective marketing campaigns need to have cross-channel reach, and be seen by customers through their favourite devices or social media. Microsoft Atlas provides brand managers with a solution to make digital marketing faster, easier and more accountable. It provides the digital media tools to improve return on investment and make campaigns a total success. Atlas Media Console provides a command central for campaign planning, delivery and reporting for display adverts and beyond. Atlas Rich Media provides comprehensive rich media campaign management tools and services. Atlas Advanced Analytics provides a blend of technology, analysis and optimisation to achieve brand performance.

“True cross-channel retailing is no longer just a nice to have – it’s a must have. By connecting channels, retailers can not only better understand their customers, but serve them better”

Salvatore Cicero

Servebase

ensure seamless visibility, from the general ledger to the warehouse.”

Maginus has also built its cross-channel solution on the Dynamics AX for Retail stack. “Dynamics AX for Retail is a fantastic store and head-office foundation solution for traditional bricks and mortar retailers, which when complemented by the Maginus Multi Channel Commerce (MCC) solution, unleashes its real power to provide a cross-channel consumer experience at an affordable price,” says Russell Dorset, the company’s sales and marketing director. “This gives retailers full 360-degree visibility of their consumer across all their channels and allows them to minimise any operational challenges.”

Aldata is also succeeding with the solution, using it as the foundation of its 1-2-1 Retail offering, which has experienced remarkable uptake in Scandinavia, and is set to enter the UK market later this year. “We believe the combination of Aldata’s

specialist retail capability and Microsoft Dynamics AX for Retail provides a fast and flexible way for midsize retailers to gain new cost, inventory and service benefits at low risk and low total cost of ownership,” says Mark Croxton, vice president of customer support at the company.

For those that embrace true cross-channel retailing using solutions like these, there are significant benefits to be gained. Analysts agree that cross-channel consumers spend more, generate higher profits and show greater loyalty than their single-channel counterparts. “The benefits are huge, but the one major advantage has to be the greater spending power the consumer has when the total retail offer is joined up,” says Bryant. “K3 has established that cross-channel consumers spend considerably more than their single channel counterparts. Customers using only the web spend an average of £107 in a single transaction. Those using just mail order spend an average of £179. Store-only

Evolving cross-channel strategies: the impact on inventory

The evolution of cross-channel has a remarkable impact on inventory. Retailers need to look at ways of reducing costs while ensuring that the breadth and width of the assortment presented is appealing to consumers who now have unprecedented choice. “The major challenges include consolidating multi-channel inventory to reduce costs, enhancing the accuracy of allocation and redistribution of inventory across channels to improve availability, as well as streamlining the assortment planning process to reduce markdowns and improve the appeal of the products,” says Peter Leith, JustEnough’s director of professional services for retail planning and execution.

Addressing these challenges is straightforward with inventory planning systems that provide retailers with the tools to logically pool inventory across channels. This allows for accurate allocation and redistribution of the inventory based on real-time analysis of trends. “The integration of planning and execution capabilities in a single system gives retailers the ability to plan their assortments, forecast their demand and distribute orders in a single cohesive process,” Leith explains. “This technology allows retailers to have a consolidated view of inventory levels and demand across channels. This provides far more effective planning, resulting in cost reductions associated with holding pooled inventory, improved margins due to better planning

of assortments, reduced excess stock and enhanced sales potential through accurate allocation and redistribution of inventory.”

As well as giving retail management access to this information, it’s also crucial for store associates on the shop floor to be able to access it, as Scott Fenwick, senior director of product strategy at Manhattan Associates, explains: “Today’s more intelligent customer often doesn’t require the levels of advice from store staff as they have done in the past. Instead, they often enter a store knowing exactly what item they want, and the price they’re willing to buy it at. With this in mind, the key thing they are asking the store associate to do is fulfil an order. This means the associate needs better tools to help them have total visibility into the supply chain, understand stock levels and know when an item is likely to be in stock.”

Mobile solutions such as Windows Phone 7 are being adopted in these environments to meet these requirements. “These solutions can help in a variety of ways, giving staff information about when they are likely to receive inventory, adjust inventory requirements and better fulfil orders,” says Fenwick. “Not only this, but it gives them access to the same information that consumers are accessing when they’re shopping online, giving them the opportunity to direct a customer to their website while they’re in the store, and improving the possibility of brand loyalty across channels.”



“With mobile, social and cloud computing technologies, cross-channel retailing is set to change significantly”

Javed Sikander

Microsoft

shoppers purchase an average of just £50. But customers accessing all available channels buy an average £611 worth of goods.”

Dorset agrees, focusing more specifically on the benefits of offering a click-and-collect service. “The click-and-collect capability offers the customer an improved level of service as they get the benefit of ordering online but then get the opportunity to collect their order when it’s convenient for them. There is also a payback for the retailer, as customers collecting in-store typically buy others things in the store – spending on average a further 23 per cent on top of the online purchase value.”

