The Big Challenges for Retail

In today's world communications is no longer about types of delivery that are used but the value that these connections make possible, to both businesses and individuals. WEB 2.0 has opened up communications with the ability for users to collaborate and share information online linking in social media networking and e-commerce. To make the most of the services, retail organisations need to look at becoming smarter through greater business intelligence and the usage of specific analytical tools and demographics to provide enhanced user experiences and to convert noncustomers to customers, customers to loyal customers, and loyal customers into fans.

For retail, the end user environment and expectations has changed and the user experience is of even greater importance for the delivery of service through both bricks and mortar and online to provide a complete Omni-channel experience. Consumers choose where to purchase, how to purchase, and when to purchase based on the shopping experience. This in turn means that shop floor staff need to be more knowledgeable and have the same technologies available to them whilst engaging with customers within the store. Mergers and acquisitions bring in the need for multibrand integration and expanding internationally means having to deal with multiple country service providers, all of which put a heavy burden on company resources.

Some of the challenges we are asked about

INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION: When expanding internationally, WAN connectivity can prove to be a headache when having to deal with multiple telco providers for each country of expansion, not just for initial connection but for ongoing operational support through the life of the contract.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: It is so easy for customers to go elsewhere or write a poor experience and launch on social media for an immediate impact on the business, but unless you know the customer in greater depth, how can you deliver the excellence users expect?

MULTIBRAND INTEGRATION: Mergers and acquisitions bring the challenge of having to integrate multiple brands into a single ubiquitous network. With different connectivity, duplication, security, and different systems, this puts a heavy work load onto IT teams.

REDUCING OPERATIONAL COST: Reducing operational or capital cost is always a focus for retail organisations along with flexible payment options. This has to be weighed against the value to the business of new services and infrastructure.

MULTICHANNEL DELIVERY: With multiple channels for consumers to connect, how do you ensure that you have access to all potential customers wherever they are located?

OMNI-CHANNEL: The customer expects the same experience whether in-store, on line or when mobile. The challenge is how do you provide a seamless service across all these channels to the customer?

PCI DSS COMPLIANCE FOR PAYMENTS: CONTACTLESS: With more online, mobile POS and contactless payment along with connectivity across Wi-Fi, how do you stay compliant and understand what is in-scope to be able to put the right design and plan in place to maintain compliancy?

BUSINESS CONTINUITY: Network failure is not an option due to the impact it has on the business, both in the short- and long-term. Reliable and secure WAN connectivity for business applications run in the Cloud or back to the companies' data centre.

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT: How do you match with your competition for customer engagement? Does your staff have all the latest training and information at their fingertips?

MOBILITY: Customers want to stay too connected wherever they go and staff on the shop floor want the ability to take orders or answer questions across the store.

KNOWING THE CUSTOMER: To be able to provide the expected user experience and to increase sales, knowing the customer is one of the most important considerations for retail organisations. Knowing gender, what they like, what they buy, how they purchase, etc., opens up the overall sales experience and gives the ability to drive new revenue streams.

TARGETED MARKETING: MORE REVENUE FROM LESS? How retailers specifically target individuals and grow new revenue streams is linked in with knowing the customer. Being able to provide more targeted marketing campaigns to the right audience provides a greater return on investment and enhances the user experience due to a more personalised service.

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HughesON is a suite of innovative, Cloud-ready network and digital media solutions designed for the unique needs of distributed enterprises in industries such as retail, hospitality, and retail petroleum.

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BYOD: Users now want to use their own devices in the workplace, but this does bring issues for the IT teams. Staff can download all types of information, which is then broadcasted across the internal customer network. This opens up "Shadow IT" support and brings security risks into the corporate network. Despite this, BYOD can reduce the overhead of IT equipment within a business and the cost of training users on new devices as they know how their device works. The question is how to control BYOD?

BYOC: As well as customers and staff bringing their own devices into the retail environment, the bigger issue is what content they are bringing with them as high-streaming applications can have a big impact on the performance of the network. The user experience and the ability to run critical business applications like POS, stock control, and product information can all be affected. So having control over what applications can have access or being able to guarantee bandwidth for the critical applications is a key requirement.

PUSH APPS AND SERVICES RATHER THAN DOWNLOAD: There are so many applications available that users can download and many different retail outlets all wanting users to download their own app. But how many apps does a user really want on their phone? Pushing an app across Wi-Fi that is relevant for the location means that the users gets the best experience where they are without the need to download and take up space on their device.

PROTECTING THE BRAND: The impact of a poor customer experience can be felt immediately through the growth of social media. Being hacked or losing customer information that is broadcasted across the media channels can have a high impact on the business in both financial cost and future customers. Protecting the brand comes from internal education just as much as securing the network.

DIFFICULT LOCATIONS: Expanding international and opening up new sites comes with its own challenges but what do you do for geographically dispersed sites where there are limited telecom services but you still need connectivity?

LOGISTICS: With limited in-store stock, click and collect and online distribution channels being able to stay connected to logistic customers to meet agreed delivery of items is a core requirement of Omni-channel strategies.

ROLLING OUT NEW APPLICATIONS AND PRODUCTS: Time to market is a core consideration to stay ahead of the competition. With so many new applications daily, is virtualisation a quicker delivery model for the business? But how does this affect the existing investments in infrastructure?

CLOUD OR PRIVATE? Many questions are raised on whether to utilise Cloud-based business applications verses private networking. The answer is not always the same and it is down to the business objectives to really decide the best infrastructure model.

How can Hughes help?

Hughes is helping retail organisations in their digital transformation by providing solutions to many of the above questions that companies and individuals are asking. Whether you are C-level executive, head of department, director, or manager, Hughes has services and solutions to aid you in deploying your digital strategy.

Experience the Hughes difference

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