



Moving and Grooving: Enterprise Mobility Meets Store Execution

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Blackberries, Treos, PDAs, and Wi-Fi have all made their marks in the corporate enterprise. For many years, handheld devices have been deployed at retail stores primarily for barcode scanning, yet very few mobile applications have impacted the retail industry. But PDAs, known in their ruggedized form as enterprise digital assistants (EDAs), are just beginning to emerge as effective management tools for retailers, and the mobile retail enterprise is poised for a breakout.

High-bandwidth services, evolving handheld technology, and new software applications can bring rich communications, increased efficiency and reduced costs to retail store operations. By untethering managers from back-office desktop systems, sending projects directly to on-floor store associates and opening multi-way communications among headquarters, field management and stores, enterprise mobility can change the face of the retail industry.

While mobile solutions were relegated to the periphery, store execution management (SEM) and task management solutions have already impacted the retail industry. These transform manually intensive efforts, such as sending projects to stores or assigning tasks to individuals, by using an enterprise application that automates, optimizes and streamlines these business processes. Leading retailers have seen measurable and dramatic results from these applications, such as sales increases of nearly 4 percent, a 64 percent increase in display compliance, task compliance increases of up to 90 percent; increased floor time for managers, and three hours per week in time savings for district managers.

The solutions allow users at corporate headquarters to manage, create and publish projects to multiple store locations, while managers and associates at stores sign on to the application using standard browsers on desktop computers. For example, if a category reset project is initiated by the headquarters merchandising team, all store managers are able to see the tasks in the project, their due dates and to whom they have been assigned. The reset project details can be tracked by the store manager using a process monitor, a calendar or an inbox view, and individual tasks within the project may be allocated to specific associates who hold responsibility for their execution. In this manner, all work assigned to a store can be tracked and monitored in real-time - a key to uncovering problems before projects stall.

Since in most cases, store managers have been promoted to their positions precisely because they are strong salespeople, it makes little sense that they spend a bulk of their time away from customers. So in essence, while retailers derive clear results from using SEM software, the results are accomplished by running the application on desktop systems in the store, often tucked in the back office far away from their customers. Associates and managers need to be on the floor as much as possible in order to have an impact on sales and customer service. Going "mobile" can truly optimize these already successful solutions by bringing the solution out onto the floor.

Using the "mobile task manager" concept, retailers can take further advantage of SEM solutions, providing store managers and associates with EDAs that are capable of accessing corporate applications over in-store Wi-Fi networks. First, EDAs allow managers to receive, prioritize, assign and update projects while on the sales floor, providing instantaneous in-hand updates on associates' progress, compliance and feedback to anywhere above store. More importantly, because this can all be accomplished from the floor, managers spend more time selling to and assisting customers, providing a direct impact on sales. Store managers that utilize desktop-based store execution management solutions already see a two-to-four-hour increase in floor time per week - it's not hard to imagine those hours will double or triple when accessing the application on an EDA.

Associates can, in turn, view task details regardless of where they are in the store. With these details at their fingertips, tasks can be completed more efficiently and compliance can be quickly reported while the associates remain on the floor interacting with customers. District and regional managers can benefit from EDAs as well. Rather than hauling around expensive and fragile laptops, a roaming manager with an EDA can connect

wherever there is wireless access, monitoring progress from anywhere in the field. With mobile devices, no one is chained to the desktop.

SEM software has made an indelible mark on the retail environment. Following in the footsteps of supply chain management solutions, it has brought new enterprise control and insight to previously manual and costly store operations management. Mobilizing these solutions can bring yet another level of efficiency to operations. With minimal additional training, retailers can quickly shift from the desktop to the handheld, putting associates and managers on the sales floor and delivering additional efficiencies and ROI to the entire retail enterprise.