

STS Profile:

RetailNOW® 2015 Show Floor in Review: Perspectives from RSPA's Strategic Technologies Solutions Committee

with contributors Todd Cripe, Jim Marascio and Bernadette Wilson



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EMV, the Cloud, Mobile POS: these topics dominated the conversations within RetailNOW® education sessions, but would these trendy subjects have the same sort of dominance on this year's Show Floor? RSPA's technology-focused committee, the STS Committee, not only met as a group during the event, but also had a strong presence in the exhibit hall. connect sought their perspectives on the show floor's "hot topics" as well as what new products sparked their interest. Just as STS Technology Profiles are focused on those products and solutions which are easily deployable for RSPA reseller members, we requested that STS Committee members identify products and solutions that resellers can assess today for addition their portfolios.

What were some of the "trending" topics you saw on the RetailNOW 2015 Show Floor?

Todd Cripe: I was pleased to see a lot of new companies and new faces at RetailNOW 2015. Several trends were evident including:

- The continued migration from thick client to thin client architecture.
- The continued migration from local to cloud-based solutions.
- Consensus that semi-integrated payment processing may be a big part of the solution to data breach issues.
- Selling payment solutions is challenging without having additional services that add value bundled with payment processing.
- Multiple Omni-channel commerce solutions are now available to the average Reseller.

Bernadette Wilson: I don't know if this qualifies as a trend, but I noticed that a lot of conversations came around to how a solution helps merchants enhance

the customer experience for consumers. In Business Solutions' coverage of NRF 2014, the message resonated that most retail IT VARs were not helping their clients enhance the customer experience. About a year and a half later, though, it's a part of the conversation:

- A label printer can help a grocery store with "order online, pickup in store," by enabling items and packages to be labeled and accurately delivered to the consumer curbside—providing the correct order in a timely manner.
- Software that enables merchandise to be purchased online and returned to a store—providing convenience for the consumer (and helping avoid losses for the merchant).
- Software that analyzes data to provide personalized offers to shoppers—providing items the shopper is interested in at sale prices and increasing customer engagement.
- Mobile POS solutions with options to allow a sales associate to quickly disconnect from the stationary checkout counter and move onto the sales floor to help with a long line—helping to move shoppers through the checkout quicker and providing a positive impression before shoppers leave the store.

It appears that VARs are looking more deeply into how solutions can be used and how they can address their customers' pain points.

What are your thoughts on this year's Pavilions?

BW: I liked that similar technologies were located near each other so a VAR could associate companies with the tech they provided more easily.

TC: I think the Pavilion concept makes sense in some regards but not in others. It is appealing to attendees that have a specific area they want to focus on while at the conference and is also appealing to unknown vendors that need exposure or vendors who believe they have a superior offering and invite comparisons with their competitors. I think we're just seeing the beginning of the trend for consolidation, where vendors are migrating towards single source solution model by M&A activity or through partnerships.



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1. Exhibitors at TableSafe, Inc. demonstrate features of a payment solution.
2. Anywhere Commerce displays their tablet solution in their booth on the show floor.
3. Kiosk solutions were on display in Elo Touch Solutions' booth at RetailNOW.

Not sure how well pavilions work if a company has multiple offerings that fit into multiple pavilions.

Did you visit the Security and Networking pavilion?

TC: Having a Security and Networking Pavilion was appropriate; given the media attention and general awareness of the need for heightened security that has occurred as a result of data breaches. One would hope that this is a top of mind issue for Resellers and their end user customers that all Resellers were already aware of, but it is possible there were some Resellers that needed additional datapoints to consider. Net-net is that the Pavilion served a purpose for Resellers that were not yet aware of the options available to them and for Resellers who wanted to see how the solution they were currently offering stacked up against the competition.

If you had the ability to choose pavilions next year, what pavilions would you like to see on the RetailNOW 2016 Show Floor?

TC: That's a great question. I don't think I'd have more than 2 or 3 Pavilions. The Pavilions should focus on the solutions that represent the greatest opportunity for RSPA Reseller members. Customer Experience and Mobile both fall in that category, but I'd suggest waiting until after the first of the year to see what new developments take place in the market before making any decisions. Among other factors, that would allow RSPA to see what areas of interest were causing a buzz at the NRF show.

BW: This year's pavilions were a good representation of areas VARs need to address: networking and security, data collection, payments.

There was a proliferation of product launches and major product announcements at this year's show. Which, if any, solutions/products caught your attention as particularly innovative?

Jim Marascio: Samsung Veriphone e355 Payment Sled for Galaxy Tab Active. While there are other sleds for POS tablet systems, this one is ruggedized, not consumer grade, is water resistant to 6' for several minutes, supports EMV and touchless ordering and payment.

TC: I saw a couple things that I thought were innovative. The first one is the Rail solution from Table Safe. They have an innovative tableside payment solution that seems to solve most of the issues restaurants face with legacy check closing procedures.

