



For
Small
Business



Retail Operations Gain Efficiency Through the Network

Cisco Small Business Solutions help retailers address today's most critical business issues with a comprehensive approach.

Challenges

Sharon manages four retail clothing stores for a family-owned company. She spends her days visiting the stores between California and Washington state to oversee the store staff, logistics operations, vendors, mall partners, and the central office. Her main concern these days is in managing the competition from larger retail chains and in maintaining her share of consumers' dollars. As the economy has tightened, she knows her most powerful marketing force is her in-store staff. Helping train, retain, and utilize the staff to deliver top customer service is her biggest challenge. She is traveling more while on a tighter operational budget, and she is constantly looking for ways to streamline her operation and increase her inventory turns while not overbuying from her distributors. Sharon knows the right technology can help, but in such a fast-paced industry she has little time to consider her options.

Small retailers today face daunting challenges. With consumers spending less, excellence in customer service is more important than ever in order to attract and retain customers. And with margins shrinking, efficient store management and greater productivity are important factors in the health of a retail establishment. To stay healthy and grow in any economy, savvy retailers are finding technology solutions to be a critical asset in conquering these challenges.

These retailers focus every day on protecting their margins, simplifying staffing, improving customer service, and boosting store productivity. To do that effectively, they need to connect with and coordinate suppliers, staff, and outbound customer communications and protect their inventory with better security. Another issue is finding, hiring, and training sales staff. Poor access to training information and methodologies and inadequate inter-store communications add up to lost revenue in an industry where customers need immediate answers to their product inquiries. And when staffers lose opportunities to cross-sell and upsell, store productivity and customer loyalty are reduced.

Results

A strong network and communications foundation based on Cisco® switches, routers, security, and wireless products and services provided Sharon's company the key technology components it needed. Sharon says, "We found that Cisco offered the full range of routing, switching, access, communications, security, and storage products to form the foundation we needed to increase revenues and manage the business more effectively." The infrastructure built on Cisco solutions connects her team to customers more effectively, both inside and outside the store.

Today Sharon's company is running more efficiently and profitably because Cisco Small Business Solutions are helping her communicate and coordinate with her stores, staff, and vendors. Easy-to-use technology helps her train staff more consistently and efficiently with in-store and videoconference learning sessions. Inventory is sourced and tracked more effectively, more securely, and more economically.

"As competition for shrinking consumer dollars raises the pressure for today's retailers, success comes to those who can run their stores more efficiently, securely, and profitably."

Highly secure wireless capabilities help the sales team process transactions from anywhere in the store, where transactions secured by the Cisco Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliant solution protects the personal data of customers from theft and loss. Customers save time, staff is more efficient, and the cross-sell and upsell opportunities are more easily met. And purchase tracking is now helping to create more effective outbound marketing to loyal repeat customers.

Store inventory is more secure as well through Cisco Video Surveillance solutions. Wireless IP cameras connected to the Cisco network give Sharon and the central office the ability to monitor their physical inventory. Shoplifters trigger alarms that send store managers automatic email or text messages containing links to the online video clips that captured the theft. Video is simultaneously stored on high-capacity storage systems for easy retrieval and review. Managers review surveillance video simply and rapidly by date, time, and location using Cisco video control software. The business is seeing a significant reduction in theft and product shrinkage as thieves find easier prey elsewhere.

Staffing is simplified through Cisco communications solutions. For example, the Cisco Smart Business Communications System (SBCS) allows Sharon's sales staff to clock in for their shifts at the touch of a button on their Cisco IP phone using Cisco TimeCard view or the IPcelerate application, located at the register or checkout counter. Time cards are more accurate, and managers have a clearer view of who is on the sales floor at any given moment. Phone calls are also quicker and more efficient as the system enables managers to set up protocols for when employees are absent. SBCS is also used to access sales information and store statistics from web-based applications and web-enabled devices, giving store managers and owners instant access to critical information.

Cisco, its channel partners, and service providers were Sharon's expert resources for networking and communications. Cisco's Certified Partners worked closely with her to help plan and implement the optimal solution. "Every retail operation is different," Sharon says, "and we could rely on them to work with us on a complete solution that's right for us today but can grow as our needs grow." Cisco partners also provided cost-effective options for outsourcing the administration of network services.

Cisco offered flexible, affordable financing through Cisco Capital. "We could choose the technology solution that best met our needs without a large, up-front investment, so we could make better use of our available budget," Sharon says. Cisco also helped ensure that the network will continue to support and grow Sharon's retail operation with service and support.

Product List

- **Cisco WRVS4400N Wireless-N Gigabit Security Router** offers next-generation, highly secure Wireless-N speeds while maintaining compatibility with older devices.
- **Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker with the Trend Micro ProtectLink Gateway Service** helps protect against spam and web-based threats.
- **Cisco SRW2016 16-port Gigabit Switch** supports gigabit networking, offering exemplary performance over 16 separate connections.
- **Cisco WAP200 Wireless-G Access Point** doubles the reach and reduces the "dead spots" of a standard Wireless-G connection. Enables the addition of Wireless-G (802.11g) or Wireless-B (802.11b) devices to the network without so much as a power plug.

To learn more about Cisco solutions for retail businesses, visit:

www.cisco.com/go/smallbusiness/retail



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