The customer benefits too. “As the complexity of being a true cross-channel retailer is removed, retailers can organise their operations around the customer rather than the channel,” says Carpen. “The

channel becomes irrelevant as retailers have a complete, unified view of customer orders and inventory. Retailers who can do this will leapfrog over the competition. They can match how to best deliver merchandise to a customer based on the customer’s preference and availability of inventory. For example, a customer buys a sweater online and wants it shipped. With a solution that enables true cross-channel inventory and supply chain management, that retailer can see they are out of the sweater in the closest warehouse, but a store nearby has one in stock. That sweater can still be shipped to the customer quickly, and it’s all done in a cost-effective manner.”

Clearly, cross-channel strategies have become an essential ingredient for retail success, and with an effective, joined-up ERP system based on Microsoft Dynamics,

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retailers can really succeed. But this is just the start. By embracing new digital business processes and technologies, retailers can keep pace with their customers and significantly differentiate themselves from the competition. "Effective and efficient engagement customers is vital in today's difficult, pressured market," says Croxton. "With constant exposure to multi-channel marketing messages from competitors, loyalty is far from guaranteed. Retailers need the ability to create highly targeted marketing campaigns and deliver them to customers at the time most likely to influence purchase, via their preferred communication channel."

"In a way, technology is the instigator here," adds Sikander. "Today's shoppers are armed with smartphones that are sometimes more powerful than the POS or back-office computers in the store. These phones are always connected to the web, putting the shopper just a few clicks away from learning about a product directly from the real

users who have experienced it. There are thousands of mobile shopping applications out there that allow shoppers to instantly check prices, read reviews and research product specifications. There are more than a billion users on Facebook, Windows Live and Myspace combined. These users have their own micro-communities that they stay in touch with, sharing everything from pictures to shopping experiences. The experience shoppers have with your brand will travel through these social networks and reach the four corners of the world in the blink of an eye."

Retailers can use technology to better connect with their shoppers, create positive brand experiences and offer a genuine cross-channel experience across home, store and online on all three screens – phone, computer and television. By using mobility, cloud and social computing effectively, retailers can become more customer-centric across all channels and convert interactions

into sales. "Microsoft offers digital commerce solutions for creating cross-channel customer centricity," says Sikander. "Digital commerce is the contemporary cross-channel shopping solution that encourages conversion through delivering relevancy and value across channels, devices and locations. It includes technologies for digital signage, e-commerce, loyalty, digital clienteling, customer analytics and campaign management."

In fact, according to recent research from Nielsen, last year consumers spent nearly a quarter of their online time on social networking sites and blogs. "With mobile, social and cloud computing technologies, cross-channel retailing is set to change significantly," says Sikander. "Retailers who do not understand and adapt to this won't survive. Best-of-breed retailers are already using these technologies to essentially treat each customer as a channel, to provide them with unique personalised experiences and exploit their propensity to share their ideas and experiences."

Changing the way we pay: how to support multiple payments channels

Payment systems are an obvious area of synergy for today's cross-channel retailer, but making payments data available across all touch points presents understandable security challenges. "As customers demand greater flexibility, retailers have to support multiple channels of payment for the customer, allowing them to, for example, pay for an item online and pick it up in store," says Wendy Dobson, Servebase's head of sales and marketing. "Dealing with the logistics of this can be complicated, as retailers have to be careful about how they store payment information, and can't simply pass it from one channel to another."

Mark Kusionowicz, marketing director at The Logic Group, agrees. "Merchants today are offering customers the ability to buy through various channels and mix and match them depending on their needs. These different payment models provide multiple points of interaction with the customer and also provide different entry levels for cardholder data, each of which must be identified and secured. This process can be very complicated if the right technologies aren't used, especially as more stringent regulations have come into play recently."

Indeed, the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS), introduced in June 2010, has been developed to help organisations that process card payments prevent credit-card fraud, hacking, and other

security threats. "Many retailers are finding these regulations costly to adhere to, not to mention time consuming," says Dobson.

However, by implementing an integrated payments solution, retailers provide security and PCI DSS scope reduction across all channels. "Integrated, multi-channel solutions allows processing of both card-present transactions using Chip and PIN, and card-not-present transactions over the internet or via mail order or telephone, anywhere in the world," explains Dobson. "By adding a data encryption capability into the mix, such as tokenisation, retailers can benefit further."

"To minimise risk, the PCI regulation recommends that merchants first get rid of any stored payment card data that isn't truly required for the business," adds Kusionowicz. "By using tokenisation – the process of substituting 'tokens' for credit card numbers – retailers reduce the number of places where payment card numbers are stored and also minimise the range for compliance audits."

As well as bringing significant security benefits, tokenisation can also help retailers to understand customer loyalty. "In a complex multi-channel retailing environment, it's not always possible to track patterns of customer behaviour," says Kusionowicz. "Tokenisation allows retailers to track the token number across channels and understand how customers interact with their brand."

The evolution of IT in the retail industry

Will Roche, Microsoft Dynamics industry director, explains why retailers need to take a fresh look at their IT infrastructure and application framework

Over the past 25 years I have watched with interest as massive technology advancements have changed the face of retail. I've seen first-hand from one of my first IT roles with IBM just how PC-based point-of-sale solutions revolutionised retail practices and forced a massive change in the way that consumers started to purchase products.

