

Smartphone App a Retail Breakthrough Phone a Self-Checkout Device



RETAILING has taken a quantum leap with the launch of an Australian first Smartphone application that bridges the gap between bricks-and-mortar stores and e-commerce sites by empowering the consumer to find, compare, scan and checkout.

Whether shopping from the comfort of their lounge room or in the actual store, the

consumer using MobileShopper will have a handheld till or self-checkout device and information portal all in one.

Developed by DigiPoS, the leading hardware and solutions provider for retailers, MobileShopper is a first for the retail sector and has created a buzz of excitement throughout the industry as retailers come to grips with its true potential.

Shoppers will be enamoured of the free app's functions:

- E-commerce
- Store locator
- Coupons
- Price verification lists
- In-store navigation
- Integrated scanning
- Queue jumping checkout

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How They Saved \$240,000

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\$240,000 Saved With Technology Update

14 Stores A Week Upgraded In Pretty Girl's POS Update

For even a stand-alone retailer the thought of a Point of Sale system changeover can be unnerving.

But what if you had more than 400 outlets, representing some of Australia's most recognisable fashion brands, spread across the nation? How would you do it? Why would you even contemplate it?

Pretty Girl Fashion Group is the name behind womens' fashion retailers Rockmans, Wombat, BeMe and Table Eight. The group has more than 2000 employees.

Like many chains that have experienced rapid growth, PGFG had an assortment of hardware systems across the nation and an IT support bill from a third party provider averaging around \$4000 per month.

PGFG decided to bite the bullet in seeking a solution that would provide reduced total cost of ownership together with stability, reliability and local backup ability. They wanted retail hardened equipment.

"The ease and speed of down store recovery and uptime was also important to us, as the majority of our stores are a one register setup," said Pretty Girl Fashion Group's General Manager - IT Sonja Tysar

Pretty Girl already had been working with DigiPoS Systems for some time on new projects, but when the requirement to upgrade all stores surfaced, it was the core design of the DigiPoS Retail Blade solution that grabbed the company's attention.

One of the Retail Blade's appealing innovative options was that it allowed implementation of localised daily backup solution at minimal expense.

Sonja said that this was an important plus as it meant there is no loss of data in the event of a store system crash. Laybys, sales figures, gift voucher records and stock integrity are all maintained.

Specifically designed to meet the unique requirements of retailers, the Retail Blade was seen as a solution to reducing their total cost of ownership through the simplicity of design that enabled store staff to swap hardware out in the unlikely event of a failure.



The purchase decision made, PGFG's next problem was the rollout. Here DigiPoS' experience also came to the fore.

PGFG called on DigiPoS Systems to manage the installation of their equipment and provide additional services including pre-staging and configuration of all equipment and ongoing support services.

"We had some tight deadlines for brand rollouts, DigiPoS supported us by testing, staging and arranging techs in stores to setup the initial POS equipment," Sonja said of the program that was accomplished brand by brand in over just five months - 330 stores in all.

The transition was made all the easier by the equipment's retail specific design being such that there was no need to modify counters. And when the equipment was in place there was far less cabling to confuse non IT Savvy store associates.

Apart from the Retail Blade, DigiPoS even sourced POS Printers and software as part of a partnership between DigiPoS and PGFG has been ongoing since. Even the POS Printer was a quantum improvement. Printer-related calls dropped from 20% of PGFG Help Desk calls to less than one per

cent as the printer itself can be maintained by in-store staff.

The DigiPoS-PGFG relationship has endured six years and has not paled. Sonja summed it up as great service, quick responses and a knowledgeable team with friendly and efficient service.

"DigiPoS supply us with all POS and peripheral related equipment. They have staged, tested, repaired and setup equipment and applications for us and recently they developed a translate program for our stocktake upload," Sonja said.

"Most recently we had a problem with a POS peripheral interfacing to upload to our new POS application, DigiPoS did all the development and testing to ensure our existing peripheral interfaced with the new application, this saved us \$45K in a hardware purchase."

DigiPoS Systems works closely with customers to establish plans that will not only reduce their total cost of ownership over the life of a system, but also improve performance in the store.

Free DigiPoS App To Transform Retail

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For retailers, the strengths revolve around a CRM back-end that builds up an unprecedented profile of a wider range of shoppers than they have ever been able to access before.

Using these profiles they will be able to reach out to customers in new ways. Knowing an individual's shopping habits the retailer will be able to develop targeted and timely promotions, coupon offers, loyalty programs and advertising.

On the one hand, data-driven customers will be able to research promotions and products, anytime, anywhere, while on the other hand retailers will be able to provide personalised and targeted information.

At launch, the Smartphone based application runs on the Apple iPhone but it will soon be available on Google Android and Blackberry.



