



## Microsoft Business Solutions Retail Management System Customer Solution Case Study



### Overview

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** Retail

### Customer Profile

The Swing of the Quad Cities is a profitable single-A affiliate of the St. Louis Cardinals that sells more than 1,500 team-branded items from two stores, the Web, and phone sales.

### Business Situation

When the club's new stadium went up between seasons, the informality of previous manual sales and the inefficiencies of management by spreadsheet had to be retired.

### Solution

After comparing leading contenders, management found that the retail management solution they wanted was also among the more inexpensive.

### Benefits

- Reporting time cut by 80 percent.
- Customer program automatically tracks and rewards big purchasers.
- High-school and part-time staff speed customers through in seconds.
- Up-sells, work orders, and reports are easy to learn.

## Local Baseball Club Gets New Stadium and World-Class Retail System for Opening Day

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Josh Eagan, Director of Merchandising, Swing of the Quad Cities

When a hometown baseball team in the Midwest needed to remain profitable, it expanded income avenues to include retail sales, concerts, and special events. Team-branded souvenir and gift items include “almost anything that can hold a logo,” according to Josh Eagan, Director of Merchandising, Swing of the Quad Cities.

Even though Eagan had successfully used the predecessor to Microsoft® Business Solutions Retail Management System at his previous club, he still tried out two other retail management contenders, Retail Pro and Tangent. In the end, the one with the features he wanted came with a very reasonable price tag.

Reports now take 80 percent less time, sales associates can put transactions on hold so customers can run to get more merchandise, and item-specific reminders tell associates to promote up-sells such as personalizing team jerseys, which uses the product's work order feature.



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## Situation

The Swing is a single-A hometown baseball affiliate of the St. Louis Cardinals. The Quad Cities, lying along the Mississippi River border between Iowa and Illinois, are Davenport and Bettendorf, Iowa, and Moline and Rock Island, Illinois. Fans go to games to spend time with family, see friends, and, sometimes incidentally, to watch and cheer for the Swing of the Quad Cities. Behind the scenes, retail management can't be so easygoing.

Between the 2003 and 2004 seasons, with a new team name and a U.S.\$12.5 million top-to-bottom facelift of John O'Donnell Stadium, the Swing and its new Director of Merchandising, Josh Eagan needed a new point-of-sale (POS) system to manage gift and memorabilia sales from two store locations, one inside and one outside the ballpark.

In the old stadium, the organization had no cash registers and an informal sales setting that sold 1,500 stock keeping units (SKUs) of team-branded merchandise—jerseys, mini-bats, mugs, classes, T-shirts, and trinkets. “We had a sales stand where someone accepted money and handed out merchandise,” says Eagan. It had been that way since 1960 when the team was founded.

## The Squeeze Play

“Our challenge, compared to other retailers, is that our traffic is concentrated into six months, then into a few days a week, then into a few hours on game days,” Eagan says. That meant a new POS system had to sell fast while keeping a close watch on stats. Eighty-five percent of sales occur in the park and, as Eagan observes, “When people want an impulse item, they shouldn't see a long waiting line.”

Eagan knew that, under the right conditions, he and his staff would have to transact 600 to 800 sales per night from a few registers during their limited window of hours.

To stretch revenues more widely through the year, the club sponsors a haunted house and big-name concert draws such as Hootie & the Blowfish. The Swing's retail system would need to work extra innings.

## Working Harder

Staff worked hard to overcome a low level of automation in the back office. “When we were named the City River Bandits, records like revenue and stock levels were tracked manually on spreadsheets,” says Eagan. “That robbed huge amounts of time. We might spend five or ten hours every week just preparing reports.”

But thanks to this diligence, business was brisk and owner Kevin Krause made sure that retail sales were a key player in keeping the team profitable. Says Eagan, “We ran ads in magazines like *Sports Weekly* and *Baseball America*.” The publications traditionally sponsor nights at the ballpark and give away sample copies to fans and sell subscriptions.

## Solution

“Even though I had previous, personal knowledge of an excellent retail system and a proven Microsoft® reselling partner in this type venue,” says Eagan, “we did our due diligence in selecting a new IT solution. We looked at systems from Retail Pro and Tangent,” Eagan says. “We compared the system I had worked with previously to this new organization's needs at the point of sale and for back-office reports.”

“Since all our records were in QuickBooks and Microsoft Excel,” says Eagan, “we needed a system that could rapidly automate the transfer of that information, and not require manual reentry or complex conversions.”

## A Winning Record

At Eagan's previous minor-league team in New Jersey, he had used the predecessor to

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Microsoft Business Solutions Retail Management System, QuickSell 2000, which Microsoft acquired in 2002 and began enhancing.

Says Eagan, “I also worked with Retail Realm in that installation, so I knew product and partner. There were really no unknowns. The package had only gotten better. Since Retail Realm gave us the best quote for top-of-the-line retail management capabilities, Microsoft Retail Management [System] was the clear winner.

“We had resolved to spend the necessary money to get a top-notch system to help frame, test, and support our buying and pricing decisions. Then we found that the solution we wanted actually cost a lot less than the others. We got big-league tools at a more reasonable price.”

#### **A Good Deal**

Retail Realm began installation as construction ended in April 2004. The system would be hooked up to three registers in the inside store and two in the outside store. All had to come together for unified inventory reckoning. And 35 people including part-time staff and high-school interns needed to learn it before the season’s first pitch.

