

## Case study

# Nebraska Furniture Mart

## Furniture giant transforms customer experience with HP Mobile POS Solution



### Industry

Retail

### Objective

Transform sales process to engage the customer at all times, streamline the shopping and purchasing processes, and improve the overall customer experience

### Approach

Nebraska Furniture Mart deployed a custom application with the HP Mobile POS solution and ElitePad devices to enable immediate access to product pricing and inventory data, as well as the ability to process purchases

### IT matters

- Windows 8.1 provides ability to handle POS transactions in a business-class, highly secure environment with touchscreen ease-of-use
- HP ElitePad features hardware-based Trusted Platform Module (TPM) 1.2 and HP BIOS protection against virus attacks and other security challenges
- The HP Retail Jacket features a barcode scanner and credit card reader for complete mobile POS
- Carrying options including a hand strap, shoulder strap and carrying pouch extend user possibilities

### Business matters

- Streamlined mobile processes help sales associates provide a premier customer shopping experience
- HP Mobile POS Solution sales solution eliminates need for sales staff to leave customers to check pricing or inventory, enabling continuous 1:1 interaction with customers
- Mobile POS Solution integrates Nebraska Furniture Mart ERP system with product information, enabling immediate price and inventory checks, ability to reserve products and finalize purchases
- HP ElitePad provides familiar touchscreen interface for rapid training of sales associates, as well as customer access to product options



**“The HP Mobile POS Solution gives us all the functionality, mobility and security we need—a business class mobility solution that is easily adopted in retail.”**

— David Bash, CIO and Director of Information Technology

Nebraska Furniture Mart, now in its 77th year, is no ordinary retailer. Its headquarters store sits on 77 acres and boasts more than 450,000 square feet of retail space. It also operates a megastore in Kansas City, and soon another huge store in Dallas-Fort Worth. After years of planning, the company deployed the HP Mobile POS Solution to help simplify the customer experience. Its proprietary application for delivering merchandise information and streamlining order processing is at the fingertips of sales associates using Windows-based HP ElitePad devices with the HP Retail Jacket.



Nebraska Furniture Mart does things in a big way. Its headquarters store in Omaha, Nebraska, has roughly 50,000 products on display, ranging from furniture and appliances to electronics, flooring, mattresses, home décor and more. The NFM website has more than 240,000 items.

If customers want something for the home, they'll want to shop at Nebraska Furniture Mart. But with the vast selection comes some challenges for customers.

"First, because our store selection is vast, it can be hard to find something if you don't know where to look," acknowledges Rodney Rahl, general sales manager for furniture. "Until now, our salespeople would need to leave customers from time to time."

Rahl explains that when customers identified an item they liked, the sales associate would write down the SKU number, then go to a computer terminal to check availability and pricing. The sales associate might be away for a few minutes. On returning, the associate would reserve the item for the customer. When the selection process was complete, the sales order ticket was written up for the shopper, who then needed to stand in line to finalize the purchase with a cashier.

**"Adding the HP Mobile POS Solution and putting ElitePad mobile technology in our sales associates' hands is a win for customers. And that makes it a win for us."**

— David Bash, CIO and Director of Information Technology

"Our goal was simply to provide an excellent shopping experience. We wanted a continuous and personalized 1:1 interaction with customers and our sales associates, and to make it as simple as possible to do business with us," explains David Bash, CIO and director of information technology for NFM.

## **A vision outpacing technology**

Several years ago, the IT team at NFM took on the challenge to help transform that process. The initial goals: keep the customer engaged at all times, streamline shopping, and eliminate the wait. This was years before touchpad tablets, yet the IT team worked to develop an innovative solution using a

handheld device. They did develop an app to help sales staff remain with customers for more of their visit, but without technology to support secure transaction processing, customers still had to stand in line to pay. Bash determined this partial mobility was too expensive and put it aside.

With advances in tablet technology, Bash recommended that the idea of using a mobile device to streamline the customer visit was now within reach. The solution could leverage the emerging touchscreen user interface, Bash explained, and would need to handle POS transactions in a business-class, highly secure environment using Microsoft Windows.

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The IT team focused for two years on building a soup-to-nuts app running under Windows 8.1 to streamline the customer process. It integrates NFM's ERP system including inventory of in-stock products, as well as the hundreds of thousands of products that can be ordered on the website. It enables immediate price and inventory checks, reserves products, and even helps guide buyers to find products in the store. Using the custom app and the card reader on the HP Retail Jacket, sales staff can now swipe a customer's credit card complete the purchase process right on the sales floor. No more customers waiting in line for a cashier.

