



CONVENIENCE STORE I.T.:
SOPHISTICATION MADE SIMPLE
WITH HPE PROLIANT EASY CONNECT

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THE CONVENIENCE STORE MARKET

Convenience stores (C-stores) have become sophisticated retail outlets. They have modernized from “gas and a snack” stops to delivering a complete, high quality, express retail experience. In order to meet today’s customer expectations they now need sophisticated, easy to use, information technology to support this development.

The market for C-stores is growing rapidly, with in-store sales jumping 6 percent in 2015 to \$600 billion*. In-store sales grew by 3.1% in the first half of 2016, going some way to offsetting a 11.9% drop in gas revenues.** This has led to increased investment in convenience retail outlets, focused on improving the shopping experience, shopability, expanding offerings and footprint, reducing costs, and improvements to the core concept of shopper convenience.

What’s surprising, given the dynamic nature of this industry, is that, to date, the IT industry has not responded with solutions and technology that meet the unique needs of this sector. IT professionals in this space complain of having to make do with solutions designed for other, more stable markets. If this has been difficult to live with in the past, it’s going to prove impossible in the future. C-stores are now investing in sophisticated technologies across mobile and multi-media in-store systems as they add fast food kitchens and juice bars to become high quality express stores. What C-stores need are IT solutions which are powerful enough to meet these sophisticated needs, but which can operate in “no-back-office, no-local-support”, highly distributed environments.

The HPE ProLiant Easy Connect range delivers the sophistication C-stores need in a simple, easy to deploy, easy to manage format. They are purpose built and optimized for highly distributed operations with integrated remote management, upgrading and patching to reduce support cost and deliver sophisticated IT in stores without sophisticated IT support skills. And they offer a unique small form factor, so space isn’t an issue.

IMPROVING THE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

So important is improving the customer experience, that C-stores must be constantly remodeling to ensure that the shopping experience remains fresh and engaging. IT can play a vital role in rising to this challenge. C-stores are defined by the customer experience they deliver: quick, easy, and reflecting our busy lifestyle. So, a laser like attention on a successful and differentiated customer experience is obvious. In-store IT solutions must reflect and enable this core business value. They must support an omni-channel experience so that customers can choose how they buy; perhaps ordering on-line and picking up on the way home, or ordering while at the pump and picking up when the gas is paid for, or many other mobile driven

customer interaction scenarios. To achieve this, IT solutions must be integrated with the cloud, but must retain in-store speed of response and reliability, regardless of WAN infrastructure, so that retailers can have peace of mind that the customer transaction will be efficiently completed in real time.

SHOPABILITY

Constant attention is given to making the shopping experience easier and more enjoyable. A key objective is to attract customers from the gas pump and into the store, or to bring the store to them wherever they are. This may involve tablet based browsing and purchasing of goods at the pump, either self-served or assisted by a mobile, or a tablet equipped associate to make the sale and complete the transaction. This requires a local IT infrastructure with the power to support multiple device types and multiple applications with guaranteed quality of service.



EXPANDING OFFERINGS AND FOOTPRINT

New requirements for new customer experience models and new applications are arising all the time. IT must have the power and flexibility to enable these models quickly and cost effectively. This needs backroom information technology that can keep pace with front of store innovation - an IT solution which is inherently flexible to accommodate pricing, promotion and product line changes, but in a cost-effective manner. They need to be easily upgraded to support new applications that may be required to deliver support new lines of business.

The success of the C-store sector, and the need to put stores where customers need them, has led to an expansion of the number of outlets and to a desire to be able to respond to demand and open (and potentially) close outlets quickly and cost effectively as market conditions dictate. C-store IT needs to be easily deployed and commissioned with minimum technical resources, and without disruption to the business. An optimized way of achieving this is to design and maintain a standardized IT server implementation across all sites that can quickly and effectively be rolled out with minimum business impact.

REDUCING COSTS

Although the customer experience is king, this does not mean that the issue of cost containment and reduction is not of paramount importance. In an IT world, this means reducing real estate costs, and reducing implementation, support and management overheads.

Space is at a premium in C-stores, and IT professionals are seeking solutions that can reduce current IT footprint by replacing multiple legacy servers with compact virtualized solutions. Consequently, any new IT solution that requires a dedicated server room is suboptimal. If the device needs extra cooling, dust protection, or other environmental conditions to operate efficiently, then the true benefits of state

of the art IT technology are being lost. It is also important to consider power consumption; seemingly marginal cost differences can have a major cost impact when replicated across multiple sites.

But the prime cost consideration for C-store IT is reduction of management and support costs. By definition, C-stores are widely distributed and do not benefit from local IT support skills. So not only is centralized monitoring, management and support essential, it must be delivered and maintained in such a way as to minimize costly site visits, reduce down time, and facilitate ease of maintaining currency so that all implementations are always kept securely up to date. This is challenging to achieve cost effectively across multiple distributed edge devices, particularly where consistent standard images must be maintained across sites to reduce costs. The processes and technologies used for automated patching and to keep current are core to the value any IT solution can deliver.

Costs can be contained ensuring in-branch simplicity of support, so that more and more expensive support skills are not required. PC support skills cost less than server support skills, which in turn cost less than datacenter support skills. C-store IT must address de-skilling the support challenge, so that support costs can be reduced.

