

The Power Of Single-System Retail Management

An integrated retail management solution helped this specialty retailer overcome its POS, merchandising, accounting, and warehousing problems.

by Erin Harris

Consider this scenario: Your store operates on proprietary ERP (enterprise resource planning) software, which requires proprietary hardware to function properly. Therefore, if a problem occurs with the hardware, you may be unable to repair it on your own. Two weeks before Christmas, your primary register breaks, rendering the remainder of your registers inoperable as well. It turns out that your registers are down for an entire week, because your vendor needs to make an on-site visit to diagnose and repair the problems. The primary register holds the database information that processes credit cards. Because you can't access the database, you're forced to phone in every credit card transaction and revert back to the old days of taking an imprint of the credit card. How can you possibly measure how much business you've lost due to this problem? Surely, customers have become skeptical about why are you phoning in their credit card information. And, the additional steps to complete a transaction create long queues, causing potential customers who may have considered shopping at your store to notice the long lines and leave. Retailers see this scenario as a nightmare of epic proportions. David Messina, director of IT at BC Sports, lived this exact nightmare and, as a result, overhauled his proprietary ERP system with an integrated retail management solution, enabling BC Sports to boast numerous benefits.

Messina's aforementioned ERP solution issue is true, but it is just one of the reasons why BC Sports, a \$5 million specialty retail chain with nine stores, chose to overhaul its ERP system. "Our former ERP system wasn't an integrated solution," explains Messina. "The software wasn't integrated with our accounting system, so data didn't automatically flow to accounting. Also, reporting was difficult, because it was a separate third-party application. We were constantly paying money to have the system modified to meet our needs as we grew the company. On top of that, it's all proprietary software. So, we had to buy proprietary hardware, which put us at the mercy of our software vendor."



ChainDrive Integrated Retail Management enabled BC Sports to streamline its merchandising capabilities.

Lack Of Integrated Retail System Affects Entire Business

The lack of an integrated retail system caused problems for several areas within BC Sports. Messina explains that buyers, store-level managers and associates, and accounting felt the pain of the proprietary system. "Not only were stores and accounting affected, but so was our warehouse," laments Messina. "I supported every department as a company, and you can imagine the inefficiencies and inconsistencies that come with a retail system that isn't integrated throughout the business."

When BC Sports' contract with the former solutions provider came to an end, Messina chose to research other vendors. Messina

chose ChainDrive Integrated Retail Management Solution (ChainDrive), which is developed by Multidev Technologies. ChainDrive's integrated accounting records sales directly from polling and allows BC Sports to review information in real time. With the ability to filter and manipulate data, accounting, buyers, and store-level and warehouse employees now have access to real-time sales and inventory information. As product purchasing for BC Sports increases, their buyers are now able to ship merchandise directly to the

store where items can be received right at the register.

To prepare for the implementation, Messina and his team removed the old hardware and installed Dell machines. Messina purchased receipt printers, scanners, and other peripherals from various vendors, and the retailer built out the network infrastructure to handle the server side of the software. The entire implementation took seven days to complete.

BC Sports now operates its stores on an integrated retail system and is free to make hardware purchases as it sees fit. Also, Messina states the new POS software is more efficient than the previous solution. From a merchandising standpoint, BC Sports now generates POs and performs a predistribution against that PO in advance of receiving the products. Finally, Messina explains the holiday hardware nightmare is no longer a concern. ■

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