

Sephora Makes Strides Towards The Store Of The Future

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Over the past few years, **Sephora** has implemented a variety of innovative technologies in stores that make the shopping experience more compelling. Now, the cosmetics retailer is moving towards a new store of the future concept designed to make the brick-and-mortar store more relevant for shoppers.

“Components of our store of the future outlet include enhanced digital signage, as well as dynamic in-store and in-mall promotional items,” explained Peter Chow, Lead IT Project Manager for Sephora. “We’re leveraging the data we have on our customers and providing them with an enhanced shopping experience.”

For example, if an opted-in consumer is roaming the first level of a shopping mall, Sephora can use geo-location technology to send a targeted text message or email, encouraging them to visit the store upstairs. Additionally, if consumers are in a store, “we can see whether they’re a Beauty Insider member, then use data from their accounts to create offers, and keep them informed on new products and promotions,” Chow said in an interview with *Retail TouchPoints*. “Although this is all going on now, it will be expanded in our store of the future outlet.”

Because Sephora uses so many different technologies in stores, and these environments are going to become more complex in the future, Chow’s team needs to ensure optimal Internet connectivity and speed.

“We deploy products such as traffic counters and in-store metric monitoring devices from a number of different vendors,” Chow said. “They’re all real time and going over the Internet, and various teams want up-to-the minute or even second metrics, and they check these systems multiple times a day. So you can’t have flaky connection; you need to have a solution that allows the store and all solutions to be online at all times.”

Each Sephora location has a primary circuit and a secondary circuit that connect to the same network port, running simultaneously and supporting different services. Both circuits have failover support, so if one has an issue, all services on the failing circuit switches to the other within a five-second period.

“Serious issues are now few and far between, so solution metrics are available at all times,” Chow noted. “Teams responsible for all the reporting in the retail environment now have their fingertips inside the store all day, every day.”

Using the **Grid from Granite**, and leveraging the company’s managed services, the retailer has reliable Internet connectivity for its broadband circuit, as well as an added layer of monitoring, quality assurance and uptime. Granite also integrates with Sephora’s Enhanced Service Request (ESR), “which we use for the provisioning and management of our circuits,” Chow said. All these elements combined “give us stronger support in our stores.”

In order to support new software and hardware tools in stores, shopping malls and other retail environments will need to develop a strong infrastructure, Chow advised. “That’s a major benefit of Granite. I can go to them in a mall they service, they know the infrastructure and they build ours parallel to it. It provides a more robust solution.”