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Jerome Soblet, Collection Systems Manager at Cora, a subsidiary of the Louis Delhaize Group.



Customer's Challenge

How to reduce check-out transaction times? How, furthermore, to reduce the workload of the cashiers and to encourage them to act as hostesses with regard to customers? The problem is well-known in the mass distribution sector.

In an urgency-oriented world, customers want to be able to choose their goods quickly and to pay for them quickly. While there are various automation systems that can achieve faster check-outs, none, up to now, has really imposed itself.

After analysing the offer, the Louis Delhaize Group, well established in Belgium and France where it has in particular 59 hypermarkets of the Cora name, and a larger number of other chains (Louis Delhaize, Match, Profi, Delitraiteur...) has turned to Fujitsu Services, widely recognised for its retail trade solutions.

“We were looking for an integrated solution, which would not call into question the existing one; we were also looking for a solution that could be implemented quickly for the end-of-year holidays and which, very quickly, would generate real advantages both for our customers and for our staff”, explained Jerome Soblet, Collection Systems Manager at Cora.

Even if it is only a question as yet of a pilot scheme, limited to date to one Fujitsu U-Scan self-check-out system, the completion times have been very short. The project, indeed, really only started in mid-October 2005. However, the system's four tills were operational on December 15, just when the hypermarket was entering its busiest time of the year.

The risk had been evaluated in full knowledge of the facts by Jerome Soblet who, like the other directors of the Cora chain, is highly accountable. The Cora's decision is therefore, above all, a team decision.

Fujitsu Solution

The U-Scan self-check-out system is an entirely automated till solution, which enables the hypermarket's customers not only to scan their purchases themselves interactively, but also to pay for them automatically, in cash, by bank card or by Cora Card. The system can give change and can also record and process discount vouchers.

SUMMARY OF KEY FACTS

Organisation

Cora, subsidiary of the Louis Delhaize family group; 59 Cora hypermarkets in France and 9 in Belgium; 22,000 employees (52,000 across all chains).

Contract signing date:

October 2005

Service/s delivered

Installation at Boussy (Paris) and Woluwe (Brussels) of pilot sites of the Fujitsu U-Scan self-check-out system.

Key Metrics

- In Paris, one self-check-out site (four tills, one hostess). The customer is planning to install two or three self-check-out "islands" per store

Benefits

- Free customer choice of check-out process
- Enhanced customer satisfaction from faster transactions
- Reduced cash handling risk
- Reduced cashier workload
- Better customer contact

“By installing this system, we wanted above all to improve the service we offer our customers”, explained Jerome Soblet. “The introduction of the new system is part of Cora’s loyalty-building exercise. By choosing us, our customers show their confidence in us. By offering them the opportunity not only of scanning their purchases themselves interactively, but also of paying for them automatically, in cash or by card, we also show our confidence in them”.

The fact of offering customers the possibility of scanning their purchases themselves, at their own pace, and of paying for them without any intermediary, also enables them to check the price of each product better and therefore to have greater control over their shopping, with the assistance of one hostess per “island” of four self-check-out tills.

The new system perfectly meets hypermarket needs. Unlike supermarkets, the average trolley contains fewer items. At Cora, for example, it is estimated that 62% of customers buy less than ten items; it further appears that 40% of those customers buy less than five items. Also, the reduced waiting time at the tills that result from the installation of a self-check-out system can be most meaningful. For the customers, this time-saving can be an important factor in their choice. It is also a means of increasing existing customer loyalty.

Benefits to our Customer

While Cora of course is promoting the advantages that can accrue to its customers, certain advantages can also accrue indirectly to its organisation and its processes.

The first advantage, relating to the very principle of automating the scanning and payment tasks, derives not only from a reduction of the level of fraud, but also from a reduction of the risks relating to the handling of cash, leading to enhanced store security.

Although it is only a question of a pilot site, Cora has been able to identify rapid real profits, even if they are not easily measurable at the financial level. Admittedly, the turnover has not increased, but no less than 13% of the till receipts now come from the U-Scan self-check-out lanes. Cora believes that it can easily reach 20% following a campaign to promote the system.

Cora prefers to capitalise on customer satisfaction. *“Our customers have quickly adopted the system”, confirmed Jerome Soblet. “A great majority of them appreciates the aspects of a system that is both high-tec and entertaining. There has been no hesitation, not even among the more elderly. With analysis, I think that this success is also due to the training of the hostesses. Our customers feel both freer in what they do but guided nevertheless in how they do it. This leads to improved relations between customers and staff.”*

Our Approach

With clients becoming increasingly demanding in terms of choice and quality, it is now of paramount importance to optimise the client relationship while controlling expenditure. When Fujitsu solutions are chosen, not only does the store’s environment become more complete, it also becomes an integral part of the IT infrastructure that supports the entire organisation’s value chain.

Over thirty years, Fujitsu has developed a complete Retail solution package. Today, U-Scan systems account for approximately 40% of the systems used in respect of North American self-service tills.

In addition to a commitment to the terms and times of the projects that it conducts, Fujitsu’s approach is fully comprehensive, from the analysis of the need to the deployment of the solution and client follow-up. Another success factor is the Group’s structure which enables convergence of the necessary skills. For Cora, for example, the project was run by Fujitsu Belgium, which worked closely with the French and Canadian teams, with the installation support and the training being provided by Fujitsu U.K. This flexibility enables the most qualified necessary resources to be gathered for optimal implementation of each project.

Our Expertise

Although, as Jerome Soblet has pointed out, *“Fujitsu Services was the only service company to undertake to deliver a completely integrated solution within the timeframe that we had set”,* the success was due to preparation, implementation, training and support.

For Jerome Soblet, the Fujitsu reputation played a part. *“Our relations with this supplier go back several years and its list of references in terms of self-check-out solutions is impressive. So we had no fear of commitment. From the start, this project has been enshrined in genuine partnership where, on both sides, the necessary resources for success have been mobilised. Here, in Paris, we have been able to count on a multinational team to train our staff, to guide us technically and to answer all our questions.”*

Once the pilot projects have been judged successful, the solution could be deployed in 59 stores in France and 9 in Belgium.

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