Unified Communication Solutions for the Retail Industry Communications-Enabled Business Processes

Abstract

Today’s retail industry is characterized by greater complexity and unpredictability, driven by wider consumer choice and complex global supply chains. While this is undoubtedly a challenge, it is also an opportunity for those retailers who are able to make smart use of technology to drive a competitive advantage by improving customer satisfaction, expanding profitability and increasing employee motivation. Successful stores can realize the above mentioned advantages by providing the customer with the right product at the time of need and at a competitive price while operating efficiently. This brief illustrates how Infosys’ Unified Communication and Collaboration (UC) solutions address these factors for the retail industry.
Successful Store Execution and Unified Communication

The retail industry is characterized by narrow margins, high employee turnover, and unmet customer expectations in the face of ever increasing competition. Retailers also face challenges such as unforeseen stock shortages and isolated POS systems. It is imperative for retailers to take charge of these factors for their own survival. For example, AMR Research\(^1\) states that customers will stop shopping at a retailer after 3 negative experiences. These can be due to out-of-stock products, rude or uninformed sales associates, etc., all leading to a substantial loss in potential sales and goodwill. Wal-Mart has estimated that the lifetime value of these lost customers can be $200,000.00 or more for a single store.

Selling profitably also depends upon products being in stock and on the shelf, informed store associates who can successfully guide the customer, point-of-sale systems with the correct pricing and promotion data etc. Customer satisfaction can also be realized by embracing their needs and wants, enabling fast checkouts, quicker service at the place of need etc. Part of being profitable means motivating store associates which can be done by providing flexible working hours, increased control over their schedules, effective task management, providing the right tools and job training to empower them to make decisions etc.

Changing consumer behavior that demands faster and better service coupled with the retailer's business imperatives is driving the industry to adopt emerging technologies to stay competitive. One such technology is Unified Communications and Collaboration (UC) that enables access to resources anytime, anywhere and on any device employing rich, multi-media and seamless integration with existing IT systems.

UC delivers, in a single unified platform, the following:

- **Real-time Immersive Audio and Visual Communication** via IP Phones, PDAs, Desktops and kiosks.
- **Concept of Presence** - Reach out to the right person at the right time over the right device with the right information
- **Rich Collaboration** - Audio, video and web conferencing
- **Integrated Synchronous & Asynchronous Communication Capabilities** all on a single unified platform - Instant Messaging, Unified Messaging, traditional voice capabilities etc.

Infosys UC Solutions for Retailers

Infosys has combined its thought leadership in the Retail industry and knowledge of UC technology with its unparalleled capability of integrating complex systems to develop UC solutions for a superior customer experience and successful store execution.

The power of UC is derived from its capability of unifying different systems on a single platform, which is the Internet Protocol (IP) platform. Business processes can now be enabled with real-time communications that can integrate with IT systems such as databases, data warehouse, security systems, business intelligence systems, CRM etc., to log, track, report and measure business benefits. Below are some solutions Infosys has developed for the Retail industry:

**SOLUTION 1**

*UC Enabled Kiosks, IP Phone As Kiosks*

Kiosks are an inherent part of retail stores providing instantaneous product and other information. However, the kiosks' size, weight and cost limit their ubiquitousness throughout the retail store. In such a scenario, IP Phones can be placed at various aisles in a store that can serve not only as a phone but as a kiosk delivering product information, promotions etc. and as an intelligent communication device providing one-click context sensitive help to customers.

The Infosys IP (Internet Protocol) Kiosk solution can both UC-enable existing kiosk deployments or help retailers to leverage IP Phones as Kiosks.

- UC enabled existing kiosks would deliver features such as one-click context sensitive help, voice and video communication support for connectivity with knowledgeable product personnel.
- The IP Phone as a kiosk provides standard kiosk features such as product browsing, context-sensitive promotions etc. embedded with intelligent UC capabilities enabling one-click context sensitive help, conversations with knowledgeable product associates etc.

\(^1\) *Transform Your Stores: Enhance Customer Interactions with Advanced Selling Technologies* - Rob Graf, Sriram Thodla and Joyce McGovern, June 2005, AMR Research.
Consider a situation where a customer is browsing or searching for a laptop on an IP-enabled kiosk in the electronics isle and comes across a specific laptop that suits his or her needs. While key information is displayed on the screen, the customer might have additional questions that only an expert can answer. The IP kiosk can provide a one-touch access to an expert available in the store or through a contact center to connect to the customer at their moment of need via voice or video for answers to their specific questions and, if possible, even make a sales offer for additional products thus enabling cross-sell or up-sell opportunities.

