IBM and StorePerform modernize the links in retail chain management

Highlights

- *StorePerform™ Workbench™ software provides retailers with a closed-loop store execution management system designed to help maximize sales opportunities and increase productivity across the retail chain*
- *The standards-based flexibility of the IBM® TotalStorage® DS4000 Family combined with StorePerform software can help retailers manage resources more cost-effectively*
- *Performance tests of StorePerform Workbench on an IBM platform show exceptional performance and scalability*
- *StorePerform has qualified as TotalStorage Proven™ with the IBM TotalStorage DS4000*
- *A standard set of application programming interfaces and integration with IBM WebSphere® Application Server helps enable retailers to leverage existing IT assets*

Retail enterprises operate in a highly competitive, rapidly changing business environment. Distinctive brand propositions can help retailers stand out in a crowded field of competitors, but they are only a first step in providing innovation and an experience that matters to customers. Retailers are working to differentiate the in-store experience in ways other than lowering prices, realizing that the impeccable execution of in-store, consumer-centric initiatives can help drive retail success.

However, successful task execution cannot be achieved without real-time reporting and feedback, along with workload management tools. Compliance with regulations and policies must be supported and documented throughout the chain, and vendor marketing dollars must be managed as efficiently as possible. Retailers need effective communication tools to help them transform retail strategy into

store execution. These tools can help ensure that best practices are shared among all stores, that labor requirements are scheduled appropriately and that all tasks are monitored from assignment through to completion.

Still, many retailers rely on historical sales data to evaluate the success of promotional campaigns and depend on a jumble of IT services and infrastructures—phone calls, faxes and e-mail—for customer, office and in-store communications. Many organizations have expanded IT capacity over the years simply by continuing to add hardware, which has created highly complex IT infrastructures with expensive overhead. The challenges associated with this kind of ad hoc expansion are amplified in the face of mergers and business acquisitions—a common thread in the retail industry. Flexible, standards-based platforms combined with sophisticated store execution management (SEM) software can help retailers transition from complex, resource-intensive, localized or isolated infrastructures to integrated, streamlined IT architectures that can share information and manage resources more cost-effectively.

StorePerform eliminates the gap between retail strategy and store execution

StorePerform Technologies provides SEM software with Web-based functionality designed to help streamline the in-store management and execution of operational tasks, from outsourcing facilities maintenance to launching corporate initiatives to ensuring coupon releases match product supply.

The StorePerform Workbench is a role-specific, Web-based application designed to enable retailers to design, execute and monitor processes and programs throughout stores. Each module in the workbench is designed to help increase operational efficiencies across the board—from headquarters to store level. The Business Process Designer module allows corporate executives to develop tasks and activities based on a template that can be used across all stores. Workload Optimizer acts as a gatekeeper, to help ensure that stores have the workload capacity to handle tasks, and scheduling or reprioritizing activities accordingly. Task Manager is designed to distribute the relevant information and Feedback Manager is designed to close the loop on completed tasks, providing real-time status and performance reports on demand. By allowing retailers to successfully execute retail strategy, StorePerform can help improve the customer experience and drive down operational costs.

StorePerform adds flexibility and performance

StorePerform Workbench software can be configured to address the unique business requirements of each retailer. This helps avoid having to wait for expensive custom code development, lower the total cost of ownership (TCO) and minimize the impact of new software releases.

StorePerform Workbench is also designed to offer exceptional performance and scalability. In performance benchmarking and testing[1] on IBM @server® pSeries® servers running the IBM AIX 5L™ operating system, IBM DB2 Universal Database™ (UDB) and WebSphere® 5.1 software, the StorePerform Workbench scaled up to 240,000 distinct users and 58,860 concurrent users supporting

15 million tasks at 1,500 stores. This level of performance can help enable retailers to personalize communications across multiple locations and effectively monitor thousands of simultaneous processes by thousands of users across those locations.

IBM TotalStorage systems help maximize reliability and performance

Many of the StorePerform Workbench customers have chosen to run the application on an IBM storage platform because of its proven track record for reliability and performance. Designed to help retail businesses simplify their IT infrastructures, support business continuity and improve information life-cycle management, the IBM TotalStorage DS4000 Family can help customers achieve high efficiency, enhanced data protection and high return on investment. These systems help retailers achieve low TCO for their storage infrastructures by providing scalable and flexible platforms to support advanced data applications.