HPE PROLIANT EASY CONNECT – CONVENIENT I.T FOR CONVENIENCE STORES

HPE ProLiant Easy Connect Managed Hybrid Servers offer unique value for C-store IT. They are powerful, high availability small form factor devices purpose built for sophisticated distributed IT environments, but which face challenges of space and local support. They are delivered pre-built, pre-integrated and pre-tested, making installation simple and highly cost effective. They meet all of the primary needs of the C-store business and IT team, and have the flexibility to be adapted to varying customer requirements. Some of the major benefits they offer are:

- **A Flexible Retail Experience – Across All Channels**

HPE ProLiant Easy Connect Managed Hybrid Servers are virtualized in-store solutions that can run all of the applications a C-store requires and are integrated with the cloud to enable a differentiated omni-channel customer experience. Designed from the ground up as hybrid solutions, they come pre-integrated with cloud services and powerful cloud management capabilities, combining the benefits of on-premise IT with the scalability and cost benefits of the cloud. They allow IT professionals to choose what applications run in-store or in the cloud, and provide a powerful local presence that provides for the immediate and reliable delivery of the in-store element of the omni-channel experience.

- **Tablets and Mobile Devices**

HPE ProLiant Easy Connect Managed Hybrid Servers support the advanced applications required to deliver new types of customer experiences. These new applications need to run across multiple device types and may rely heavily on advanced graphics and advanced POS activity. These applications require a reliable and powerful virtualized infrastructure that can efficiently, flexibly and reliably support multiple applications without inbuilt latency issues.

- **Enabling Business Flexibility and Speed of Response**

With HPE ProLiant Easy Connect Managed Hybrid Servers, IT Professionals can create a golden image of a standardized store architecture which can then be centrally tested and simply and effectively rolled out to new stores with minimum local support and business disruption. The solution is preconfigured to install in minutes so it can quickly begin handling business workloads both on premise and in the cloud.

In addition, updates and upgrades can be centrally controlled and managed, so that new product lines, promotions or prices can be easily and cost effectively implemented across a C-store network, with minimized local support.

- **Reduced Real Estate**

Any Convenience Store space not used for retail opportunities impacts the bottom line. Multiply this over hundreds of C-stores and the impact is significant. The ProLiant Easy Connect range occupies minimum real estate, does not require a dedicated equipment room, and because they are virtualized, allows multiple legacy servers to be consolidated into one device. The unique form factor of the ProLiant Easy Connect EC200a is ideally scaled for most C-store implementations, offering unprecedented opportunities to free up previously unproductive IT space to use for retail opportunities.

- **Reduced Management and Support Costs**

The ProLiant Easy Connect range has an integrated cloud management platform, enabling IT Professionals to manage their store network from one central location, eliminating the need to travel to multiple sites to maintain support. This management platform constantly monitors the health of all servers 24/7 from a hardware, security, service performance and backup perspective, and provides alerts of any concerns or issues. It assesses the need for patches to software, operating systems and security capabilities and automatically handles the delivery and confirmation of updates as required. It proactively runs health checks and tests to ensure performance of the server, automatically discovers and attempts to fix operational faults within virtual machines, and automatically manages backup processes to protect local data from loss. In summary, it provides a comprehensive management, patch and upgrade platform that can drastically reduce the need for local support and expensive site visits from central support staff for fixes or software updates.

In addition, the range enables IT Professionals to put in place standardized IT implementations, based on standardized X86 hardware, thereby reducing site differences and reducing the support overhead.



C-stores have had to cope with sub-optimal IT adapted from other market sectors for some time, and they have done a great job of making it work. But as they move forward into more varied and sophisticated customer offerings, they will require tailored IT solutions to meet these needs. HPE ProLiant Easy Connect Managed Hybrid Servers are ideally suited to the in-store IT demands of the fast-growing Convenience Store market, delivering compact, advanced IT on site which can enable a differentiated customer experience, with powerful but simplified central management capability to reduce costs.

ABOUT SAGENET

SageNet designs, implements, manages and protects fast, secure and reliable networks that empower organizations to achieve their core business objectives.

SageNet's integrated network infrastructure, dedicated personnel and innovative products and services suite have set the standard for Managed Network Services. Combining longstanding traditions of industry leadership, innovation and a passionate commitment to customer support, SageNet manages communications at more than 160,000 locations. The company's customer base represents many of the nation's leading retail, healthcare, financial and energy companies, as well as public utilities, state lotteries and government agencies.

Today's SageNet offers a uniquely broad and deep understanding of local and wide area network technologies and leading-edge cybersecurity solutions, all backed by a nationwide field service organization and three 24/7 U.S.-based Network and Security Operations Centers.

Headquartered in Tulsa, SageNet also has regional offices in Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Chicago and Philadelphia.

ABOUT HPE

Hewlett Packard Enterprise is an industry leading technology company that enables customers to go further, faster. With the industry's most comprehensive portfolio, spanning the cloud to the data center to workplace applications, our technology and services help customers around the world make IT more efficient, more productive and more secure.

ABOUT ZYNSTRA

Zynstra is a software company, formed by experienced technology and business entrepreneurs. We have a track record in creating enterprise grade software, and delivering it into successful operation inside some of the most complex and rigorous IT organizations in the world.

Our experience has shown us how to delight our customers - with a single-minded focus on how software can help them grow and save them money. Zynstra are the winners of the 2015 IT Industry Awards for infrastructure innovation of the year.

* *BizReport, citing a new Koupon report*

** *Convenience Store News Market research 2016*