The UC Enabled Kiosk solution improves customer satisfaction by providing the requested information at the right place right away. Sales losses can be minimized by assisting the customer to make a quick purchase decision and by opening up opportunities for cross-selling or up-selling additional products.

Other potential usage examples include downloading relevant, contextual promotions based on a customer profile and location, tracking consumer behavior, scanning and checking the accuracy of product prices, instant checkouts etc. All this is possible by enabling UC into these business processes and integrating them with the back-end IT systems.
SOLUTION 2

Customer Service Notifications, Response & Escalations

To deliver the quickest and most relevant service to customers, IP phones can be placed at strategic locations throughout the store. Customers can initiate voice or video conference with a single touch of a button and reach out for help. The power of UC is not only in initiating multimedia conferences but tying it with business intelligence to make the customer-store employee communication relevant and effective.

Consider an example where a customer needs assistance in the indoor garden aisle and presses the help button on the IP phone. The contextual information, for example, indoor gardening is passed on to the nearest store associate on his or her mobile IP device (mobile phone, for example) through an instant message or a page or voice notification. Sophisticated business rules can be used to select the relevant associate/expert who can address this request either in store or via a contact center. Once the notification is received by the associate, he or she can immediately walk up to the customer, or initiate a voice or video conference through the contact center or mobile device and the IP help phone near the customer. In case the request cannot be handled by the auto-selected associate, the associate can deny the request which leads to automated re-routing to the next available and qualified associate or the same request can be escalated to a supervisor for immediate action depending on the business rules enabled.

This solution improves customer satisfaction by providing the requested information right away at the customer's location through, not just voice but also, video, thus minimizing revenue leakage. It enables conformance of strict Service Level Agreements (SLA), tracking, logging and reporting of such customer service requests and responses. This data can be leveraged further for making business decisions based on consumer behavior and strategic initiatives within the store.

SOLUTION 3

Store Handhelds and PDAs

Sophisticated consumers are moving towards PDAs and mobile devices as their main tool for communicating, shopping, banking, for Internet access, emailing, etc. Their retail shopping experience can be enhanced by providing UC-enabled applications on these devices. Personalized information such as welcome greetings, promotions, coupons, shopping and wish list creation and maintenance etc., can be downloaded on these devices as soon as a customer enter the store. Furthermore, one touch voice or video conferences can be initiated for assistance, check outs, rain-checks, delivery etc. with UC embedded in these applications.

Consider an example where a customer walks into a retail store with a PDA that has UC-enabled applications installed on the device (A store handheld can be provided with the same capabilities if a customer doesn't have his or her own personal device). At the entry gate, personalized welcome greetings can be downloaded along with the store promotions and coupons. To locate these products and obtain the most relevant offers, the customer can initiate a voice or one-way video conference to talk to a store associate or can send Instant Messages (IM) to their buddies in and around the store notifying them of such promotions and coupons. In effect, customers can start to sell on a store's behalf. In this example, the PDA acts as an IP device with kiosk-like functionalities described earlier in this brief.

This solution helps the store in managing their customer loyalty program and enables the customers to use their own device of choice to freely access information in and around the store while maintaining their security and privacy. This is achieved by using various access technologies in the store such as the Wi-Fi network and tying it with the store back-end IT systems while embedding UC in the entire business process.
Customer’s Handheld Homepage

Customer selects ‘Enter’ & can choose between ‘Favorites’, ‘Find & Buy’ and ‘Buddies’

Customer adds item to cart and proceeds with her shopping

Customer views product info on selected item

Customer selects ‘Find & Buy’ → ‘Books’

Customer selects ‘Fiction’ & browses books available

Figure 2: Store handhelds for customers increases sales of products

Other UC Solutions

While the solutions described above are only a few examples of how UC-enabled business processes can help the retail industry, the scope and reach of UC is boundless. Other areas where UC can enhance business processes include:

Workforce & Task Management

IP phones can not only serve as kiosks but also be the front-end for workforce management. Employees can use these devices to clock-in and clock-out of work, view and log task information, report issues and escalate matters etc. This can be directly integrated with workforce management applications.

Training

The same IP phone can also be used for training employees and keeping them up-to-date with latest products on the shelves. Instant access to training materials or product information via voice or video can help the associates help the customer cost effectively.

