



What can a retail tech company teach you about the future of work?

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Game Changers



Retail Technology Game Changer Connects and Empowers Global Workforce

The new world of retail is digital, borderless, and connected, and Mike Verdeyen knows that seamless communication and collaboration are crucial to his growing company's future.

“As our employees and customers now span many geographies, tools that enable collaboration are critical,” said Verdeyen, CTO and Product Leader at Aptos, which provides customer engagement and merchandise management solutions for retail brands like adidas, Billabong, Build-A-Bear Workshop, Cole Haan, Dior, Guess, Lacoste, Louis Vuitton, Sephora, Tesco, Tod's, TUMI, Urban Outfitters, WH Smith, and Zalando.

Aptos acquired TXT Retail in October of 2017, and now serves more than 1,000 of the world's leading retail brands across 60 countries. The company is thriving and growing around the globe.

Engaging a Global Workforce

Since the acquisition, Aptos' workforce has nearly doubled in size and shifted from a predominantly North American base (95%) to a nearly even split of 55% located in North America and 45% located in the rest of the world. This growth has made Aptos a retail technology powerhouse, but it has also created new complexities in global communication.

Specifically, providing dependable, scalable communication and collaboration solutions for employees in different global time zones and on different platforms was an urgent priority. But Verdeyen had a winning game plan in mind for effectively connecting his new global workforce.



“We wanted everything to be cloud-based and accessible from a variety of devices in any global location.”

“When Aptos was first spun off from our parent company Epicor Business Solutions in June of 2015, we decided to move all of our systems to the cloud,” he said. “From email, to finance, to human resources, to communications, we wanted everything to be cloud-based and accessible from a variety of devices in any global location.”

Since Aptos was already working in the cloud, Verdeyen looked for cloud-based solutions to effectively connect employees located around the world.



Choosing the Right Partners

Aptos searched for best-in-class solutions to support its growing organization. It chose Google for written communications, including Gmail and Google Docs.

“Google Docs adoption has been significant. It’s much more powerful than simply a file share,” explained Verdeyen. “Simultaneous editing of documents and spreadsheets eliminates the ‘which version are you looking at’ confusion that often happens at the start of every call.”

The addition of robust video conferencing software has helped make conference calls and collaboration efforts more efficient, too. “It’s significant how much more productive video conference meetings are since you tend to hold everyone’s attention and avoid the natural multi-tasking distraction that comes with audio-only conference calls,” he said.

Aptos implemented both group and person-to-person instant messaging (IM) tools to drive real-time interactions between employees. These new work-stream collaboration tools have effectively eliminated many multi-person email chains and they also streamline internal support. For software development and collaboration, Aptos turned to Atlassian; JIRA for issue tracking and Confluence for formal information sharing.

Managing the Change

Verdeyen acknowledges that, as with many large-scale rollouts, there were some growing pains associated with the enterprise-wide implementation of new tools.

“There was, of course, a learning curve as we first made the transition. We were a very traditional, Microsoft-oriented, on-premises focused organization. Even as we moved everything to a cloud-centric, mobile-optimized approach, there was some confusion around when to use which resources,” he said.

While Verdeyen says he could have mandated how to use the tools to mitigate that confusion, he decided instead to observe how his users behaved and support those trends. “In today’s consumer-oriented world, IT leaders can educate users about the tools designed to help with problems,” he said. “But, the days of ‘command and control’ IT are largely over.”

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Reaping the Rewards

Aptos' decentralized, app cloud-based approach to communication and collaboration is paying off. According to Verdeyen, IM chat groups are perhaps the best example of how the strategy benefits both employees and customers.

For example, anyone in the company can join Aptos' product-specific chat channels, and they often include members of the development team. When associates are working with customers in the field and support teams are working through an issue, employees ask a question on the group chat platform and get instantaneous feedback from developers and other team members.

Long gone are the days of one-to-one email requests or support tickets, with all the normal batch-oriented delays. Today, problems are solved collectively, in real time, leveraging the cumulative expertise of the organization.

Decentralized IT Is the Future

"At Aptos, we pledge to engage our customers differently, no matter when, where or how they shop," said Verdeyen. "This promise is hard-coded into our corporate DNA, and we aim to treat our employees the same way. My overarching objective is to provide solutions that empower our employees, no matter when, where, and how they work. In a perfect world, IT should enable and support this reality, rather than attempt to control or dictate how problems get solved."



NAME:
Mike Verdeyen

COMPANY:
Aptos

TITLE:
Chief Technology Officer
and Product Leader

INDUSTRY:
Retail

EMPLOYEE COUNT:
1,250

HOW HE CHANGED THE GAME:
Crushed the challenges of integrating a newly-acquired global workforce by leveraging cloud-based solutions to drive communication and collaboration.

Visionary leaders are changing the game for
the modern workforce.

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fuze
let work flow.