



Ensure Retail Stores' Readiness for Business with Digitate's BHM Solution

A Large U.S. Retailer

ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

The customer is a chain of 293 department stores, mostly in the southeastern United States. The company was family-owned for more than a century, before it was sold to a private equity firm in 2015. It is still a familiar and well-liked brand in its communities.

BUSINESS CONTEXT

Retail stores throughout North America have been struggling for at least a decade, due to the global recession, changing consumer tastes, and buying patterns shifting from in-person to online. COVID dealt an even sharper blow, forcing the customer (like many other department stores) to close altogether for several months in 2020, offering only online purchases.

Even when the chain's stores re-opened, they offered limited on-premise operations to adhere to the CDC guidelines. At that point, the customer was facing heavy pressure to boost sales through non-traditional channels and reduce operating expenses by making its internal processes more efficient and cost-effective.

THE CHALLENGE

To stay competitive, the company had to complement its traditional bricks-and-mortar sales by ramping up its efforts in e-commerce and hybrid processes such as BOPIS (buy online, pickup in store). It needed to fill orders in any channel quickly and reliably, to ensure that the customers wouldn't walk away.

This meant that the technology infrastructure (including networks, databases, point-of-sale devices, back-office applications, and e-commerce) needed to be ready to handle the increased demand. The store's IT department was tasked to address frequent IT issues and implement proactive measures to improve the availability.



THE PROBLEM- Getting a Single, Customizable View of All Sales-Facing Systems Across a Large Store Chain

The company had a large IT maintenance burden: nearly 8,000 cash registers and about 7,000 scanners and other devices across the chain, 51 systems requiring individual health checks, and 293 separate databases (one at each store). Its technology leaders were able to get to know about an issue only after it happened.

In addition, the disparate monitoring tools the company was using produced too much “noise” (false, duplicate, or unnecessary alerts). They could only report on performance by separate applications, not by store site – a necessary viewpoint when multiple systems need to interact smoothly to keep each store running. The company’s leaders realized they needed near-real-time visibility into how each store is operating, especially in the crucial morning hours just before opening. They wanted a dashboard that would display the status of critical business functions, both by individual store and by region. In fact, they wanted to entirely “reimagine” their IT command center.

They were intrigued by the prospect of an AI-based IT operations solution because an intelligent solution could not only determine if their critical business functions are up and running in near real time but prioritize attention to the most important locations. At the same time, they wanted to equip their operations team with detailed dashboards to perform root cause analysis (RCA) of any issues before each store opens for the day.

THE SOLUTION

Digitate implemented its Business Health Monitoring for Retail solution, providing an overview in near-real time of the status of all IT systems in all 293 stores. The dashboard allows operators to see systemwide IT health, or drill down to individual components.

The interactive dashboard allows technicians to quickly identify a problem, report it with a trouble ticket, and get it dealt with more quickly than before. It also offers a “lights on” report every morning around 6 a.m., showing each store’s readiness to open at 9 a.m. This includes a health check of key technology components, and self-heal actions if needed, before declaring each site “ready for business.”

The Business Health Monitoring solution utilizes multiple data sources to learn about each store’s IT operations. When first installed, it created a “blueprint” of each store’s individual IT contexts, reflecting the structural and behavioral aspects of their business processes and related applications, infrastructure, and devices required for smooth functioning.

The solution suppresses alert noise and proactively checks the health of store registers/lanes, ISP servers, databases, and network devices across each store by comparing their real-time functioning to the baseline captured in the system blueprint. Where auto-resolution is configured, it heals the issues autonomously. When issues require manual intervention, it forwards them to the store operations team for triaging and further actions. The incident processing features can also address valid store alerts manually or with third-party ITOM tools for the cases where auto-heal is not possible.

Interactive dashboards allow hierarchical drill-down of store health status across the entire array of applications, platforms, servers, and devices, and helps in prioritizing issues affecting the business. Geographical views can show entire regions that may be experiencing problems (such as storms knocking out power). Store operations teams use dashboards for their daily pre-opening standup call.



OPERATIONAL BENEFITS

51%

noise suppression helped the client in focusing on the issues that matter and hence saved time and effort

75%

reduction in IT maintenance needs, from about eight person-hours/day, every day, to two hours

70%

MTTR reduction helped the client deliver a better customer experience

**Upto
140**

hours less of downtime a month

KEY VALUES DELIVERED

- Reduced need for manual monitoring – reduction in “eyes on screen monitoring” for store IT operation team
- Consolidated and detailed view for both managers and store IT operations team
- Enhanced flexibility to offer hybrid sales channels, boosting competitiveness