The Managing Director of DigiPoS Australia, Matthew Sherwood, said that at a time when other marketing channels are beginning to lose their appeal and consumer use, MobileShopper will enable smart retailers to differentiate themselves and as such offers an attractive Return on Investment.

"For the first time, regional customers will have access to metropolitan based stores, previously inaccessible to them, whilst retailers will have the ability to engage with this overlooked customer base."

"Up until now technology in retail has always been designed with the retailer in mind, making their jobs easier. Our MobileShopper app focuses on the emergence of the 'new shopper'.

"I believe that the mobile phone will have the same impact on retail that the ATM once had on the banking sector.

"The retail sector has touched upon elements of mCommerce for some time now, but I don't believe that the majority of retailers have a firm strategy in place, when it comes to a true multi-channel offering.

"Now more than ever, retailers need to see beyond tomorrow – those who don't implement a strategy are certain to be left behind," Matthew said.

During development DigiPoS insisted that the system had to be easy for retailers to adopt quickly.

To this end it deploys a simple middleware application that acts as a catalyst between the retailer's existing software – saving time and money, whilst protecting their investment.

"We are continually developing products to support our clients, and we feel confident that no other player has explored mCommerce to the extent which we have."

DigiPoS is currently in talks with a number of major retailers, and plans to make a joint announcement on the launch of an mCommerce platform in Q2, 2011.

The app will be free for consumers to download. Retailers will pay per download plus a monthly retainer fee for the middleware gateway server application. Additional functionality will be available based on the specific needs of the individual retailer.

Retail In-Store Solutions

Solutions for most any retail in-store including grocery, mass merchandisers, specialty, drug, and discount stores. Applications include back end receiving, shelf inventory, price verification, markdowns, self-shopping & queue busting and mobile point of sale.

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No Stone Unturned In Hardware Choice

“DigiPoS Wins Hands Down”



When a systematic and thorough retail IT manager changes hardware providers after five months of research, it's a decision worthy of study. When that same IT manager two years later is still discovering new plus points in the relationship then there's definitely a lesson ...

Bed Bath n Table IT Manager Sam Kyriacou has a methodical approach to problem solving and with 85 stores to look after and a further 12 coming on stream this year he needs it .

For years Bed Bath n Table used standard boxes in their stores but as outlet growth escalated the a-typical problems of quickly matching superseded componentry became too time consuming. By mid to late 2008 the company determined it was time to look at commonality of their systems.

Sam identified that across their retail chain of 65 stores the most common failures and problems were: power supplies, hard disc

drives, motherboards and the 'Blue Screen of Death'.

The company sought trial boxes from the major players – HP, IBM, Dell and retail specialist DigiPoS – and put them through their paces, examining their features, benefits and deficits in detail, particularly in terms of power, HDD, motherboards and that “Blue Screen”.

According to Sam, DigiPoS' retail hardened solution was by far the only alternative, but even then he did not commit and spent from February to July in 2008 making DigiPoS jump through hoops to prove their worth, particularly in terms of communication and responsiveness.

The biggest test that DigiPoS passed with flying colours was the development of a three disc hardware system with the conventional two disc raid system backed by a third disc that images the main disk every three hours.

Since that time the two companies have

built a close relationship based on Bed Bath n Table's commitment to a complete DigiPoS lane solution – scanner, cash drawer, box, printer, monitor, keyboard and mouse.

But even now Sam is learning. A day before our interview Sam had mentioned to DigiPoS almost as an aside that a visual merchandiser going to New Zealand to set up a new store would be carrying 12 boxes of computer equipment.

“DigiPoS volunteered that they had capability there and 24 hours later everything bar the hard discs was delivered to our New Zealand store,” Sam said.

Sam said that quite apart from enormous costs savings on hardware and support being enjoyed by his stores, there was a real benefit in the ease with which his IT people could now handle issues.

“My mum could change the external power supply in one of these boxes. The connection can only go in one way. You can't get it wrong. Similarly, the hard disk is retained by two thumb screws and it just slides in and out.”

The simplicity of the system is definitely a plus for Sam who cites the built-in modem and single power supply for all peripherals reducing the under-counter 'spaghetti cables' clutter as real bonuses.

Until now Bed Bath n Table has been replacing their old systems as needed but last month management gave the go-ahead for the remaining 31 generic boxes to be replaced with full DigiPoS systems, systems that also now feature across the board in their new sister chain of Homeworks stores with 3 locations already and a further 9 to open this year.

“Digipos may come across as more expensive than other suppliers, but knowing we can have consistent chipsets for years to come together with their instant email or phone support outweighs the extra cost,” Sam said.

“If I had known the excellent email and phone support was to be as true as their references mentioned then the decision to move to DigiPoS would have been a quicker one.”



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