Upgrading Point-of-Sale Systems for Pilot Flying J

RETAIL
TECHNOLOGY DEPLOYMENT

TEKsystems®
Global Services

Executive Summary

Pilot Flying J needed to upgrade their point-of-sale (POS) hardware at approximately 600 stores throughout the U.S. TEKsystems' Technology Deployment practice successfully upgraded the systems and managed the logistics and scheduling tied to this large deployment.

Quick Facts

Client

- **Industry:** Retail
- **Revenue:** More than $30 billion
- **Employees:** Approximately 26,000
- **Geographic Presence:** Headquartered in Tennessee, with more than 650 travel centers across North America

Objectives

- Automate the client's sales process
- Refresh antiquated point-of-sale hardware, including card readers and payment applications
- Ensure a consistent deployment of technology and equipment across approximately 600 stores

Challenges

- Source qualified technicians who were willing and able to travel for a period of three months
- Maintain continuity and consistent installation support at every location
- Handle schedule management, ensuring resources were deployed efficiently and repeat site visits were eliminated

Results

- Provided 15 technicians with the required skill sets and willingness to handle a rigorous travel schedule
- Completed upgrades on time and $14,000 under budget
- Installed approximately 5,400 pieces of equipment at a total of 583 stores

Technologies Supported

- Hard drive upgrades/replacements
- Peer-to-peer (P2P) technology
- Point-of-sale systems

Client Profile

The client, Pilot Flying J, offers fuel, food and convenience products and services to professional drivers and motorists across North America. TEKsystems has partnered with the travel center and travel plaza operator since 2000.

Industry Landscape

Keeping point-of-sale (POS) systems up to date is tremendously important to retailers. Modern systems offer increased efficiency and automation of sales transactions, and ensure the security of their customers' personal data.

While the replacement and/or upgrade of antiquated payment software and equipment is critical to the speed, efficiency and security of sales transactions, the system downtime that is required for implementation can temporarily interrupt the ability to make any sales. Minimizing that disruption is crucial to limit or eliminate negative impact on the organization's sales and revenue. But the larger the organization and number of locations needing support, the more challenging it can be to manage the logistics and scheduling of upgrading POS technology.

Internal IT departments often do not have the capacity or bandwidth to handle geographically spread-out, high-volume technology deployments in addition to their day-to-day responsibilities. Organizations seeking to enhance the automation of their POS systems, upgrade payment applications/software and replace aging equipment should solicit the help of a third-party IT services provider that has technology deployments as a core competency.

Situation

Pilot Flying J is a large organization with gas stations and travel plazas located across the U.S. With aging POS hardware, the client was experiencing significant technical issues across their stores. Not only did Pilot require upgraded PIN pad and POS systems, but also back-office hard drives associated with the software that supports the PIN pads and POS devices. Bringing the equipment up to modern, standardized technology was critical to ensure the hardware would be compatible with and could support the software and Pilot's automated sales process.

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Due to the timing constraints of the given three-month period to complete the upgrades along with their internal priorities, Pilot elected to partner with TEKsystems. Given the massive volume of installations required, paired with the geographic scope of this project, the Pilot technicians deployed could not support the large scale of this effort, and the day-to-day operations became difficult to manage simultaneously. Without the internal capacity to perform the large POS deployment initiative, Pilot required the support of a third-party IT staffing and services provider.

Solution

TEKsystems' Technology Deployment practice recommended assembling a team of technicians to perform the upgrades, freeing up Pilot's internal IT department to focus solely on day-to-day operations. We would replace/upgrade existing POS devices, card readers and related hard drives in order to support newer technology and software improvements. TEKsystems would perform upgrades and implement peer-to-peer (P2P) technology across approximately 600 stores in North America. We would upgrade back-office computers and POS systems by replacing systems' hard drives and deploying new PIN pad systems.

The upgrades would be completed during non-peak hours to minimize potential disruption of sales. Pilot would not be able to accept payment during the system downtime of our installation period at each site (i.e., store). Yet there were a number of factors that could potentially extend system downtime beyond the minimum time required to complete the installations. These factors include:

• Equipment failure
• Delivery delays from equipment vendors
• Software failure migrating from old to new applications

TEKsystems would work to ensure each site implementation occurred in the shortest time frame possible so the POS system could get back online quickly and continue generating revenue with limited disruption.