“Retail Realm went above and beyond,” says Eagan. “The system was going in just about flawlessly, but the stadium wasn’t fully ready with all the conduits and cables when they got here. They did everything they could, then coached us long distance through the final steps when the stadium was finished. The rest was so easy, we finished it ourselves.”

Neo Computers of Davenport, Iowa, built and installed a dual-Xeon server to handle retail sales, ticketing, the club’s Web domain, and to work as a company-wide file server. Eagan and a high-school intern handle sales and back-office tasks. The intern often runs

reports because doing so takes just a few clicks. Eight part-time employees help with transactions.

#### **Benefits**

“Of all the large and small retail systems I have used in other retail environments,” says Eagan, “Microsoft Retail Management [System] is better than any of them.

“It really helps us maximize sales,” Eagan says. “We have very fast transaction times and the shorter lines encourage buying. We complete single-item sales in less than 30 seconds. If customers think of something mid-sale, we put the transaction on hold while they go back to fill up their arms again.”

#### **Right off the Bat**

Eagan uses on-screen item messages for sales associates to prompt item-driven up-sells such as protective cases for autographed baseballs and personalizing team jerseys. “This feature helps us add several dollars to lots of transactions every night with very small cost in staff or customer time.”

Eagan has set up Microsoft Retail Management System to enable season ticket holders to present a membership card for scanning. “After each \$100 in purchases,” he says, “they earn an additional discount and the system tracks all this for us.”

Rather than tagging all logoed items, Eagan gave each such item a short alias code and keeps them on a cheat sheet near the register. “We don’t label these for a couple of reasons,” he says. “We don’t want sticker goop on our souvenirs, and it would take forever to label the thousands we sell. “ Someone brings a blue mini-bat to the register, we look it up on the cheat sheet, punch in two digits, and [the] Microsoft system does all the rest.” The alias code invokes the item’s SKU number at the

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register, which tracks the item from the register through inventory reporting, to reorders, to accounting.

Eagan says the system is very easy to use and to teach new cashiers. They clock in and out on the registers, follow suggested selling messages, and use its work order function to place personalization orders for team jerseys.

#### **In the Manager’s Office**

“We use the system’s standard reports,” Eagan says, “to see what our most popular items are, when during the day they’re sold, and when our high and low traffic is during a game. We also analyze past weeks’ item movement to see what we should put on sale.”

Upper management wants to see sales reports by department, category, per hour, and per store. “The ten hours a week we used to spend on reports is now cut by more than 80 percent. This gives me time to find new merchandise and handle my other tasks like booking acts, staffing, and getting our printing done. What retailer has enough hours in the day?” says Eagan.

Eagan praises Retail Realm, who “handled our questions and were patient when the construction blocked installation. They even called to check on us. But, honestly, we don’t talk to them much. They put in a system and it runs fine without them.”

#### **The Coach’s Box**

“I tell other retailers, if you don’t have a modern POS system, or are still using electronic cash registers, you are wasting hours every day. A system like this lets you do better predictions, better planning, and have more business flexibility.

“You don’t realize it because now you’ve built extra time for long tasks into your work week, but you’re taking way too much time with

manual processes. This product gives you ten times the business information, arranged nearly any way you want to see it, in a quarter of the time.

“We look forward to taking more complete advantage of the capabilities of the system,” says Eagan. “We want to start using its NetDisplay functionality to advertise to people walking by or waiting in line about our upcoming games and promotions.” NetDisplay is a feature of Microsoft Retail Management System that enables a dual display at the register or anywhere in the store. It can pull item- or customer-specific images from the database or Web sites and show them during the transaction.

“Next year,” says Eagan, “we’ll investigate sending out catalogs and explore this new system’s more advanced reporting. After all, this is a baseball team, and the owner really likes his stats.”

## For More Information

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For more information about Retail Realm products and services, call (732) 730-8239 or visit the Web site at: [www.retailrealm.us](http://www.retailrealm.us)

For more information about Swing of the Quad Cities products and services, call (563) 324-3000 or visit the Web site at: [www.swingbaseball.com](http://www.swingbaseball.com)

## Microsoft Business Solutions Retail Management System

Microsoft Business Solutions Retail Management System offers a complete store automation solution for small and medium-sized retailers, streamlining point-of-sale (POS), customer service, and store inventory management, and providing real-time access to key business metrics. Microsoft Retail Management System is a comprehensive solution for single-store and multi-store retailers that empowers independent proprietors, store managers, and cashiers through affordable and easy-to-use automation. Microsoft Retail Management System has the flexibility and scalability to grow with a retailer's business. It works with the Microsoft Office System, Microsoft Windows® Small Business Server, and leading financial applications to provide end-to-end support from the cash register to the back office.

For more information about Microsoft Retail Management System, go to: [www.microsoft.com/pos](http://www.microsoft.com/pos)

### Software and Services

- Products
  - Microsoft Windows Server™ 2003
  - Microsoft Windows XP Professional
  - Microsoft Office 2003 Professional
- Solutions
  - Microsoft Business Solutions Retail Management System

### Hardware

- Neo Computers server
- Dell OptiPlex PCs
- Logic Control CR3000 cash drawers
- Metrologic scanners
- Epson TM-88 printers

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