## **HP offering the right technology at the right time**

The IT team had spent several years upgrading the NFM back-end IT infrastructure to support the application. It upgraded the server architecture, linked the sales, marketing and product databases, and deployed a secure wireless environment and purchasing process. The finishing piece of the comprehensive plan was finding the right POS solution for the NFM sales force.



After surveying the marketplace, NFM chose the HP Mobile POS Solution which includes an ElitePad and HP Retail Jacket. “The HP ElitePad as part of the Mobile POS Solution really gives us all the functionality, mobility and security we need—a business class mobility solution that is easily adopted in retail,” Bash explains. “Everybody else is trying to catch up, but for enterprise users, HP is without a doubt head and shoulders above the rest.”

The ElitePad enables seamless integration with an enterprise-level ERP system, securely handles point-of-sale processes, and is easy to use thanks to its Windows 8.1 touchscreen user interface. It is built to stand up to heavy use and daily handling, with travel-tough hardware that passes the U.S. military’s MIL-STD 810G testing for durability.<sup>1</sup> The screen is made of Corning® Gorilla® Glass 3 and an optional secondary battery is available.

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For high-level security, the ElitePad features hardware-based Trusted Platform Module (TPM) 1.2 and HP BIOS protection against virus attacks and other security threats.

“We know customers expect that a transaction on the sales floor is secure, and we’re confident

that it’s as secure as any transaction can be,” Bash says. In addition to encryption, the wireless network itself is a certificate-based VLAN that’s separated from the company infrastructure so that unauthorized users can’t simply walk in with a device and try to connect.

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Rahl describes the transformation. “Now, when a customer says, ‘I really like this item,’ the sales person scans the product SKU using the scanner built into the Retail Jacket. The ElitePad quickly brings up all the sales information on the product—the supplier, pricing, inventory, color and fabric choices, and other options right away.”

“Extensive information is now at our fingertips and available to the customer. The custom app performs well on the ElitePad and bringing up new detail is quick and easy,” says Rahl. If the customer wants to see more options, sales associates simply recommend similar items from the store or the NFM website for consideration.

“We’re working to make this a very holistic POS solution that addresses all the possibilities,” Bash adds.

## Putting customers first

The NFM mobile solution is a prime example of putting the customer and customer experience first—then business benefits naturally result.

“Our reason for developing this solution was not to cut costs, but to make sure we offered the customer a better experience — as simple an experience as we could make it,” explains Bash.

For NFM, the benefits include increased sales staff productivity because the customer and sales person remain engaged 1:1 the entire time. The sales person has all the answers to the customer’s potential questions via the ElitePad, so there is no need to walk away at any time. The HP Retail Jacket provides a hand strap so the sales staff can easily hold and use the ElitePad with one hand. A shoulder strap or pouch are available for additional carrying options.

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With the Mobile POS Solution, the sales person can complete the purchase right on the sales floor using the ElitePad tablet to streamline the final purchase process. Customer service improves even further, and the chance of a customer walking away from the cashier line without buying because of a misunderstanding or frustration waiting in line is eliminated.

The HP Mobile POS Solution also enables NFM to scale up or down quickly to meet customer demand. Previously when NFM opened its doors each year to shareholders of parent

company Berkshire Hathaway for its one-day friends and family sale, the large group came in ready to purchase. Unfortunately, the cashiers couldn’t keep up with longer lines than ever on those sale days.

“With the Mobile POS Solution in place, every sales person can complete the purchase process,” Bash explains. “To scale up for a large sale, or a big store opening, we only have to put more sales people on the floor with an ElitePad with Retail Jacket in hand.” That flexibility is especially handy on peak shopping days like Black Friday, when NFM has sales 2.5 times normal volumes.

## Everybody wins with mobility

In retail, making the customer shopping and buying experience more simple and rewarding can transform the business, Bash notes. A mobility retail solution with the customer in mind can help do just that at NFM. It gives customers quick, simple access to more information than ever before, increases the options available for purchase, and reduces the customer’s shopping burden.

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“Adding the HP Mobile POS Solution and putting ElitePad technology in our sales associates’ hands is a win for customers,” Bash concludes. “And that makes it a win for us.”

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