

Case Study

Cotton Traders
IT Managed Service
Home and in-store retailing

Ricoh IT Managed Service delivers transformation across the Cotton Traders retail estate



Cotton Traders has a wealth of enriched data from its loyal home shopping customers. However, restricted in-store technology agility and unreliable PoS equipment resulted in limitations with gathering information from

retail shoppers. Using a Ricoh IT Managed Service, the company has transformed in-store PoS operations, improving insight and the overall customer experience.

Executive summary

Name: Cotton Traders
Location: Altrincham, Greater Manchester
Size: 750 staff
Activity: Clothing retailer

Challenges

- Improve experience for in-store customers
- Shop technology infrastructure lacked agility, limited retail customer data capture
- Unreliable, poor-performing Point-of-Sale technology

Solution

- Ricoh IT Managed Service
- Point-of-Sale IT upgrade across entire retail estate
- Nation-wide 24/7, four-hour break-fix support service

Benefits

- Fast, efficient IT maintenance, upgrades and support call SLAs
- Increases productivity and reduces store and PoS downtime
- Makes PoS technology quick and efficient for in-store staff
- Staff able to capture high-quality customer information, faster
- Improves ability to meet changing shopping habits and trends

Challenges

Cotton Traders, a British casual clothing specialist, was founded in 1987 by former England rugby union team captains. Today the company is much more than rugby, with a multichannel offer of clothing, footwear and homewares ranges across online, stores and contact centre.

Based in Altrincham, Cheshire, the home shopping retailer has over 120 stores in the UK and its expanding international presence covers delivery to 25 countries. The business has enjoyed strong growth in recent years bucking the adverse trading conditions seen on much of the UK high street.

Whilst Cotton Traders has a wealth of enriched data from its loyal customer base, in-store technology infrastructure lacked agility, resulting in limited retail customer data capture functionality, particularly due to unreliable, poor-performing Point-of-Sale (PoS) technology.

The challenge was to modernise store equipment in order to improve primarily customer experience, and also the various critical tasks needed to run a retail store.

Solution

Cotton Traders began by improving links between stores and head office with an enterprise-grade Wide Area Network. Then it turned to upgrading in-store PoS systems and needed a partner to drive the project.

One of the concerns in choosing an IT partner for Cotton Traders was the risk of getting lost in a big organisation. It has had instances of ending contracts because of poor care. But Cotton Traders was also keenly aware that the project demanded a company large enough to have a national presence. The reality is that Ricoh is a large company, but



Cotton Traders confirms that it doesn't really feel like it; because you get that small company care.

As part of Ricoh's Managed IT and Retail Service - designed to modernise retail IT systems and create a better shopping experience - Ricoh has managed an in-store PoS upgrade and launched a nation-wide support service. The store upgrade involved new PC-based PoS tills with large touchscreens in every store across the UK; along with wireless HP desktop printers to improve paper and document handling.

Deployment was completed on time and on budget. It was an exceedingly robust and smooth deployment; made so by Ricoh's rigorous planning, documentation and rock-solid project management.

The effectiveness of the project was further underlined by store staff. Although some disruption during roll-out was expected, Cotton Traders retail employees found the service exemplary. The Ricoh engineers were efficient and professional, but also polite and friendly, and when customers wanted to purchase; the engineers would step aside so staff could serve them.

The other key element of the Ricoh solution is a strategic partnership to provide a PoS break-fix service. It replaced the existing next-day service with a 24/7, four-hour SLA anywhere in the country. The stores only have single-lane service so keeping PoS running is critical. To minimise business disruption further, Ricoh holds a stock of pre-built spare PoS systems in reserve in case there is a problem with a store system that needs to be replaced quickly.

To improve further Cotton Traders' business operations, the company is planning to extend its use of Ricoh IT Managed Services.

Benefits

The managed service has helped Cotton Traders transform its retail store operations. Stores can serve customers faster and more efficiently than before and all on-till processes perform better; this helps the company deliver a more improved customer experience.

Turner says, "Within minutes of the new PoS technology going live, we were getting unsolicited reports from multiple sites about how much quicker and better the sales process was functioning. The Ricoh solution and its support service are critical to Cotton Traders' bricks and mortar retail business because PoS systems are the only things that allow that arm to operate. Every single sale, every delivery and every bit of information we capture goes through it. Without that one piece of hardware working effectively, reliably and with minimal downtime, stores can't operate."

continued overleaf

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For Cotton Traders, time and cost dealing with equipment failures and store downtime has dropped significantly. Since the upgrade six months ago, there have been no PoS failures at all. In fact in order to 'prove-the-process' a dummy Till Hardware failure has been orchestrated to test and trial all of the support wraparound services to Cotton Traders. In essence for Cotton Traders; it doesn't matter where a store is located, Ricoh's national support network means it can get our stores up and running, serving customers and operating effectively in this crucial arm of the business.

One of the key benefits Cotton Traders has seen is the quality of partnership which the company described as more like an extension of its own business rather than a 3rd party. The company can contact anyone in the Ricoh team from engineers, to account management and even senior executives.

Ricoh Solution/Products

- Managed IT service
- UK-wide Point-of-sale system upgrade
- HP 100 PC-based tills
- HP desktop printers
- Ricoh in-store, break-fix service

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Nick Turner, Head of IT, Cotton Traders

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