Technology has brought many rewards, but with systems often implemented over a long period of time and added to with bespoke solutions, many retailers do not now have consistent end-to-end visibility, usability, manageability and, most importantly, integrated data and business processes. By adding more applications and capabilities over time, the initial simple but powerful solutions like the AS/400 and 4680 from IBM no longer provided the required enterprise framework. And so today, many retailers have difficulty understanding their business performance in real time. They have trouble deploying true multi-channel capabilities, and cannot make best use of the information they have to optimise their operations.

This has now reached a critical point. The speed of innovation means

that where once we could take several years to deploy a new system, we now need to be constantly on top of, or even ahead of, the technology game. Retailers need to look hard at where they see themselves five, ten, even twenty years from now, which is difficult considering the constant pressure to keep afloat and respond to the needs of the business. What retailers need is a new view of their infrastructure and application framework, with the clear objective of developing a single version of the data across the entire enterprise. Winging it with loosely integrating operating systems and ERP solutions will not get you to the finish line!

There are several ways to strategically build the required infrastructure and application framework, although today I believe Microsoft offers a great solution to the core questions we all ask ourselves: 'what does having this infrastructure really mean?'; 'how do I know what is required and how will I build a roadmap to get where I want to go?'; 'what will this undertaking cost and am I guaranteed the outcome will be as predicted?'; and 'how do I get my business to operate as a dynamic business with integrated and interoperable business processes?'

Although complex, everything starts with the architecture. This architecture provides the structure that enables a company to achieve the fully automated and dynamic business operations required in today's business environment. At Microsoft, we have done most of the heavy lifting by providing products that are designed, developed and deployed to work seamlessly with each other, based on our architecture. Think of Microsoft Office; this is an example of an everyday software platform that seamlessly integrates and interoperates vast amounts of information.

In retail, having the ability to leverage a foundation which provides the agility to connect all business processes and entities is critical to being able to compete going forward. More importantly, the use of this persistent information for all employees and customers is the real key. Even having information locked up in a huge data warehouse typically only reserves the right of information access to a few, much less to all, which is what is required. It is the merging of real-time information with business process that provides retailers with the structure to create a differentiating business model not using someone else's 'best practices',



“Technology has brought many rewards, but with systems often implemented over a long period of time and added to with bespoke solutions, many retailers do not now have consistent end-to-end visibility, usability, manageability and, most importantly, integrated data and business processes”

Will Roche

Microsoft

which could also be used by any competitor.

Microsoft is uniquely positioned with our Microsoft Dynamics ERP enterprise retail business applications leveraging our integrated and interoperable platform products such as Windows Server, SQL Server, System Center, Office and mobility to seamlessly provide the end-to-end visibility, usability, manageability and interoperability ‘out of the box’. Along with our advancements in cloud technology, we provide the architecture, platform and applications needed to compete now and

in the future.

As with all Microsoft products, the addition of our world-class development tools enables our partners and customers to easily extend capabilities and business processes you want and not what you have to settle for. I urge you to build a long-term vision, strategy and roadmap and to become a dynamic business. At Microsoft, we are prepared like never before to help you not only build an IT infrastructure, but to partner with you to build a true next-generation retail business.

JustEnough empowering retailers with Dynamics AX integration

Earlier this year, US-based technology solutions provider JustEnough announced that its merchandise and assortment planning, and allocation and replenishment solutions are now aligned with Microsoft Dynamics AX. The company, which has over 15 years’ experience solving complex demand management issues for the retail industry, decided to integrate its solutions with the Microsoft ERP system to enable its customers to more easily and accurately plan assortments, allocate products and replenish inventory.

“Retailers operate in a highly competitive environment and need solutions to help improve employee productivity, increase operational efficiencies and enhance customer service to drive their success,” said Will Roche, commenting on the announcement back in January. “Working together, Microsoft and JustEnough deliver the know-how and innovation to meet customer needs and be more efficient from the supplier to the POS.”

Combined, JustEnough’s retail solutions with Microsoft Dynamics AX’s flexible, out-of-the-box offering ensure that today’s retailers can better forecast customer demand, plan assortments and allocate inventory and connect that information with their ERP and financials. This will help them drive bottom-line value by ensuring the right products are allocated to the stores where they have the best chance

of selling at the highest possible prices.

“The integration of JustEnough’s retail suite with Microsoft Dynamics AX will allow companies to leverage advanced merchandising and allocation capabilities,” says Malcolm Buxton, president and chief executive officer of JustEnough. “Users will be able to focus on creating more targeted assortment and allocation plans, which drive improved inventory levels, reduced markdowns and increased profits.”



JustEnough’s solutions help retailers plan assortments better



Merchandise & Assortment Planning For Today's Retailers

Want to learn how JustEnough's demand-driven retail planning solutions make it simple to plan better assortments, allocate products to the optimal stores and replenish inventory with accuracy?

Take a tour or view solution videos at
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