IBM Retail Store Solutions

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Services and Support
National Retail Services Center

Sales reference guide

Overview

The National Retail Services Center (NRSC) is a services group within IBM Retail Store Solutions that specializes in helping retailers minimize the time and risk typically associated with developing, customizing and integrating store-level solutions. The NRSC offers a wide range of services, including software customization, in-store integration, store-to-enterprise integration, and IT consulting. Achieving cost-effective, low-risk integration and customization is critical for any organization seeking to achieve the retail on demand vision.

When to engage the NRSC

Typically, retailers engage the NRSC when they need help with software customization or other projects that involve integrating a combination of new and existing software and hardware. Retailers often call the NRSC for one or more of the following reasons:

- *In-house IT expertise is unavailable for a project*
- *NRSC has specific experience with the desired technology*
- *NRSC has already developed components of the solution and can kick-start the project*

Regardless of the reason, the NRSC can work with the retailer's team in a services capacity that suits their needs.

The NRSC provides deep technical and retail skills, and has more than 60 IT specialists on staff, representing more than 900 collective years of retail systems experience. The NRSC works in all retail markets and segments, with any size organization, and has a proven track record of successful engagements with both U.S. and international retailers. In fact, NRSC solutions are installed in more than 30,000 stores worldwide. The group helps retailers implement many different kinds of solutions delivered through IBM and IBM Business Partners.

Solution components may include software products from IBM, software assets developed through customer engagements, software from IBM Business Partners or independent software vendors (ISVs), hardware components from IBM or other providers.

Key services

Software customization
Through customization, retailers can modify point-of-sale (POS) software to look and act a certain way in order to meet their customers' changing needs. The NRSC can customize offerings from IBM (including the complete set of IBM 4690 POS applications), IBM Business Partners and other vendors. The NRSC can also leverage pre-existing software assets – such as the StorePay® payment system, the Electronic Marketing Enterprise (EME) loyalty solution, GSA and CDSA promotional pricing solutions, or clean receipt for the IBM 4690 Supermarket Application to enhance a retailer's current POS application.

In-store integration
This range of services covers a wide variety of opportunities. Projects may involve integrating customized POS software with existing POS hardware and peripherals. Retailers may engage the NRSC to enable back-office applications to integrate with POS applications or gain access to data generated at the POS. The NRSC can also help retailers extend proven POS applications to Webpads, mobile POS devices, PDAs or wireless kiosks. Common examples of in-store integration projects include integrated pharmacy accounting, implementation of self-checkout systems, fuel system integration, line-busting applications and personal shopping systems. In addition, because the NRSC helped develop the IBM Store Integration Framework (see *Store Integration Framework: IBM Store Integration Framework*), the group is well-positioned to deliver engagements based on this technology.

Store-to-enterprise integration

Through enterprise integration, retailers can extend the POS and POS data beyond the brick-and-mortar store to enterprise-level applications. Examples are numerous. Retailers may want to integrate POS software with applications for customer loyalty, inventory management, and multichannel transactions, including Web-based applications. They can establish an enterprise-level electronic marketing program. Some retailers may need to integrate the POS application to support debit, credit, check, gift cards, EBT transactions, or other payment systems across the enterprise. Or they may require specialized middleware that simplifies enterprise-level integration, such as a realtime T-log trickle, integration with enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, such as SAP, or integration between the POS and in-store processor (ISP) systems.

IT consulting

The NRSC offers IT consulting services to help retailers and solution providers with a variety of needs. The NRSC can structure consulting workshops focused on a tactical approach to a specific in-store problem or integration requirement, or create a more comprehensive session designed to help identify and prioritize objectives. Consulting engagements provide an external perspective as well as technology recommendations based on a the desired objectives of a specific solution. The NRSC also provides POS package selection services.

How does the NRSC enable retail on demand?

The NRSC is critical for retailers that want to implement the retail on demand vision successfully. Examples are abundant for all four imperatives of retail on demand. Here are a few:

Transform the customer experience

- *Customizing IBM SurePOS™ ACE helps retailers positively differentiate the sales experience for customers at the POS*
- *Providing loyalty data to various consumer touchpoints throughout the enterprise allows retailers to promote offers and deliver personalized marketing messages prior to checkout, which can help increase consumer spending. The EME solution supports realtime access to customer data, which can be critical for successful targeted marketing campaigns*
- *StorePay helps retailers keep pace with new payment trends – from gift card consortiums to payment via biometrics – so consumers can have access to a variety of tendering options*

Take out costs

- *The 'Scan & Save' solution, an electronic consumer incentive program from Advanced Marketing Systems (AMS) for which the NRSC provided design services technology, enables paperless coupon validation and clearing. It can help retailers reduce coupon handling costs, while adding a solution that may entice consumers to shop at their stores*
- *T-log trickle solutions allow retailers to feed POS transaction data to enterprise systems as transactions occur, which helps optimize the supply chain and improve responsiveness to stock outs*
- *The StorePay payment system can be customized to encourage customers to pay via debit or credit cards, providing an opportunity for retailers to reduce transaction fees*
- *Touchscreen interfaces for the POS allow faster employee training, which eases the pain of sales associate turnover and helps reduce training costs*

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Enable your people

- *Many POS applications can be customized with icon-driven GUIs that make it easier for employees to complete transactions and can help eliminate errors*
- *Implementing self-checkout can help retailers to serve more customers at the front-end while freeing up staff to provide customer service in other areas of the store*
- *Connecting operational store systems to centralized ERP systems provides decision support applications with timely data*

Operate with secure resilience

- *The NRSC has a reputation for creating solutions that offer performance, scalability and fault-tolerant resilience*
- *The NRSC has experience with a variety of solutions that require increased security – such as those that use wireless technology or handle sensitive data such as payment, loyalty and pharmacy-related information*

For more information

If you have questions about the NRSC and its service offerings, please contact Peter Large at plarge@us.**ibm.com**