



Building an agile ticketing process— a story from the frontline

As apparel and garment retailers seek to find new advantages in an insanely competitive marketplace, they are constantly on the lookout for ways to increase the speed and agility of their operations.

For example, in a recent survey conducted by McKinsey, two-thirds of respondents stated that improving speed to market was either the highest priority or a top priority for their companies. Since our retail clients have told us that their ticketing system is their second most business-critical system (next to point-of-sale), it makes sense to examine how retailers can revamp their ticketing process in order to increase their overall agility and speed-to-market.

We sat down with Puneet Gupta, Director, Supply Chain at Neiman Marcus, to ask about how this luxury retailer has optimized their ticketing process.

Q What business objectives has Neiman Marcus set regarding ticketing and tagging?

A “We had an overarching business objective to reduce the amount of work at stores. Of course, there are several reasons for printing price tags in the store. It could be due to price markdowns, lost or damaged tags, or because goods are received directly in the store. Our objective though was to have 90-95% of our garments ticketed prior to arriving at the store.”

Q What options did you consider to achieve your objective?

A “If we were going to ticket prior to store delivery, we basically had two options: have our vendors, which we have thousands of, ticket the items before sending them to the distribution centers, or we have to ticket in the distribution centers. The challenge with asking our vendors to ticket the items is that not every vendor has the technological capabilities to do ticketing. To deal with this, we decided to offer this as a service to our vendors, where we print the tickets in our distribution centers based on the purchase orders, and then send the tickets to our vendors.”



Q How have you benefited from placing ticketing in the distribution center?

A "It's a combination of speed and accuracy. Accuracy because we're printing tickets on behalf of vendors who don't really have the capabilities to do so. It also improves productivity at the distribution center because we don't have to ticket merchandise when we receive it. This saves us an extra step in the receiving process. It also means stores don't have to ticket items, which is a more expensive option. It's more cost-effective and improves process speed."

Q Where will you go from here?

A "We now have a solution in place that works for our through-flow, where merchandise is received from vendors in the distribution center and then sent on to the store. In that process, goods are only in the distribution center for three days at most. The second flow, where we stock merchandise, like seasonal items or bulk purchases, in the distribution centers and then transfer them to the store at a later time, is our next phase of implementation. We don't ticket these items when we receive them. Our next goal is to implement the same pre-ticketing option for our stocked items, but this will require a mobile solution. Our picker now doesn't have the capability to print tickets on the fly."

Q What do you see as the future for ticketing in the apparel and garment sector?

A "I think all of the technology we're seeing, whether you're talking about in the store or in the distribution center, has an emphasis on mobility. Every task they have to complete is done on some type of mobile device so I think ticketing and tagging will have to go mobile in order to accommodate this trend."

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With the help of our label management systems, organizations are able to digitally transform their entire labeling process, from design to printing to label management. The result is a leaner, more agile operation that enables companies to respond more quickly to changing market conditions and requirements, get products to market faster and compete more effectively in the sectors where they do business.

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