Improve Shelf Performance With A Mobile Retail Audit Solution

How a mobile retail audit solution improves performance of fast moving consumer goods on the shelf and lowers the overall cost of conducting retail audits

Flowfinity Wireless Inc.
BACKGROUND

Paper, clipboards, laptops and spreadsheets continue to dominate the way retail audit information is collected and consolidated. Conducting retail audits is necessary to remain competitive in an industry where multiple products and brands fight for the attention of consumers. The reality of the traditional retail audit process is that there is a considerable time gap from when retail audits are conducted to when a manager sees the reports and can respond to trends or critical situations. Data accuracy is also a concern of any process that involves transferring data from paper, and then consolidating it to produce management reports.

What FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) companies need is a complete, end-to-end retail audit solution that enables managers to influence the shelf performance of their products and brands in real-time while reducing the overall costs of conducting retail audits.

IMPROVING SHELF PERFORMANCE OF FMCG

How can the retail audit process tangibly improve product and brand performance as measured by market share and revenue? By replacing clipboards and spreadsheets with a smartphone-based retail audit solution, FMCG companies can receive immediate and accurate results to gain even more market intelligence. This translates to better and faster decisions and a new ability to immediately respond to store-level trends and discrepancies.

An innovative and end-to-end solution is necessary to get the most out of retail audits and needs to be:

- **Quick** - fast to deploy with rapid data collection and immediate reporting
- **Insightful** - to get more accurate reporting on key performance indicators and brand metrics
- **Responsive** - to make better and faster decisions to gain competitive advantage

CHALLENGES WITH RETAIL AUDITS

1. **Timeliness** as results show up too late in management reports
2. **Accuracy** as input errors and illegible responses are common
3. **Costly** as re-keying and consolidating results is labor intensive

THE IDEAL MOBILE RETAIL AUDIT SOLUTION enables better & faster decisions and makes it possible to respond immediately to audit results
A quick retail auditing solution also needs to be customizable for gaining internal adoption and to achieve immediate insight into the retail channel. The mobile solution should be easy for both IT departments to implement and business managers to use - one that requires no programming or technical knowledge to define & deploy surveys or to collect & review results.

With Flowfinity® Audits, a built-in campaign manager makes creating and modifying surveys simple. With just one click, the surveys are automatically deployed to auditor’s smartphones in seconds. And once completed, surveys are submitted on the smartphone and results instantly compiled to generate up-to-date reports for head office.

What this means for FMCG companies, in addition to gaining immediate market insight, is the ability to conduct even more intelligence gathering via retail audits. Because it’s so quick and easy to deploy, business managers can send out even more surveys to the field in order to gain the advantage necessary to win on the shelves. And since the auditors no longer need to re-key in data, more time for value-added activities is created.

Good insight is key to managing FMCG and is dependent on reliable data from the retail channels. The more accurate the results from retail audits, the better the insight. Therefore increasing the accuracy of audits is key when considering a mobile retail audit solution. Not only are mobile surveys intuitive to fill in for an auditor, they also eliminate blank and illegible responses common to paper-based systems. Data accuracy can also be improved by thoughtfully selecting the right response type. A best practice is to choose response types that:

- are easy and intuitive for auditors to fill-in (ie. checkboxes or drop-down menus)
- reduces the chance of input error (ie. mandatory fields or input parameters)
- and produces powerful insights when analyzed (ie. average or sum calculations)
A mobile retail audit solution is of no benefit if it doesn’t ultimately contribute to improving agility and increasing market share and revenue. The ability to respond quickly to what is happening on the shelves is reliant on how fast reports can be generated when the latest retail results come in.

With Flowfinity® Audits, data gets immediately compiled to produce management reports that FMCG companies can rely on for monitoring its KPI (key performance indicators) and brand metrics as well as stay up-to-date on market trends and the competition.

- Summary Reports show product and brand performance throughout the overall retail channel and are effective for executive reporting and highlighting trends. Built-in filters enable top-down views into specific regions, banners, or products to highlight any performance issues that may exist.

