Shedding weight: finding a leaner, quicker way to serve customers

When it comes to the point of sale (POS), robust doesn't have to mean heavyweight. BCP's Richard Marshall explains why retailers need to be fitter and faster than ever before – and how a lean back-end solution can propel companies forward.

To survive in today's demanding retail environment, robustness is more critical than ever. As connected consumers increase their service expectations, and retailers connect more devices to their store networks to meet these needs, most businesses find their operational infrastructure being placed under unprecedented pressure.

To cope with these increasing demands, retail organisations are seeking a reliable, durable IT system that can process extreme peaks in demand and survive even the toughest trading environment.

Traditionally, this has meant investing in a heavyweight on premise solution, known for its resilience. However, these are not without fault; their huge infrastructures demand a great deal of management and, in the event of technical issues, getting someone out on site to remedy the problem can be both costly and time consuming.

At the point of sale, a heavyweight solution can also struggle to adapt to the addition of new electronic point of sale (EPOS) devices – something that's becoming a greater problem as more retailers add mobile POS points to engage with customers in a flexible manner.

The alternative for these organisations is to invest in a cloud-based solution, which has the agility to connect devices remotely to the network. However, many previous solutions have not boasted the same robustness as on premise systems.

This, though, is changing rapidly. The latest generation of cloud IT is enabling retailers to implement EPOS solutions without having to choose between flexibility and resilience. Instead, it is offering them both in a single solution.

Cloud-based IT is much better suited to today's IT requirements, for a number of reasons. Firstly, it removes the need for on-site solutions, instead drawing data down remotely across the business, through any number of connected devices.

Secondly, the remote connection aspect speeds up the addition of new POS devices to the network. Moreover, updates can be automatically applied across the network, to keep all devices running at maximum capacity, and the majority of technical challenges can be fixed without an engineer ever having to step on site. This is particularly important for retailers in remote locations – for example, we recently implemented a cloud-based EPOS solution for motorway services group, Westmorland Ltd.

As a result, the advancements in retail technology mean businesses no longer have to choose between being robust and being innovative. The right cloud-based solution enables retailers to become fitter, faster and more agile, powering their company forward to meet even the highest customer expectations.