



Connect Your Brand to Today's Customers

Executive Summary

Connecting your brand to your customers has never been more important – or challenging. Fortunately, it is also much easier to accomplish with an integrated approach to delivering retail initiatives and applications. A Connected Retail strategy allows you to use the strength of the network to connect your brands to today's consumers. It can help you:

- Reach today's mobile, connected consumer
- Maintain consistency across channels and customer touch-points
- Collaborate more effectively with employees and field managers
- Maintain security vigilance
- Reduce operating costs through a lean retail architecture approach

Introduction

Retailers face one of the most challenging business environments in recent memory. A global economic downturn affects every aspect of a retail business – including its customers. One of the most difficult challenges is improving sales in an uncertain economic climate while managing consumers' growing expectations. While operational costs climb, consumers are becoming more technologically savvy, and demand immediate access to information and a personalized experience.

Less Frequent, More Focused Shopping

Today, consumers shop on their own terms. Often, their priorities include shopping in a convenient channel and finding the right price, and they are less loyal to specific stores or brands. Shoppers also expect responsive service, knowledgeable assistance, customization options, and a high level of convenience, whether they shop in a store, online, or on the telephone. And they are more discerning about where, and with whom, they spend money.

The Connected Consumer

It is easier than ever for customers to make educated decisions because they are connected to unprecedented amounts of information. In addition to researching purchases thoroughly, shoppers increasingly research the company behind the products they buy. They solicit others' opinions and they share their own experiences with products and brands online.

Increased Competition

When consumers shop less frequently and spend less, competition for their wallets becomes more intense. Transforming loyal customers into active advocates for your brand becomes critical as more sales must come from fewer customers – or you must win customers from competitors. Many retailers are implementing strategies to create a consistent brand experience across all channels – in stores, online, across call centers, and other customer touch-points.

A Need to Increase Productivity

Many retailers are also seeking ways to improve the productivity of their retail managers and store associates. By simplifying on-boarding, administrative, and task management processes, retailers can free their teams to spend more time with customers, learn more about products, or improve their sales capabilities. And all of these improvements have a secondary benefit of improving customer service.

Security Represents a Continuous Concern

Compliance with the Payment Card Industry (PCI) standard for securing customer and credit cardholder data can be difficult to continuously maintain as data security threats evolve and become more sophisticated. Maintaining security requires best-practices security measures and a focus on creating security-conscious employees.

IT Infrastructures Have Become Complex

Initiatives designed to improve the customer experience, enhance productivity, or increase security almost always require IT resources. However, many retail organizations have separate voice, data, and wireless networks that have developed over time to meet a wide range of specific needs – as well as many "point" solutions. These multiple networks and systems are managed in isolation, and make it difficult to cost-effectively implement new strategies and applications.

Connect Your Infrastructure, Your Customers, and Your Brand

Effectively meeting these challenges within static or shrinking budgets is easier with an integrated approach. Connected Retail solutions allow you to use the strength of your network for connecting with today's consumer, collaborating more effectively with employees, maintaining security, and reducing operating costs.

By using the network as your platform, you can easily integrate access to information for every user, including employees, customers, and suppliers. Security, management, rich connectivity, video, media, mobility, voice, and identity services are enabled in the network itself. As a result, you can provide your users with access to the information and people that they need, at any time and with any device. With network-based services available to all devices, you can also execute new retail strategies and implement new applications far more rapidly, easily, and cost-effectively than ever before.



Transform the Customer Experience

In a connected retail world, you can change a satisfied shopper into a loyal advocate, and in turn, help increase sales, reduce costs, and create competitive differentiation. Connected Retail solutions enable you to:

- Enhance customer service: Cisco retail solutions for instant call connection, efficient call routing, mobile voice, and customer contact centers can help you provide immediate, consistent response. These solutions intelligently connect the call to the appropriate resource.
- Provide immediate access to information or remote assistance: Make it fast and easy for customers to find the answers to questions through the use of Cisco® Unified IP Phones, interactive kiosks, and wireless services.
- Provide personal assistance: Customers can push a button on a phone to request assistance. For example, in-department Cisco Unified IP Phones enable customers to seek help directly from department-assigned employees carrying Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phones.
- Deliver personalized service: You can deliver mobile concierge services directly to customers' mobile phones, informing them about special pricing programs, new merchandise, or product comparisons. You can also solicit interactive customer feedback to assess customer satisfaction levels.
- Reinforce advertising or promotions: Cisco Digital Signage solutions can display promotional videos, tutorials, and other visual information that enhances the shopping experience.