Pilot had intensive installation procedures that focused on each site's end-of-day procedures; each install needed to happen prior to: 1) the turning off of fuel pumps, and 2) store managers' finalizing of cash register totals for that day. Based on this, it was critical that the partner of choice follow the installation instructions to ensure a seamless process and minimal service disruption at each site. We would provide a small team of traveling technicians who would collaborate with Pilot upfront on training; this would ensure installation instructions were carefully followed by TEKsystems' technicians, enabling continuity and consistency across every location. In addition to following a detailed and rigorous implementation process, the installation partner would need to adhere to a proper site schedule to minimize wasted time. All stores within the same vicinity would be scheduled to occur close together to eliminate technician site revisits.

Given the specifications of this project and the required level of consistency across the high volume of sites, Pilot's IT department was reluctant to trust a third party to lead this initiative, but with the right partner—one that could handle the scale and scope of this massive deployment—they saw the value in outsourcing the project.

TEKsystems' proposed solution involved a limited team size, which Pilot appreciated as this would help provide the consistency they needed. Based on our established staffing partnership, the client was confident in our ability to deliver high-quality service through our Technology Deployment practice. The delivery approach we recommended, combined with our robust deployment experience, helped differentiate TEKsystems from competitors and we were ultimately selected to support this large-scale deployment initiative.

Results

TEKsystems successfully completed the installations at a total of 583 sites across the country. We replaced or upgraded 5,400 pieces of equipment. We accomplished this on time and $14,000 under budget.

Our team included a delivery manager, project coordinator, and 15 technicians who provided comprehensive knowledge of IT and support services specifically, troubleshooting capabilities, and offered Tier 1, 2 and 3 technician support.

Our team was deployed over the course of three months, traveling across the continental U.S. and reaching 48 states. Because the client placed great value on consistent delivery to every site, we limited the number of technicians to just 15—making a very rigorous travel schedule and high volume of installations for a small pool of resources. Through our National Logistics Office, TEKsystems focused on site scheduling, ensuring all stores within one area were completed in the same time frame for efficiency. To counter potential delays from factors outside of our control (e.g., delivery delays from equipment vendors), effective scheduling of locations was also critical to eliminate system downtime for extended periods and the possible need for site revisits.

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Every site was different and the length of the installation depended on the number of PIN pads and other factors. But the installation part itself required the system go down for about two hours at each site. This period of downtime was to be expected, and because we strategically timed our installation with end-of-day business activities at each site, we were able to minimize the potential financial impact from system downtime.

Following our installation schedule, Pilot's IT department conducted extensive post-installation system checks for functionality and were satisfied to find the POS systems were fully operational.

Pilot has future plans to build and upgrade additional stores across the U.S. Given TEKsystems' familiarity with their IT environment and our working knowledge of their specific installation processes, we anticipate we will work with them again in similar efforts.

Key Success Factors

Dedicated practice

TEKsystems Technology Deployment is a mature practice with more than 1,000 successful projects completed, enabling us to bring unrivaled experience to every deployment initiative we support. We offer optimized project management methodologies, and process and logistics management that enabled Pilot to trust in our ability to perform a smooth, multistate implementation. Additionally, we have delivered POS support to numerous other clients in the past, including an EMV chip-enabled POS installation for a large national retailer and a POS modernization initiative for a grocery retailer. This relevant firsthand

experience further positioned us to back Pilot's large-scale effort.

Logistical expertise

Our National Logistics Office was an essential component to booking and managing the substantial amount of travel and logistics this project demanded. Within TEKsystems, this office is strictly dedicated to coordinating the sourcing, screening and deployment of qualified resources. Leveraging our National Logistics Office enabled us to deliver seamless support and schedule management, minimizing disruption to Pilot's business.

Relationship

Prior to TEKsystems getting involved, Pilot's IT department was hesitant to entrust an outside third party with this initiative, given their particular specifications around the deployment process and expectations regarding consistency across nearly 600 locations. However, our existing business relationship with Pilot goes back to 2000. Our proven track record of success over the years provided confidence to the client, and they knew we could deliver to their exact needs.

About TEKsystems

People are at the heart of every successful business initiative. At TEKsystems, we understand people. Every year we deploy over 80,000 IT professionals at 6,000 client sites across North America, Europe and Asia. Our deep insights into IT human capital management enable us to help our clients achieve their business goals - while optimizing their IT workforce strategies. We provide IT staffing solutions, IT talent management expertise and IT services to help our clients plan, build and run their critical business initiatives. Through our range of quality-focused delivery models, we meet our clients where they are, and take them where they want to go, the way they want to get there.

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