Flexible storage scales easily and cost-effectively

To keep up with rapidly changing business demands and seasonal workloads, retailers need a flexible storage environment that can scale quickly and cost-effectively. TotalStorage DS4000 Family systems can help retail enterprises to respond with agility to customer demand and market opportunities. Virtualization tools with easy-to-use interfaces and remote management capabilities also can help improve ease of use and management efficiency.

The IBM TotalStorage Resiliency Family of technologies can help protect high-availability and disaster recovery functionality with a range of redundant components and a comprehensive suite of resiliency features that help support high availability and data protection.

StorePerform on pSeries servers helps optimize high performance

pSeries servers with the POWER4+™ processors and AIX 5L—the advanced, open, scalable UNIX® operating system from IBM—deliver outstanding performance, scalability, reliability and security. pSeries servers provide the power required to run robust SEM applications and the interoperability required to share information across the entire store chain. Built on innovative mainframe technology from IBM, pSeries servers running AIX 5L provide a powerful, flexible base for the StorePerform Workbench applications and solutions while helping to lower costs and improve operational efficiency.

pSeries systems feature exceptional processing power, memory and I/O capabilities, so they can scale dynamically to handle the rapid growth and ever-changing needs of a retail environment. Using the dynamic logical partitioning (LPAR) capabilities in AIX 5L, retailers can create virtual servers within a server and dynamically add and remove processors, real memory and I/O slots from active partitions—each isolated from other partitions and running its own instance of the AIX 5L operating system—without the need to reboot. In this manner, dynamic LPAR enables clients to assign system resources where they are most needed, easily adjusting to changing system priorities and growth requirements.

WebSphere and StorePerform streamline browser access

StorePerform Workbench runs with the WebSphere middleware software to provide an integrated browser experience for end users. WebSphere Application Server is a tightly integrated development tool and application server

for companies developing dynamic Web sites. WebSphere supports the full J2EE 1.4 programming model and extensions, including servlets, JavaServer Pages™, Enterprise JavaBeans™ and Web services, delivering a service-oriented architecture across all configurations. This enables retailers to increase their return on investment and lower their TCO by reusing existing IT assets using standards-based messaging and the latest Web services standards.

DB2 enhances SEM performance

With support for the latest Web services protocols and open Internet standards, DB2 UDB easily integrates with the StorePerform Workbench application. DB2 UDB is a multimedia, Web-enabled relational database management system delivering high levels of reliability, availability and performance. To manage growing data volumes, DB2 features shared-nothing partitioning to support no-limits scalability—from hand-held devices to high-performance enterprise cluster systems based on massively parallel processing configurations. This capability makes DB2 one of the most scalable and storage-efficient databases on the market. And DB2 runs on the most popular platforms, including the Linux®, UNIX® and Microsoft® Windows® operating systems, providing flexibility and the ability to preserve existing IT investments.

StorePerform and IBM improve SEM, from planning to feedback

Running StorePerform Workbench on IBM TotalStorage systems can help retailers effectively improve the customer in-store experience.

The StorePerform Workbench includes a standard set of appliance programming interfaces that help allow customers to leverage existing software infrastructures. By integrating components such as organizational hierarchy, distribution lists and workload budgets, StorePerform helps streamline real-time reporting, feedback and workload management.

As retailers transform themselves into on demand businesses, an increasingly competitive marketplace will continue to push them to improve operational efficiencies across the enterprise and adopt technology standards to streamline SEM. To accomplish these goals, companies in the retail industry must optimize their IT infrastructures for flexibility and resiliency by using cost-effective, standards-based platforms. IBM storage and server systems running StorePerform Workbench can play a key role in supporting these initiatives with a platform that is designed to integrate operating systems, middleware, databases, security and storage into one infrastructure that can be deployed quickly and is easy to manage.

IBM TotalStorage Proven program simplifies IT decision-making

StorePerform software has been qualified through the TotalStorage Proven program to interoperate with the IBM TotalStorage DS4300. The IBM TotalStorage Proven program is designed to help clients identify storage solutions that have been pre-qualified for interoperability with IBM TotalStorage products. IBM helps take the guesswork out of putting a total solution together to help simplify your purchase decision, freeing you to focus on running your business.

For more overall information about StorePerform, visit:
www.storeperform.com

For more information on IBM TotalStorage Proven, please see:

ibm.com/servers/storage/proven/index.html

For more information

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[1] StorePerform Workbench 3.0 AIX Performance Benchmark Test conducted by StorePerform at the IBM Innovation Center for Business Partners, San Mateo, California, April 2005.

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