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management tool. Designed with specialty retailers in mind, Retail Star is a modular system, so users can choose the modules they need and add on to their system when necessary.

Mary Girsch-Bock • Mar. 13, 2014



BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS: 5 STARS

The Retail Star main navigation screen is divided in half, with all system modules listed on the left. Clicking on a module populates the screen on the right with all available features and functions found within that module. Retail Star's POS user interface is minimally designed, and users are able to either scan an item or enter a

product code to process a sale. Users can also search for a product and easily access

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Buyer, Reports, Franchise Consolidator, Real Time, and Open to Buy. All system users are given a user ID and system password, with specific access and rights determined by managers.

Managers can also choose to assign employees to a specific group such as cashiers, supervisors, and floor managers, and provide similar system access rights to the entire group. These rights determine which register functions the different users can perform, such as voids, returns, and product discounts.

Using Retail Star's Sales Information feature, users can add an optional sidebar to their sales screen to instantly view real-time data such as sales totals, returns, voids, and layaways. Buyers can opt to purchase Retail Star's fully customizable retail management system or choose from a variety of retail verticals that are available including Footwear, Hardware, Gift or Museums, Pets, Pharmacy, Wine/Liquor, and Sporting Goods, as well as several others, which are designed specifically for retailers in that particular industry.

For those managing multiple locations, business snapshots are a great option, providing management with 'at a glance' data that is available quickly. The Remote Options feature allows users to configure store-to-store communications, with data stored at a central location that can be accessed from any location.

Retail Star allows cashiers to process multiple transaction types, including processing a sale, accessing customer data, processing returns and voids, and even creating layaways. Multiple pricing levels are available in Retail Star, and users can categorize their inventory by department, by class, or by subclass. Managers can set up various promotions by choosing specific items or product categories and offering special pricing, such as a 'buy-one-get-one-free promotion, and can track promotion performance as well. The ScoreCARD function allows managers to quickly view various department performance levels and see how they compare to each other.

Users can manage inventory for brick and mortar stores, web-orders, and phone

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with all monitors customized to suit user and business needs. The iStar e-Commerce module allows users to integrate brick and mortar stores with their online stores for financial and inventory management. Retail Star handles multiple currency types, including cash, checks, credit and debit cards, gift and loyalty cards, gift certificates, and even foreign currency. The excellent CRM module allows users to track and manage vital data such as purchase history in order to generate targeted email sales promotions. For more in-depth customer tracking, retailers may opt to use loyalty cards that track customer preferences, purchasing habits and favorite items, while also offering special promotions and pricing for that particular customer.

TRACKING/REPORTING: 5 STARS

Retail Star offers retailers many different reporting options, with a built-in report writer available to generate reports. An impressive list of standard reports is available in Retail Star, with each report customizable as needed. A report wizard is available to steer users through the process of creating a report, providing assistance on everything from choosing data to formatting options. Customizable sales reports allow management to track detail using a variety of criteria including salesperson, department, product, or vendor. Reports provide users with real-time data, and reports can be saved and scheduled to run at a particular time. Inventory can be tracked with standard reports such as Best/Worst Sellers, by promotion, or by product. Management reports provide those in charge with product performance data, and they can be produced using a variety of criteria such as location, department, classes, or sub-classes of products. Retail Star's CRM module helps users analyze customer buying habits, track customer sales, set special sales and promotion items for customers, while generating targeted mailings and email promotions as well. Retail Star also contains thorough audit trail functionality throughout the system.

INTEGRATION/IMPORT/EXPORT: 5 STARS

Retail Star's modular structure allows users to purchase necessary modules as

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System which contains magnetic strip reader, receipt printer, barcode scanner, POS keyboard, and touch screen technology.

HELP/SUPPORT: 5 STARS

Solid help functionality is found throughout Retail Star, and the CAM Commerce website offers users access to online training videos and webinars. Users also have 24-hour access to online forums and community support options, product upgrades, and white papers. POS support is available Monday through Saturday, with emergency service available on Sunday. Training options include phone training, in-house training, and onsite training, with additional training also available by request. Hardware support is also available.

Installation of Retail Star is typically performed by CAM Commerce and the retailer is likely to undergo extensive training to deal with a very steep learning curve.

Best Fit: Retail Star is a completely integrated system originally designed with larger specialty retailers in mind, but with the availability of Retail Star Lite, even smaller retailers can reap the benefits of this fully customizable system.

Product Strengths

- Modular design provides excellent product scalability
- Two versions – Regular and Lite put the program within the reach of all but the smallest retail businesses
- Product offers complete accounting system along with POS functionality
- Complete brick and mortar – web integration
- Excellent system customization capabilities for just about any type of retail business

Potential Weaknesses

- Complex system setup that requires significant time and manpower investments

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the POS module only, with each module separately priced, making the cost prohibitive for smaller retailers.

OVERALL RATING: 5 STARS

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