

Little Green Apple Hallmark Takes a Bite Out of Long Shopping Lines

Detroit-area Hallmark retailer uses managed broadband service from iPass® to keep checkout lines short and fast.

The Challenge: Accelerate transactions at the point of sale, reduce phone line and equipment lease expenses, and improve overall business operations

The Solution: Hallmark/iPass broadband solution

The Result: Increase bandwidth at cash registers to speed transactions, shorten lines and better serve customers—even during the busiest holiday seasons

LITTLE GREEN APPLE HALLMARK

Mary and Ed Carpenter opened their first Little Green Apple Hallmark store in 1975. Later, their son Tom Carpenter followed their footsteps, opening a few Little Green Apple Hallmark stores of his own. When the couple retired, Tom Carpenter took over the chain. Today eight Little Green Apple Hallmark stores serve the greater Detroit, Michigan area.

THE CHALLENGE

Customer challenges in retail remain fairly consistent regardless of the industry in question. Customers want short lines, speedy checkout and personalized service as part of their shopping experience.

To bolster its relationship with customers, Little Green Apple Hallmark wanted to improve its communication capabilities. Company stores had relied on phone lines for voice, fax and dial-up data connections. Understandably, this situation left something to be desired when trying to get important information to stores or handle credit card transactions in a timely manner.

"We were looking for a broadband solution to address our challenges," indicated Tom Carpenter, owner, Little Green Apple Hallmark. "I spoke with some of the technical folks at Hallmark and learned of the iPass solution they had implemented for the 477 corporate-owned stores.

"Since adding the Hallmark/iPass broadband solution, we have accelerated transaction times from upwards of 30 seconds to nearly instantaneous. As a result, we have shorter lines at our registers and customers are happier. We've also been able to eliminate a phone line at each store and reduce the number of cash registers we buy when we refresh, resulting in additional savings."

TOM CARPENTER

Owner, Little Green Apple Hallmark

Everything I heard about improving transaction times, lowering costs and improving customer satisfaction sounded good. So instead of reinventing the wheel, I took their recommendation and went with iPass."

THE SOLUTION

In January 2008, Little Green Apple began deploying the Hallmark/iPass service to its stores. iPass takes care of many deployment details, such as sourcing the internet service provider, scheduling professional installation and arranging for most of the required hardware.





Carpenter has also been testing remote access to his stores, a service that will be available to all retailers using the Hallmark/iPass service soon. He installed the required software on his laptop, so he can now connect to each of his stores, run reports, upload changes to registers and more from wherever he finds himself throughout the day. According to Carpenter, "Remote access to the stores has been a real boon for my productivity and that of my managers."

The owner of Little Green Apple Hallmark also sleeps a little better these days. "One of the things that helped justify the cost of the Hallmark/iPass service was Hallmark's high level of confidence in iPass. Hallmark believes in the security and reliability of the service—including the managed firewall in each store. I knew that any breach would be quickly resolved by iPass. This alleviates a lot of worries for me."

THE RESULT

While deployment only concluded in January, Little Green Apple Hallmark has already begun realizing significant benefits for its business and customers:

Accelerated transaction processing. Customers today expect nearly instant transaction approvals. With the Hallmark/iPass broadband solution at its service, Little Green Apple has seen dramatic improvements in transaction processing times—from as much as 30 seconds to nearly instantaneous.

Improved customer experience. In addition to faster approvals, internet access at the registers allows associates to better serve customers. Associates can check the status of a special order, view ROM inventory at other stores, look up a Crown Rewards customer card number and more.

Enhanced company communications. Prior to iPass, company communications relied heavily on faxes, the U. S. Postal Service and dial-up connections. Now associates have fast, affordable access to e-mail, the internet and HallmarkLink (Hallmark's retailer intranet)—right at the register. "E-mail is a great advantage, as it's fast," noted Carpenter. "We can send digital pictures for store signage or an in-store promotion that would take a long time to download through a dial-up connection. At the same time, managers and associates can provide invaluable feedback in real time—feedback that helps me run the business better."

PCI compliance. The Hallmark/iPass broadband solution is certified 100 percent PCI-compliant, allowing Carpenter to rest assured that his stores using the service are in complete conformance with the related security requirements of the PCI Data Security Standard. What's more, iPass fees include performing the recommended quarterly network scan of all his stores using the Hallmark/iPass service, so he doesn't have to engage and schedule a vendor and pay for the scan separately for those stores.

Cost savings. With deployment of the Hallmark/iPass service, Little Green Apple Hallmark was able to eliminate a data line at each store and do away with three registers since each remaining register is now capable of handling more customers more efficiently.

For other Hallmark retail storeowners who haven't yet implemented the Hallmark/iPass service, Carpenter has these words: "For owners with multiple stores, it's a no-brainer. The e-mail communications capability between stores is huge. And your speed of checkout is dramatically increased at holidays and other peak times. Those two reasons alone are worth the investment. Having built-in PCI compliance is just icing on the cake. Of course, we've only been using the Hallmark/iPass broadband for three months up to this point; we're still finding new ways to use this incredible service."

ABOUT IPASS

iPass Inc. (NASDAQ: IPAS) provides trusted connectivity services that help enterprises maximize their return on investment in workforce mobility. With flexible iPass connectivity, security and device management services, customers can build and manage their own broadband remote access solutions for mobile workers, branch offices and home offices. The iPass virtual network spans 160 countries and includes the world's largest Wi-Fi footprint. Founded in 1996, iPass is headquartered in Redwood Shores, Calif., with offices throughout North America, Asia and Europe. ■

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