- Detail Reports give a bottom-up view of the results and show specific responses to each question that can pin-point red flags or zero in on trends and discrepancies that might get overlooked in the summary reports. These reports are key for the day-to-day business manager responsible for meeting sales targets and needing to influence product and brand performance in real-time.

- Usage Reports are good for operations and sales management purposes to highlight efficiencies, show individual performance, and estimate future campaign deployment timelines.

Winning on the shelves is what it all comes down to. That is why Flowfinity created a mobile retail audit solution that enables managers to be more responsive to what is happening in the market. Confident decision making based on accurate and timely information, facilitates effective management of retail channels and empowers the field to focus on value-added activities like analyzing and making tangible adjustments at the store level.

REDUCING OVERALL RETAIL AUDIT COSTS

A mobile retail audit solution can reduce overall audit costs when compared with traditional clipboard and spreadsheets, expensive outsourcing, in-house proprietary systems, or basic mobile forms.
**Traditional Clipboard and Spreadsheets** are costly due to the amount of time and overhead required to create the surveys, distribute them to the field, transfer data from the paper forms, and consolidate hundreds of spreadsheets to generate the raw data needed to produce reports. However the greatest costs occur when critical situations in the retail channels go unnoticed for weeks due to the time lag from when audits are conducted to when management sees the reports. Flowfinity® Audits eliminates unnecessary data-entry and automatically compiles and produces management reports enabling immediate responses to critical situations.

**Outsourcing** can be an expensive source of intelligence gathering as a premium is charged for the market data collected by third parties. Rarely do third parties gather all the information necessary in one report and requesting customized reports is an expensive undertaking. Flowfinity® Audits makes it quick and easy to deploy new surveys that can gather first-hand product, market and competitor intelligence.

**Proprietary In-House Systems** generally accumulate large capital costs as developing a new system is a complex and costly endeavor that requires continual maintenance. Flowfinity® Audits is an out-of-the-box, cost-effective solution that is easy to implement and effortless to maintain.

**Basic Mobile Forms** can be expensive to integrate with internal systems as security, data compilation, and report generation are all challenges for IT departments. Flowfinity® Audits has the reporting functionality built in and utilizes existing internal infrastructure like BES (Blackberry Enterprise Server) and Microsoft SQL Server to handle the data coming in from the smartphones.

In addition to reducing overall retail audit costs, Flowfinity® Audits increases productivity and job satisfaction of retail auditors as well as compliance with corporate environmental initiatives to ‘go green.’

“In comparison to the previous fully-outsourced approach of collecting the sales channel data, the cost of operating our national surveys is now reduced by over 75% using Flowfinity’s retail audit solution... an annual saving of over $250,000.”
- Tier 1 Consumer Goods Company [company confidential]
SUMMARY

Conducting retail audits using smartphones improves the timeliness and accuracy of reports that enable managers to respond faster to store-level trends or crisis situations. This results in better shelf performance of FMCG and reduced costs associated with conducting retail audits. It’s important for FMCG companies to be innovative and resourceful in order to maintain competitive advantage in the battle of the brands. Changing the way retail audits are conducted by adopting a proven mobile solution can be one way to achieve this. With Fortune 500 companies already deploying Flowfinity’s retail performance management solutions, it only makes sense to go with them as a tested and proven solution for the most accurate and timely insight from your retail audits.

FLOWFINITY - QUICKLY BECOMING THE INDUSTRY STANDARD FOR MOBILE RETAIL AUDITS

- To learn more about Flowfinity Actions Consumer Packaged Goods solutions: www.flowfinity.com/solutions
- Read Case Studies on Fortune 500 companies who have implemented Flowfinity solutions: www.flowfinity.com/casestudies

ABOUT FLOWFINITY

Flowfinity provides a proven, fully customizable solution for building enterprise mobile apps without programming. Since 2000, Flowfinity has helped leading companies across industries empower their mobile workforces in order to enhance productivity, engage management, and improve business insight through all areas of the organization. By making it easy and fast to mobilize day-to-day business processes on tablets and smartphones, Flowfinity enables mobile teams to access, report, and share information when and where they need to. Top global brands in CPG and other industries rely on Flowfinity software as the standard technology for automating critical business processes.