BW: Anywhere Commerce's 5-in-1 Tablet Solution. The solution includes a tablet, printer, and card reader/PIN pad. It can be configured for face-to-face transactions, and, by flipping the tablet to face the customer, as a self-serve kiosk. The tablet can be removed and the card reader attached for line busting or other mobile applications. The card reader can be unplugged and used remotely from the rest of the solution to allow the merchant to engineer their checkout counter. The base of the solution can be branded or can be used for advertising to create additional revenue. The solutions supports iOS, Android, and Windows.

Any particular relevance (as it relates to merchant usage) for these product and solutions?

JM: I think the e355 Payment Sled will be relevant in the restaurant and bar spaces, especially outdoors at resorts and other areas that require a ruggedized solution.

TC: What remains to be seen is whether the Rail approach can compete with the consumer using their phone to effect payment. There may be room for both solutions in a restaurant.

BW: With minimum wage increasing in some areas, labor can be an issue for some merchants. This



solution is designed to empower associates in small and medium businesses to do more. The solution helps one person move from the checkout counter to line busting or tableside applications or even to the delivery truck.

Any others catch your eye?

TC: The other solution I thought was pretty interesting is actually two solutions from Star Micronics. Both the webPRNT and AllReceipts solutions provide innovative technology for physical and virtual receipts.

BW: Bixolon's B-gate. Bixolon created the B-gate to manage peripherals for tablet solutions. The B-gate supports scanners, payment input devices such as PIN pads and card readers, printers, customer displays, other tablets, cash drawers, and scales. The B-gate communicates to the tablet via Bluetooth or Wi-Fi—the tablet is not tethered to anything else—and this reduces the cost per terminal by eliminating the need to purchase Bluetooth peripherals, as well as cleaning up clutter from cables.

JM: Elo's I-Series Android tablets with POS stack. It's a secure, locked OS, not just another tablet running POS software, and supports sizes up to 22". There are no front-facing buttons. It's excellent for kiosk ordering stations.

What features of these products/solutions will appeal to resellers, ISVs or their customers?

TC: Third party developers should be able to do some interesting things with the O/S and device agnostic print functionality that can be triggered a variety of ways using HTTP, XML, API's, beacons, QR Codes, etc.

BW: I talked with Bixolon product manager John Choi about this. He told me that the solution addresses merchant IT clients' pain point of wanting a sleek, mobile POS solution; but [having to] sacrifice the appearance of the solution and some mobility by tethering it to peripherals. He added that tablets don't have a many options for connecting to multiple devices, so merchant IT clients could have to invest in Bluetooth peripherals that can increase the per-terminal cost by a few hundred dollars. B-gate answers the question of how to connect multiple peripherals to a tablet point of sale (POS) solution. Additionally, it can improve installation and development time. With the B-gate, developers will no longer have to work with an SDK for each peripheral—all you need to do is use the B-gate's SDK (iOS or Android) to integrate software, and the B-gate controls all other devices.

JM: There are no front-facing buttons on the I-Series Android tablets. It's excellent for kiosk ordering stations.

There were several new RSPA members who exhibited this year, Cisco and Samsung being two with prominent name recognition. Did you visit booths of any new members? Which ones stuck out to you?

TC: I visited the Cisco booth and also sat in on Cisco's education session. They have some interesting toys and insights.

Putting your STS hat on, which booths had the most compelling messages for Resellers, in your opinion?

TC: As we discussed earlier, I was looking for innovative and disruptive technologies and solutions on the Show Floor, so I think the solutions offered by Table Safe and Star Micronics were both very compelling.

BW: There were several:

- Moneris. The PAYD Solution enables quick payment, with devices like Apple watches. It communicates with iPad via Bluetooth.
- Epson America. They announced three new products: the TM-m10 and TM-m30 mobile-friendly point of sale (POS) printers and the Mobilink P80 Plus mobile printer. The TM-m10 and TM-m30 have a unique feature that allows the user to easily configure them as either top-load, top-feed or front-load, front-feed printers. The P80 Plus is the industry's first 3-inch mobile printer with an autocutter.
- AML. Their Monarch Enterprise-Ready Kiosk has the look and feel of a tablet, but it is a purpose-built kiosk with features including Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, bar code scanning, and PoE. He comments because the kiosk runs Windows 8.1, it allows developers more freedom to write apps for the device. **c**



About the RSPA Strategic Technology Solutions Committee

In the same way that retail technology is a part of the big information technology picture, the STS Committee is charged with helping RSPA members filter through all the noise of fast-moving changes to technology and provide insights on readily deployable solutions that RSPA members can add now. Getting connected to the Technology You Need is easy: the STS Committee provides a technology article which is published in *connect* magazine, and online at www.GoRSPA.org/Publications.