ORDER MANAGEMENT & FLEXIBLE FULFILLMENT:
MEETING CUSTOMER AND ASSOCIATE DEMANDS

Retailers today are faced with a plethora of evolving technologies to solve order management and fulfillment challenges. However, finding technology to fit within the current needs of an existing retail operation can be tough. New technology can be a major disruptor, rather than a benefit, to the organization if it's not properly integrated and employees can become frustrated quickly if a new solution isn't easy to learn. Luckily, there are plenty of solutions to meet customer demand for fast and flexible fulfillment, strategically position inventory throughout the enterprise, and personalize orders in a consistent way. Below, *RIS* talks with two industry leaders to uncover what retailers need to know now about the latest order management and fulfillment technologies.

• **JIM BARNES**, •
CEO, **enVista**

• **BRIAN PULFER** •
Manager of Solutions
Development & Data
Analytics, **VARGO**

Q **What does every retailer need to know about the latest technology available to optimize order fulfillment processes?**

JIM BARNES: An order management system (OMS) built on an integration Platform as a Service (iPaaS) and microservices architecture is enabling the future of order fulfillment. OMS, with embedded machine learning and AI algorithms, enables retailers to strategically position inventory based upon an item assortment that is dedicated both for in-store and online omnichannel customers. Advanced OMS platforms are moving beyond buy, fulfill and return anywhere and leveraging promotion, pricing, and item assortment engines to better service the omni-retail customers.

BRIAN PULFER: The most important thing to understand is that technology continues to evolve every day within the current landscape. Whether it is from a software or hardware standpoint, we — as a systems integrator — are continually introduced to, and evaluating, new technologies. We determine when, where and how these innovations fit within various solution sets and we gauge their short-term and long-term viability. Depending on the complexity of the operation, it may be necessary to assess whether the technology is flexible or scalable enough for a company's needs. The most important thing to remember is that these technologies need to fit within the current processes and procedures of an existing operation. They typically are not standalone elements. New technology can be a major disruptor to the upstream and downstream operations if it is not properly integrated.

Q **What features do retailers need to be on the lookout for to achieve a real-time environment when updating their order management and fulfillment systems?**

PULFER: Many retailers have a wide variety of features they look for in an upgraded solution, but I recommend focusing on visibility and response time. Visibility is a necessity in order to assess the current situation and make decisions based on the information provided. Without visibility, an operator is essentially guessing and hoping his or her actions will not negatively impact the customer experience. When it comes to response time, I am referring to the "real-time" inference from the question above. New technology within an operation is nothing without the detailed feedback of what that element is or is not doing. That is why integration of these new technologies is so crucial to ongoing success. The "shiny new toy" could turn into an expensive paper weight if retailers do not understand the impact to the overall solution or cannot get necessary and timely feedback from it.

BARNES: The word "real-time" assumes that the OMS is built on an integration Platform as a Service, or iPaaS. However, many OMS solution providers leverage a third party iPaaS or enterprise service bus (ESB). It is nearly impossible to achieve a real-time environment when data is being translated and routed through multiple integration layers. The OMS must manage the data flow, order flow and customer data, then a real-time environment is feasible because there is only one source of the data.

Q How is demand for faster fulfillment and one-to-one personalization redefining order management?

BARNES: For orders to be personalized and rapidly fulfilled in a consistent way across the retail network, the OMS has to support a number of enterprise process objects, including retailers' item, inventory, customer, order, shipment, payment, carrier and promotion. Each of these business process objects is vital for unified commerce and each can be personalized. Leveraging the combined data from each of these process objects also provides powerful intelligence, allowing the retailer to understand the lifetime value of the customer and their buying behaviors. In addition, prescriptive analytics can be leveraged to nudge a customer to engage more. For example, retailers can apply a value to each customer that can be used by a promotions engine to encourage conversions, or promotions can be offered to customers that have a propensity to buy online and pick up in store.

