

Enabling Omni-Channel Retail

Engaging customers seamlessly across channels by successfully re-platforming this large retailer's POS, OMS, Loyalty, Gift card and eCommerce systems



INDUSTRY:

Retail

KEY OUTCOMES:

- Successful, on-time roll-out of POS upgrade to 47 stores
- 60% automated test coverage
- \$7,000 saved per release cycle from test automation

Problem

Having already grown its online and digital presence to complement its in-store, bricks-and-mortar experience, the next step for this upmarket department store chain was to find a way to seamlessly blend the two methods to provide more choice and flexibility for its customers.

If a certain product was not available in-store, customers were often referred to visit the retailer's website or another branch to see if it was available there. The business wanted to replace this shortcoming with real-time inventory checks of online/instore products, as well as allowing customers to place product orders in-store.

When returning items, online customers were limited to mailing them back. The retailer wanted to enable them to return products in-store if they preferred.

The issue also extended to their well established in-store gift registry services, where there was no way to check if a product in the gift registry was already purchased by other customers, leading to the same item sometimes being purchased by multiple customers. The ability to do a real-time gift registry check prior to finalising the sale would help inform customers if a product was purchased or not. It would also enable customers to either purchase a "registry item" online or in store, regardless of the registry.

DELIVERED:

- Functional testing
- Integration testing
- Test automation
- Test management
- Advisory

TECHNOLOGIES:

- Point of Sale (POS)
- Website
- eStar eCommerce Platform
- Givex
- IBM WebSphere
- IBM Sterling
- Indibano
- Manhattan Active OMS
- Microsoft Access
- Oracle RMS

Solution

To realise this omni-channel vision, they would need to expand the functionality of their online and in-store point-of-sale (POS) capability. This would be achieved by re-platforming these systems, switching from the IBM WebSphere Commerce platform to eStar, the Access 2000 gift card system to Givex, and the IBM Sterling warehouse and order management system to Manhattan Active.

A project of this scale requires a good understanding of the retailer's end-to-end business processes. It also requires advanced technical knowledge of the systems they use and would be replacing.

As the primary testing partner since 2008, we knew their business processes thoroughly and how technology supported them. We also had a long history of successfully delivering many of their digital projects. And in August 2017, we commenced work on the re-platforming project with a key focus on the new POS functionality.

This involved end-to-end system testing of the POS, which spanned placing digital orders online and through POS, returns online and in-store, the centralised gift registry, and new gift card functions.

Integration testing was done on the POS to ensure it correctly interconnected with the retailer's other systems. This consisted of their enterprise data warehouse, Oracle's RMS and store inventory management systems, Indibano middleware with the eStar iSAMS webstore, and the Givex gift card, layby, and purchase-on-demand host system.

The challenging aspect of this project was the high risk involved in changing and replacing many core systems and applications at one time. Any issues had the potential to negatively impact a large part of the retailer's overall business.

The POS upgrade would be carried out by a geographically distributed team. This required us to coordinate our testing efforts with staff and resources spread across Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, South Africa, and India.

While our primary focus was on the POS system, we also advised vendors and developers for each of the individual systems being re-platformed. Since they typically only possessed knowledge of their system and not the others with which they were integrating, our experience across all incoming and outgoing systems made us a valuable go-between.

ABOUT PLANIT:

At Planit, we are experts in quality engineering and assurance. With strong retail domain experience, our specialist consultants can help you deliver a seamless omni-channel experience and support the successful implementation and integration of your complex range of backend platforms.

Ask us how we can help you delight your customers and unlock more value from your systems!

Outcome

This re-platforming project successfully met its target date and delivered a scalable, omnichannel solution that made the buying experience seamless for customers on both digital and physical touchpoints. Its benefits extended to both customers and staff, whether in-store, back-office or online.

Our retail expertise and understanding of their POS enabled us to successfully deliver the full range of testing required. By the end of the project, we had created and executed over 1,500 functional and end-to-end test cases.

Our regression test suite provided approximately 60% automated test coverage, allowing for more frequent testing while freeing up staff to focus on more high value tasks. This equated to a saving of \$7,000 per release cycle.

Following the successful go-live, many of our staff were retained to provide continued support on the new POS alongside the retailer's in-house team. Since test cases and processes had been documented throughout the project, our staff were able to help the in-house testing team understand and carry out the tests without our direct supervision.

We continue to be the primary testing partner for this upmarket department store chain, working closely with them on their key systems and moving with them as they relocated their headquarters across the country. Our support extends across supply chain, third party logistics, inventory management, distribution centres, route management, online retail, in-store and full product lifecycle.