

Case Study

Retail therapy

No time for POS headaches

H ALLENSTEINS

glasssons
is good for you



“The beauty of Lexel Systems Ltd is that they’re big enough to be effective, but small enough to be personal. That’s their strength.”

Graeme Popplewell, finance director, Hallenstein Glasson Holdings

Retailing provides a stark example of just how critical IT is to business. Unlike some other businesses, whose system users are prepared to cut the IT department some slack when things go wrong, retailers get about 30 seconds to clinch the sale, before it’s lost. The customer standing on the other side of the counter simply isn’t prepared to wait for delayed transaction processing.

Leading trans-Tasman retailer Hallenstein Glasson decided the best approach was putting its point of sale systems and support into the hands of a specialist. Sticking to your core business and using specialists for resources that can’t be found in-house they will tell you is a sound strategy. In Lexel Systems Ltd Hallenstein Glasson found an able partner.

Challenge: Consistently slick customer transacting

A profitable \$200 million company with 100-plus stores on both sides of the Tasman, clothing retailer Hallenstein Glasson knows more than most about what it takes to prosper in the pressure cooker business of retailing.

IT and retailing is a potentially volatile mix. Multiple retail outlets require point of sale (POS) systems that can handle customer peaks and troughs and an army of system users. There is significant potential for both operator error and systems downtime.

The company had rolled out a new POS system to its network of stores, but wanted to centralise support and 'cookie cut' IT. If each store could use identical systems then support and maintenance would be simpler and largely trouble-free.

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Business IT needs: Streamlined POS systems and support

Graeme Popplewell, finance director, Hallenstein Glasson Holdings, says his interest in outsourcing the management and support of the group's trans-Tasman POS and back office systems was its criticality to business and the knowledge and resources a specialist provider could bring to the job.

“Outsourcing is really horses for courses. If were to handle our own helpdesk that's a seven days a week affair and you really have to be able to over-staff to manage it correctly. The job was ideally suited to someone with a depth of IT resource,” he says.

Paramount was speed of issue resolution. He didn't want his stores exposed when things went wrong. Rather than relying on the availability of key staff and ongoing staff training, Popplewell wanted to identically configure a large number of stores and streamline management and support using a provider who had the horsepower to deal with an organisation of his company's size.

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“With large store numbers you can't have separate configurations,” Popplewell says. “Everything needs to be the same. It demands a cookie cutter approach.”

Solution

Lexel Systems Ltd Service Desk monitors and supports Hallenstein Glasson's POS systems seven days a week, providing three broad levels of support. First level support typically resolves blank or frozen computer screens; second level support fixes any database errors; and third level support addresses POS applications. Additionally, Lexel Systems Ltd manages underlying systems layers, including intranet, EFTPOS and sundry back office applications.

Remote monitoring enables Lexel Systems Ltd technicians to remotely control and update individual machines, applying patches, and keep tabs on the health of the company's networks. The engagement has also seen Lexel Systems Ltd work to standardise all hardware, revolving inventory, systems configuration and store set-up, drastically simplifying support and speed of issues resolution.

Big wins

High performance POS

- Service Desk calls have diminished from 400 a month to less than 100, indicating that users are experiencing fewer issues.

Savings

- Popplewell says the engagement is highly cost effective. He is no longer required to carry systems support staff or the capital costs of maintaining a multi-vendor environment.

Simplified management

- Rather than troubleshooting and managing fixes, Hallenstein Glasson can concentrate on its core business of buying and selling.

More responsive

- When things do go wrong the availability of specialist help is guaranteed. Moreover, the help is specifically trained and armed with knowledge of Hallenstein Glasson systems, stores and business operations.

Risk mitigation

- Popplewell has effectively reduced his company's business risks. The combined approach of 'cookie cut' IT and highly specialised 'eyes and ears' proactively monitoring Hallenstein Glasson's POS systems means the tills will always ring.



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