PULFER: Customer expectations for purchase-to-delivery — from a cycle time standpoint — continue to increase. People are becoming accustomed to ordering anything and expecting delivery within 24 to 48 hours. This can significantly strain a supply chain because some elements of the order management cycle cannot be condensed. Many times, we will see the focus to condense on the tail end of the supply chain within the cycle time of the fulfillment center and shipping. This pressure being put on fulfillment centers is causing retailers to abandon traditional order processing methods. There are technologies which ultimately decrease order cycle times within the fulfillment center. Depending on specific order requirements, this can be achieved without abandoning the one-to-one personalization that customers desire. Today's e-commerce customer requires the right product, at the right price, at the right location, and with the right communication throughout the entire process. If the customer cannot get this from their current retailer, they will find it elsewhere.

Q What can retailers expect when training associates on these new solutions?

PULFER: Retailers can always expect there to be those who support the new solution, those who oppose it, and those who are neutral. The key to training for any new solution is that it cannot be too difficult or complicated to operate. If it is too complicated, then chances of a successful implementation and ramp up will be significantly reduced no matter how viable the solution may be. Associates become frustrated and lose faith rather quickly when the solution requires too many screens, convoluted steps, or requires reading a manual that looks like "War and Peace." If it's straightforward, logical, and productive —compared to what they might have been doing in the past — then even those who oppose the change will eventually come around.

BARNES: It is important to convey that technology is not the complete answer. Numerous retailers leveraging order management systems are struggling. The key is having both the right technology solutions and engaged associates that are customer-focused and obsessed. However, if a retailer's platform is not intuitive and easy-to-use, associate adoption is going to be poor, which decreases overall enterprise performance.

Solicit input from your associates early and often and ensure they are part of the process rather than making them feel forced to use a piece of technology. Communicate the solution's ability to overcome the problems experienced by the customer and the limitations faced by the associates to service the customer, versus selling the software solution itself. Associates can relate to the need to solve their existing challenges and are eager for solutions that make their jobs easier and allows them to serve and delight the customer. **RIS**

COMPANY NAME/ WEBSITE	RELEVANT PRODUCT/SOLUTION	KEY CLIENTS
Aptos www.aptos.com	Aptos Enterprise Order Management	Cole Haan, L.K.Bennett, Tommy Bahama
Bridge Solutions Group www.bridgesgi.com	DeliveryCX	N/A
Celerant Technology www.celerant.com	Stratus Retail	Cato Fashions, Robert Wayne Footwear, Stein Garden & Gifts
CGS www.cgsinc.com	BlueCherry ERP	Alice & Olivia, Tommy Bahama, Velvet by Graham & Spencer
enVista SEE AD ON PAGE 33 www.envistacorp.com/unified-commerce-platform/order-management-system/	enVista Order Management System	American Freight Furniture & Mattress, Spencer's, Yankee Candle
Infor Infor.com	Infor Networked Order Management	N/A
Jesta I.S. www.jestais.com	e-DOM	N/A
Manhattan Associates www.manh.com	Manhattan Order Management v. 19.1	Lacoste, Levi's, PetSmart
Mi9 Retail www.mi9retail.com	Mi9 Unified Order Management System	N/A
Multidev Technologies www.multidev.com	ChainDrive Web Order Fulfillment	App Group, R&A Cycles, Bench, and Jeans Factory
OneView Commerce www.oneviewcommerce.com	OneView Inventory Management	Australia Post, Carhartt, Molton Brown
Oracle Retail www.oracle.com/retail	Oracle Retail Order Broker and Order Management Cloud Services	Grupo Nazan, Pet Valu, Samsonite
OrderDynamics www.OrderDynamics.com	OrderDynamics DOM (Distributed Order Management)	BoardRiders, Columbia Sportswear, Crabtree & Evelyn
SAP www.sap.com	Omnichannel Customer Experience	Purchasing Power, Ulta Beauty, Li-Ning
Softeon www.softeon.com	Softeon OFS	Duluth Trading Co., The Honest Co., SONY DADC
Springboard Retail www.springboardretail.com	Springboard Retail	Arezzo, Detroit Institute of Arts, Scout & Molly's
Symphony RetailAI www.symphonyretailai.com	SR Distributed Order Management	Dollar General, Intermarché, REMA 1000
VARGO SEE AD ON PAGE 35 www.vargosolutions.com	Continuous Order Fulfillment Engine (WES)	American Eagle Outfitters, Forever 21, Gap