Optimize Employee Productivity

Empowered employees can become highly productive, trusted advisors with access to productivity tools and information. Cisco Connected Retail solutions can help you:

- Improve employees' product knowledge, sales skills, and responsiveness to customers: Intelligent call routing, interactive displays, digital media, and Cisco Unified IP Phones can create a communication framework for supporting applications that enable employees to serve customers better.
- Manage labor and tasks: Time-clock and task management applications can be delivered directly to the sales floor using Cisco collaboration tools, digital media, Unified Mobility, and Unified Communications solutions. Retail managers can continuously monitor store operations with visibility into daily task management and productivity measurement, and employees can clock in and receive task assignments on the store floor, at the point of work.
- Train and motivate employees: The Cisco Digital Media System enables you to deliver employee training and communication materials over the same Cisco Connected Retail network as data and voice, economically and with optimized application performance.

Secure Customer Data

Securing customer data has become one of the most important goals of many retail organizations because breaches represent a devastating blow to a brand and its value. The Cisco PCI Solution for Retail includes recommended network architectures and a portfolio of products that can be customized for your specific store and application needs. These suggested network architectures and accompanying product information are contained in the Cisco PCI Solution for Retail Design and Implementation Guide, available from your Cisco account team. Cisco also works with a wide range of vendors who can provide retail-specific solutions for antivirus, point-of-sale (POS) software, wireless POS, scan, audit, remediation services, and best practices.

Gain Cost-Effectiveness with a Lean Architecture

Lean Retail solutions also enable you to transform multiple networks and point solutions into an agile architecture. Connected retail architectures, centralized applications, and flexible management capabilities can help you satisfy customers and employees while reducing costs and delivering business capabilities faster to all of your stores. Whether supporting employees in a call center, helping ensure a seamless call transfer, or enabling shopping over multiple channels – a lean retail architecture can simultaneously improve the shopping experience and your balance sheet.

- Implement new initiatives more quickly: Centralized applications allow you to introduce new initiatives quickly, with confidence that they will be launched on time and within budget. Respond easily to consumer trends and competition, and refresh the customer experience more often to keep shoppers returning.
- Simplify management: Centralized patches and upgrades eliminate the need to dispatch technicians to each store, reducing costs and mitigating implementation risks.
- Improve application performance and availability: Data-center-based applications can now be delivered to stores with network performance accelerated to LAN-like speeds using Cisco WAN acceleration, load-balanced servers, and virtualization techniques. Even during peak holiday or sale periods, customers can quickly obtain assistance, employees can immediately access information, and transactions can flow unimpeded.
- Reduce operational, capital, and energy costs: By consolidating, virtualizing, and load balancing servers and storage in the data center, you can reduce capital, maintenance, upgrade, and patching costs for hundreds of in-store applications and servers. This reduction is multiplied when you simultaneously eliminate the need to travel to each store to provide support services.
- Gain management flexibility: You can choose which applications to centralize and still maintain LAN-like performance.

Why Cisco?

Cisco has years of experience working closely with leading retail enterprises and has carefully built a collection of network, security, application, and management best practices for helping you deploy Connected Retail solutions. Cisco retail network architecture and validated network designs have been successfully deployed and tested in Cisco labs. Network architectures have been designed for small, medium-sized, and large retail stores, enterprise data centers, and the Internet edge to support e-commerce operations. They include solutions for both wired and wireless deployments. In addition, Cisco provides:

- A customer-centric approach to delivering comprehensive, scalable, network-centric solutions
- Solutions that are proven in retail environments worldwide
- Strong global presence

Cisco Advanced Services

Cisco Advanced Services help make networks, applications, and the people who use them work better together. Using a Lifecycle Services approach, Cisco provides fixed-price planning, design, and optimization services to help increase business value and return on investment.

Cisco Partners

Cisco collaborates with a wide range of retail partners, providing retail solutions and strategic integration with products from companies such as NEC, IBM, SAP, and Oracle.

Learn More Today

Cisco Connected Retail solutions can help you achieve your business goals while enabling new strategic business initiatives. Call your local Cisco account executive to learn how Cisco Connected Retail solutions can help you. For more information, visit www.cisco.com/go/retail.



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