

# STEPPING UP GROCERY TOOLS

New hardware and software focus on customer-centric strategies

BY CARLY BOHACH

**Increasingly intense competition in the supermarket segment** is prompting grocers to step up their IT efforts. Many of the latest implementations are specifically focused on improving the customer experience, including self-checkout, self-service kiosks and mobile scanners. Although the IT spend is on the rise among grocery retailers, many still lag behind. Retailers should take note of several technology areas that they may be overlooking. In a report released in March titled *The Top 10 Grocery Imperatives: It Really Is Now Or Never*, written by Scott Langdoc, AMR Research has identified the 10 most underutilized and underinvested technology areas in the grocery segment.

Grocery retailers should not only be aware of these technologies, in order to keep up with the competition, they should be exploring technology options such as: store-level perpetual inventories, price and promotion planning, space planning, next-generation replenishment, fresh item management, supplier collaboration, core POS transformation, private-label product development, consumer relationship marketing and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID).

These steps are becoming imperative for grocers who want to remain viable in their marketplace. In 2005, food-oriented retailers controlled only 51 percent of the total \$818 billion grocery and consumables market, with general merchandise retailers (33 percent, including super centers) and convenience stores (16 percent) gaining ground, AMR reports.



▲ ShoptoCook GoCook Center

## ENHANCED SHOPPING

ShoptoCook's GoCook Center places a touch-screen kiosk along the perimeter in a supermarket's meat, seafood, produce, wine and cheese departments. The kiosk provides printed recipes with an ingredient list as well as accompaniments such as branded ingredients, nutritional information and helpful tips. Customers interact with the kiosk by either scanning the barcode of a product or

touching the kiosk screen. When touching the screen, shoppers can select from menu buttons, which focus on the individual's needs. Menu buttons can be customized to fit the store's unique requirements, and also can be used to feature weekly store specials or seasonal themes. All GoCook Center applications include automatic content updating, daily activity logging and reporting features. Retailers can view recipe popularity and the decision making habits of shoppers.

## MIX-AND-MATCH VARIETY

The QUICKcheck Vanguard Full Cash Express self-checkout model is designed for orders of all sizes, while the ePay model is designed for small orders and stores with limited square footage. The system allows retailers to mix and match units within the store to meet the needs of the store's environment. Each cabinet accommodates the retailer's choice of third-party POS components, such as Panel PCs, CPUs, scanners, LCDs and PIN pads. Also, the Java architecture permits retailers and third-parties to add new functionality via software plug-ins, and the Java source code is available for licensing.



▲ QUICKcheck Vanguard 010

## TRACKING RETAIL DATA

Microsoft Retail Management System 3.1 enables retailers to better coordinate and track store and headquarters information between Retail Management System and Microsoft Dynamics GP. The program assists retailers who manage their store, financial and inventory operations from a central location. Using the system, retailers can improve inventory control, enhance financial management across the supply chain and eliminate double data entry by preserving supplier data on synchronized items. The Store Operations module has enhanced security for handling credit card information. Based on the Payment Card Industry (PCI) Payment Application Best Practices (PABP) guidelines, the new security features allow credit card numbers to be automatically deleted from the system, and masked credit card numbers are used.

## MINI SELF-CHECKOUT

The NCR FastLane Mini self-checkout system equipped with a full range of tendering capabilities is geared toward space-constrained retail locations. With the NCR FastLane Mini, shoppers can scan, bag and pay for purchases using cash, debit cards, credit cards or other electronic payment methods. The mini version features NCR's touch-screen user interface, multimedia graphics, voice and visual prompts and a signature capture pad for completing credit card transactions. The system can be equipped to accept coupons, deactivate electronic article surveillance tags and provide ATM-like functionality by dispensing cash back. The NCR FastLane Mini also can be deployed as a self-checkout alternative in other retail environments such as convenience stores, drug stores, office supply stores, boutiques and department stores.



▲ FastLane Mini 010

## SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

Aldata's G.O.L.D./RI, a rapid implementation solution, utilizes a centralized database that helps mid-size retailers manage items, assortments and high transaction volumes. The solution can be implemented in three to six months, and gives retailers improved visibility across

the supply chain. G.O.L.D./RI provides retail supply chains with tools for managing suppliers, centralized procurement, automated replenishment and store operations. Other supply chain management and merchandising functionality includes replenishment and ordering, perpetual inventory, sales and promotion support and profit and margin analysis by product.



▲ U-Scan Max Single

## HANDLING LARGE ORDERS

U-Scan MAX Single, a belted self-checkout system from Fujitsu Transaction Solutions, handles large and small orders. The product offers a takeaway belt that gives retailers the ability to accommodate larger order processing and incorporates a two-handed scanning feature, which enables shoppers to scan

items one after the other without waiting for the scale to validate the weight of items before scanning the next item. The U-Scan MAX Single is available in both right- and left-hand models, allowing retailers to configure them side by side, and it supports all major grocery point-of-sale (POS) software applications.

## PURCHASING BEHAVIOR

Lawson Software's Customer Lifecycle InSight delivers a view of customers' purchasing behavior. Lifecycle provides behavioral

profiles of customer segments that reveal their expected long-term value to the retailer. Retailers can then focus on attracting and building loyalty with the most profitable segments. The application also has the ability to automatically spot new trends in customer behavior, and can further assist retailers in moving customers to higher value segments or preventing them from moving to lower value segments. The application also enables retailers to perform "what if" scenarios. ■