Auto-generated alerts

Store inventory levels are tracked by back-end systems. Critical alerts based on specific rules can be generated by these systems and sent to relevant associates to take action by integrating these systems with UC service layers.

Checkout Accelerators

The IP phone can be used to send notifications to supervisors for cash and change requirements at checkout counters, price check at checkout counters, supervisory overrides etc.
Cashier selects the ‘Change’ Option & enters the ‘Change’ Page

The Store Associate tries to accept request after Manager has accepted request

The Store Manager accepts request for change

Request gets escalated to the Manager (if the Associate doesn’t respond in a given timeframe)

The Store Associate receives the request for change in ‘Dollars’

UC is especially suited to improve the following key retail processes

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Figure 3: Checkout clerk requests change for his station

Figure 4: Summary of Infosys UC Retail Solutions
UC Retail Solution Benefits

1. **Increase Revenue**: Increase revenues by stemming leakage through use of checkout accelerators, quicker services at the place of need, real-time service and faster transaction closures.

2. **Realize Additional Revenues**: Increase up-sell and/ or cross-sell opportunities by linking store associates, product information to the customers at their time of need and by providing timely service.

3. **Reduce Costs**: Reduce costs by better utilizing a limited number of store associates to provide customer service.

4. **Exceed Customer Expectations**: Meet customer needs the first time, every time. This leads to increased satisfaction and loyalty and fewer lost customers.

5. **Boost Employee Productivity**: Provide employees with access to training materials which requires less training investment, time card management, effective task management abilities, issue management, job training to empower them to make decisions.

Why Infosys?

Infosys has considerable experience in unified communications, deep knowledge of the retail industry and skills in UC technology.

These are combined with solutions that are tailored for the retail industry and include:

- Our Converged Services Platform (Middleware with Adapters to integrate with multi-vendor UC infrastructure)
- Mobile Applications Framework covering UI, Multi-media and UC
- Retail IP Telephony Applications Suite
- UC Accelerators that can quickly enable a retailer to be UC enabled.

We can also help retailers to quickly enable their process while minimizing the need for additional investment by leveraging the existing infrastructure.
Conclusion

The Infosys’ Unified Communication Solutions for the Retail industry addresses current day imperatives and delivers a complete end-to-end solution that integrates existing IT systems with Unified Communication technology thus minimizing additional investments. These solutions provide a platform for retailers to service their customers in real time, create additional sources of revenues through instant up-sell and cross-sell opportunities while more effectively utilizing their professional resources. The platform also lays the foundation for providing the next generation customer experience, convergence of various communications onto the IP network and seamless business expansion possibilities for retailers.

About Infosys

The Retail and Consumer Packaged Goods business unit provides business solutions to the industry’s leading firms enabling them to become more competitive. Our client base spans all major segments of the value chain, from retailers to distributors and CPG manufacturers.

The 3000+ strong practice provides services which include business process conceptualization, process engineering, package selection and implementation. We are also an active member of EPC Global and ARTS (Association for Retail Technology Standards).

Unified Communications is a significant area of focus for the Infosys Product Engineering group. We leverage our deep understanding of Unified Communications, established technology expertise and domain knowledge to develop solutions for not just the retail industry but also for the banking and capital markets, manufacturing, entertainment and hospitality industry including solution accelerators for many other industries.

Infosys Technologies Ltd (NASDAQ: INFY) provides consulting, engineering, BPO and IT services that help Global 2000 companies win in a flat world. These solutions focus on providing strategic differentiation and operational superiority to our clients. We use a low-risk Global Delivery Model to accelerate schedules with a high degree of time and cost predictability.

To experience UC for yourself or for more information, contact retailinfo@Infosys.com or PE@Infosys.com
Infosys among the world's top 50 most respected companies

Reputation Institute's Global Reputation Pulse 2009 ranked Infosys among the world's top 50 most respected companies.

About Infosys

Infosys provides its clients with business and technology consulting services that deliver measurable business value to help you build tomorrow's enterprise. Through a well-integrated end-to-end range of consulting, technology, engineering and outsourcing, Infosys clients derive the business value they've always been requiring from enterprise transformations. Our extensive research teams, including the award-winning SET Labs, ensure Infosys solutions are always cutting-edge and relevant. Our high investment in training – over 10,000 graduates a year pass through our Mysore campus, the world's largest corporate university – ensures our people stay best-in-class. Infosys (NASDAQ: INFY) also believes in giving back to the communities with scholarships, libraries, schools, and many other fields through the Infosys Foundation.

Global presence

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