



# Operational Excellence

## *Managing Communications and Compliance Requirements for Retail Operations*

**L**ike most business operators, retailers are eager to take advantage of web-based technologies to streamline their business processes and improve communications with their stores. Many retailers have invested in broadband infrastructure and are constantly looking for ways to leverage their connected enterprise to help them operate in a more efficient manner. At first glance, email appeared to be the optimal solution for retailers; although great in theory, it's not the best answer in practice. Email doesn't fit the needs of a consistent and controlled communications environment, there is little to no way to track compliance and it simply does not allow retailers to optimize the special communications challenges that they need to address.

Retailers are facing more and more requirements when it comes to their operations. These requirements can cover a wide range of information from knowing delivery times, potential environmental impact, workforce knowledge, human resources issues, health and safety, training, security, etc. Some compliance issues can arise from partners, vendors, government, or law enforcement and can vary from location to location, if a retailer operates in different states or countries. Depending on industry there can be a requirement for product, technical and ethical/social compliance and more often a mix of all of the above. Put bluntly, email simply cannot provide the level of compliance required by retailers.

Email is difficult to manage because it does not provide the level of control and consistency retailers need to ensure that their store communications are being read, much less responded to or acted upon. Part of the struggle with email is how store-based email mailboxes are setup in the first place. Is it better to have one general email box per store, or to manage the cost and effort associated with setting up an email box for each store employee? With a general mailbox, privacy is “thrown out the window” because anyone with access can read all email messages. Additionally, with a general mailbox there is no way to know if the email was read by the “right” employees before it was deleted. With individual email accounts, the high rate of turnover in retail makes it next to impossible to manage.

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As a result, tasks or data requested by the head-office can often be sent back late, completed incorrectly or overlooked entirely. Store-based email sent back to the head office is also difficult, as emails from stores requesting support can often get lost, be easily ignored or forwarded without accountability.

Most compliance requirements have been put in place to improve various aspects of doing business, to make dangerous and unfair processes right, to ensure quality and consistency, or to communicate clear

standards, processes, and procedures. Addressing this is an IT issue and they need a solution that allows for a centralized view of what head office is asking the stores to do with the ability to follow up on compliance of those directives. Sometimes a retailer may even face state and national laws that define what and how procedures have to be done and could face penalties for non compliance; proving a company adheres to relevant regulations, and having the ability to measure compliance, is more important than ever.

Retailers have to become better at tracking how well they execute, leveraging electronic store documentation to follow procedures, testing and training, and collecting store based survey data such as employee satisfaction. They require the ability to track and review approvals, accurately manage issues, measure success, track records or escalations and the actions taken. Once they do they'll have valuable insight to how things are being done allowing them to make more informed strategic enterprise-wide decisions.

Opterus has a solution called *Store Ops-Center (SOC)*, a SaaS solution that has been developed for retail. It is an on-demand, web-based software that is designed to communicate corporate policy, day-to-day objectives, assign tasks and handle issues between corporate office and store locations and manage compliance. SOC enables retailers to rapidly and accurately transfer information to and from stores completely and more effectively. It also allows retailers to manage the ever increasing need for compliance.

SOC will increase store productivity and efficiency, but also enhance:

- Store communications and exception follow-up
- Visibility and control of stores
- Mitigate compliance risk
- Improve revenue, increase sales and reduce organizational costs

Many of today's most innovative retailers are now experiencing significant benefits through quicker, more accurate adoption of corporate initiatives. There is little to no way to track compliance with email because it simply does not allow retailers to handle the unique communications challenges that they need to address. By managing store information consistently across the enterprise, retailers are improving their foresight – identifying issues and areas where they

can cut costs, repeating success, and filling the need for a consistent and controlled communications environment.

### **About Opterus**

Opterus Inc. is the leading provider of a cost-effective, easy-to-implement store information and execution management solution that increases productivity and improves retail enterprise communications. Opterus *Store Ops-Center* software is an on-demand, web-based retail portal designed to communicate corporate policy and day-to-day objectives between corporate office and store locations. This solution is specifically designed for retail operations, and provides store personnel with clear, concise and timely direction, along with the proper tools to best do their jobs to support corporate initiatives. Opterus is based in Toronto, Ontario and was founded in 2006 by a group of seasoned retail industry technology veterans. For additional information about Opterus, please visit <http://www.opterus.com>.

