

For accuracy and increased sales, Detego's RFID technology is a cut above



Speed and accuracy

To match the evolving demands of customers, retailers face pressure to make sure their inventories are accurate and products can be obtained quickly.

Reducing errors to zero

With Detego's RFID software solution, a retailer can drastically reduce the time spent on taking inventory while increasing stock accuracy.

A path forward

By digitizing their stock, one retailer saw its accuracy swell by 99 percent and eventually a four percent uptick in sales.

Legendary fashion designer Diane von Fürstenberg once said, "Style is something each of us already has, all we need to do is find it." Finding your style can be difficult enough—endlessly scrutinizing the racks of umpteen clothing shops—without the added pitfall of unearthing the perfect pair of boots only to be told they don't have your size. An inaccurate stock count is not only disheartening to customers; it has the potential to injure a store's reputation and future sales. With the added pressure of reduced foot traffic due to the COVID-19 pandemic, stores have an increased drive to accommodate shoppers crossing their brick-and-mortar thresholds.

For one prominent luxury clothing retailer in the heart of London, staying on the forefront of high fashion wasn't an issue. However, to maintain their standing as one of High Street's most high-quality brands, enticing and satisfying the style-conscious in equal amounts, they would need to upgrade the way they handled inventory. And like the perfect pair of boots, they discovered their answer with a radio-frequency identification (RFID) inventory management system through global software company Detego.

Retail customers demand accuracy and speed

If there's one constant in the retail sector, it's ever-growing expectations and the evolving demands of consumers. They want things quicker, provided more conveniently, and accompanied by excellent service. With over a half century of experience and 160 stores worldwide, this retailer certainly had the experience needed to keep satisfying its customer base with that latest trends and fashions. But was there a better way to keep track of what they had on-hand to meet shopper expectations?

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—Joel Goodson, content marketer, Detego

"It's typical (that retailers) struggle with inventory accuracy and customer experience," said Tiffany M'bodj, a marketing manager with Detego, laying out a familiar scenario. "You go to a store, you look for your size—you don't find it. You ask a staff member, they go to the backroom—they come back and say no."

That's a bad look for any retailer. Technological advancements have only sharpened consumer expectations for getting what they want when they want it. This omnichannel approach (linking a store's backrooms and warehouses to a shopper's smartphone) puts extreme stress on traditional approaches to inventory tracking.

"You can't offer omnichannel without stock accuracy and real-time visibility," said Detego content marketer Joel Goodson in an interview with Vogue Business. "'Stock accuracy' sounds unglamorous but it doesn't do justice for how it can transform retail."

In other words, the future of fashion retail is faster and error-free accounting of what a shop has to offer, therefore an accurate stock tally is crucial.

Reducing errors to zero

Traditionally the process of inventorying stock is methodical yet plodding and grows in complexity the more locations and warehouses a retailer has. It can take weeks to get a precise picture. That wasn't getting the job done for this retailer, who wanted to keep up with the heightened

expectations of its clientele and satisfy their ever-changing fashion whims. That's when the retailer turned to Detego and their RFID software solution.

In an interview, the retailer's CIO laid out the reasoning behind partnering with Detego. "We started looking at the in-store manual processes which our stores have to perform to do their daily or weekly stock count or to process in-store transfers, and warehouse returns," the CIO said. "It was also around gaining visibility for our omnichannel journey. If you look at those as different challenges, RFID provided a solution that enabled us to use technology to enhance all that."

Detego worked with the retailer to pinpoint their exact needs—essentially transforming their standalone shops into makeshift distribution centers to accommodate an omnichannel customer experience—and began to roll out their solution to a handful of locations. With the help of Microsoft Azure cloud services—such as Data Lake, Databricks, API Management, and EventHub—and as part of Microsoft's FastTrack program, Detego has spent years helping other retailers refine their stock accuracy.

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Adopting a SaaS model to sustain a burgeoning demand across the sector, Detego’s platform digitally tagged every item in the retailer’s stock, making them readable via radio waves. Then, with the inventory management software activated, clerks can get an accurate read of what’s on the shop floor on a handheld device in as little as 20 minutes. More than one employee can do this at a time, and their results are synchronized for even greater accuracy. The RFID tags can be read without direct line-of-sight, meaning minimal physical involvement from staff, reducing error to near zero. The ease and speed of the technology allows each of the retailer’s 50 UK stores can perform stock takes daily, as opposed to several times a year.

An upswing in sales, and a path forward

By digitizing their stock takes with Detego and Microsoft over a rollout period of eight months, the retailer saw its accuracy swell by 99 percent. Leveraging such a massive gain in knowledge of what was in their stores meant fewer incidents of an item being out of stock in any one location, leading to more satisfied customers and eventually a four percent uptick in sales.

Armed with vastly improved data and a new direction with which to satisfy customers, the retailer is focusing on expanding its omnichannel experience, in addition to launching a line of children’s clothing. With the ongoing pandemic leaving the retail sector in flux, a precise picture of in-stock merchandise is essential to keeping a business ahead of its shoppers’ demands. In the words of another fashion icon, Detego’s industry-leading retail technologies “make it work.”