

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

Retail environment gains an edge with TransAccess from afterBOT



QUITE APART FROM THE TECHNICAL DETAILS of data organization, messaging, and reporting, the essence of business intelligence (BI) is refreshingly simple: It's all about delivering meaningful information on a need-to-know basis in real time. Enterprises in every industry—from manufacturing and financial services to public sector, telecommunications, travel, and healthcare—are seeking solutions that can enhance their business success through instantaneous access to critical information. For the retail sector, there's a solution designed to do just that: TransAccess from afterBOT, running on the HP Integrity NonStop server.

According to Jim Nadler, vice president of business development and marketing at afterBOT, TransAccess is unique in the industry. "Our solution takes POS transaction data and transforms it into a series of actionable insights across the extended retail enterprise," he explained. "We put

"Running TransAccess on the Integrity NonStop platform provides the optimal solution, with uninterrupted and real-time access to the data."

Jim Nadler, VP of business development and marketing, afterBOT



the data into a format that is usable by consumers, internal retail personnel, and the supplier community through a Web portal application that makes transaction details available in real time."

For the consumer, this could mean getting a digital receipt with direct links to an online warranty registration process or a product manual. For the retailer, it could mean quick access to proofs of purchase for return authorization, enhanced stock management, or a powerful tool for measuring marketing promotion effectiveness. And for the supplier, it could enable a system of alerts that provide immediate visibility into product movement, for improved inventory flow.

A COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT

The timing is good for TransAccess. Regulations like Sarbanes-Oxley have increased the focus on corporate accountability and fiscal responsibility, leading to a higher level of collaboration between retailers and suppliers. "Retailers have historically been reluctant to share data with their supplier community," observed Nadler. "But in reality, retailers and suppliers are part of a single supply-chain

link to the consumer, and we see a new openness starting to evolve. Of course, running TransAccess on the Integrity NonStop platform provides the optimal solution, with uninterrupted and real-time access to the data.”

In today’s demand-driven retail environment, effective vendor collaboration and customer self-management depend on 24x7 access to critical data. Other features are also important: Support for a mixed workload of online transactions and ad hoc database queries is imperative, for example, in order to ensure consistent, high-level performance and results. With its continuous availability, linear scalability, transaction and data integrity, and unrivaled mixed workload capabilities, the HP Integrity NonStop server is the optimal platform for the TransAccess suite of applications.

The strong support for open standards in the Integrity NonStop platform is good news for afterBOT. “In the beginning, when we were trying to sell TransAccess on a NonStop server, we frankly encountered resistance to the platform,” recalled Nadler. “It was viewed as proprietary, and the perceived cost of maintaining a proprietary system was prohibitive. Moving NonStop systems to the Intel® Itanium® 2 processor and supporting a wide range of open standards have definitely changed this perception. Now IT professionals at the retailer site aren’t restricted to knowing only the NonStop platform—they can support other areas as well. This flexibility is important, because retailers like to leverage their resources across multiple platforms.”

PARTNERS IN EXCELLENCE

Things don’t stand still in the retail industry, and afterBOT is already staking out its territory in future developments. “We plan to engage in an industry initiative aimed at providing a vendor portal in a multi-retailer environment,” said Nadler. “This initiative will have the sales data of multiple retailers going to a single environment in the supplier community, in order to improve efficiency and drive in-store operational excellence. Hopefully, this is another area in which we’ll be able to partner with HP.”

For now, though, afterBOT is focused on simplifying business intelligence processes in the day-to-day life of the retail enterprise. “The goal is to provide unique views of the data on a need-to-know basis, leveraging the BI environment for real-time retailing,” concluded Nadler. “This is where TransAccess on the Integrity NonStop server can play a pivotal role.” ♦

A single solution, multiple parts

TransAccess includes three portal-based components:

- **CustomerConnect** allows consumers and business customers to access detailed transaction history in order to research past product purchases or additional product detail, analyze payment history, import information into money management applications, and obtain other post-sales customer services. This always-available information drives greater customer satisfaction and helps lower customer service costs.
- **EnterpriseConnect** enables internal users to leverage the data to better manage inventory levels and product selection, drive promotion effectiveness, and improve operational efficiency, while simultaneously delivering targeted marketing messages based on product preferences, payment methods, and other customer-specific buying patterns. Benefits include fewer out-of-stock situations, lower customer service costs, and new insight into sales data.
- **SupplierConnect** enables vendor access to real-time data in order to execute just-in-time direct store deliveries, comply with trade allowance policies, and leverage knowledge of consumer demand signals to better manage the supply chain. This benefits the retailer by increasing inventory turnover and lowering supplier transportation costs.

