



Transforming the Grocery Experience for Today's Digital-Savvy Shoppers

Schnuck Markets selects Zebra's point-of-sale technology, mobile computers and printers to increase store efficiency, speed up checkout lines, improve price labeling and streamline inventory management.

Situation/Challenge

The fast-changing grocery industry is becoming increasingly competitive with a broad array of companies vying to serve shoppers' demands for fast, fresh and healthy food choices at competitive prices. No one knows this better than St. Louis based Schnucks who takes a tech-forward approach to creating a more rewarding and frictionless experience for their customers.

Long recognized as a leading innovator, Schnucks sought new ways of enriching the day-to-day shopping experience for their customers. The company wanted to upgrade their existing technology platforms to next-generation solutions and increase inventory visibility, expedite stock replenishment, facilitate faster merchandise ordering and streamline shelf labeling. At the same time, Schnucks wanted to eliminate pain points in the checkout lanes and accelerate service delivery with the promise of heightening both shopper and employee satisfaction.

Solution

Schnucks turned to Zebra's MP7000 multi-plane bioptic imagers, TC20, TC51 and TC70 mobile computers as well as the QLn320 mobile printers to speed customer checkout, modernize inventory management and simplify price labeling.

Result

By investing in technology innovation in the stores, Schnucks is investing in their customers. With Zebra's technology solutions operational, Schnucks has reduced checkout times and improved inventory, product and pricing management which has ultimately translated into better service to customers and more satisfied employees.



SUMMARY



Customer

Schnuck Markets
St. Louis, MO

Partner

Accucode, Inc.

Industry

Retail

Challenge

- Modernize store technologies
- Accelerate the checkout process
- Streamline inventory management, product pricing, merchandise ordering
- Improve customer service

Solution

- Zebra TC20, TC70 and TC51 mobile computers
- Zebra QLn320 mobile printers
- Zebra MP7000 multi-plane bioptic imager
- DS8178 cordless, handheld scanner

Results

- Faster customer checkout times
- Improved inventory management
- Easier product ordering and stocking
- More accurate and professional pricing displays

A Growing Business with Changing Needs

Schnuck Markets is a third-generation, family-owned grocery and pharmacy retailer committed to nourishing people's lives. Schnucks operates 115 stores in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Iowa, and employs more than 14,000 teammates. Schnucks ranks number 31 on *Progressive Grocer's* 2018 Super 50 list of top grocers in the United States.

Schnuck Markets got its start as a wholesale meat business in 1937. From the beginning, the company was known for its outstanding customer service, even adopting the slogan "The Friendliest Stores in Town." A few years ago, Schnucks began reevaluating how technology could help the company improve its operations and customer service.

The grocer's technology infrastructure had served the company well, but it was time for an upgrade. Slow networks and malfunctioning devices often required store associates to rescan items several times before they registered. The technology had limited functionality in managing inventory and pricing.

"We were facing a lot of issues with double scans at the front end and devices not connecting with our network solutions," said Michael Wait, director of store technologies for the IT Department at Schnuck Markets. "The antiquated technology was quite painful for us, causing a lot of teammate and customer friction due to longer lines at the front end."

Schnucks set about looking for a new technology solution – one that would not only provide operational efficiencies and better customer service immediately but would also have the flexibility to grow with the business in the future.

A Cut Above

After evaluating several vendors, Schnucks purchased Zebra equipment for both its front-end and back-end operations.

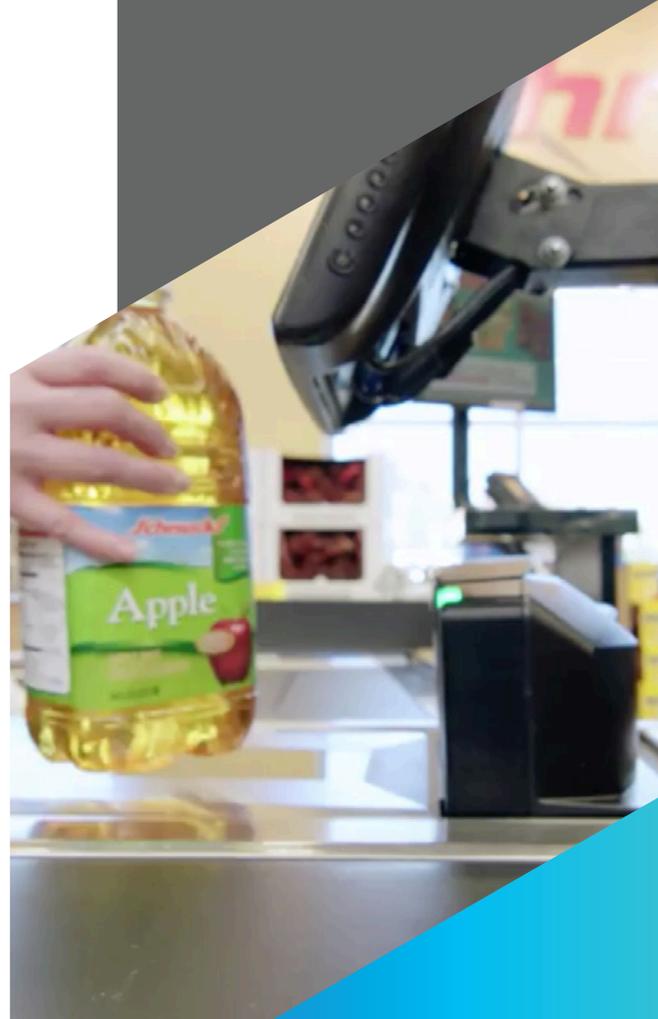
"As we decided to modernize, we looked at a whole multitude of vendors, and Zebra devices just kept coming out on top," said Wait.

"The Zebra equipment just performed better," said Dave Steck, vice president of IT Infrastructure and application development for Schnuck Markets. "It was much more reliable, so we made the decision to move forward with Zebra."

Today, Schnucks uses Zebra's MP7000 multi-plane bioptic imagers and DS8178 cordless, handheld scanners for front-of-store checkout.

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For customer-assisted ordering and shelf management, Schnucks relies on the TC20, TC51 and TC70 mobile devices as well as the QLn320 mobile printers to create pricing tags.

Giving Store Operations an Overhaul

Today, Schnucks uses the Zebra devices to manage each product from the moment it arrives at the receiving dock until the moment it passes through the point-of-sale system.

At the front of the store, Zebra's MP7000 and DS8178 scanners have helped Schnucks optimize checkout times. "The scans are more efficient and deliver better barcode reads," Wait said. "This results in less double scanning, which makes it an easier experience for the customer – and also makes the checkers' lives a lot easier."

In the store, Zebra TC20, TC51 and TC70 mobile computers enable Schnucks to better manage store inventories and even order products on the spot. Thanks to the advanced technological capabilities supported by the Zebra devices, Schnucks was able to develop a state-of-the-art application it calls "ShelfMan" – short for "Shelf Management."

The store employees use the ShelfMan application to update inventories, transfer products from one location to the next, order products and print professional-looking, easy-to-scan pricing tags.

"Zebra's TC70s and TC51s allow us to leverage the latest technology and create an application that our teammates use to basically manage the entire store," said Caleb Hoelscher, technical lead at Schnucks.

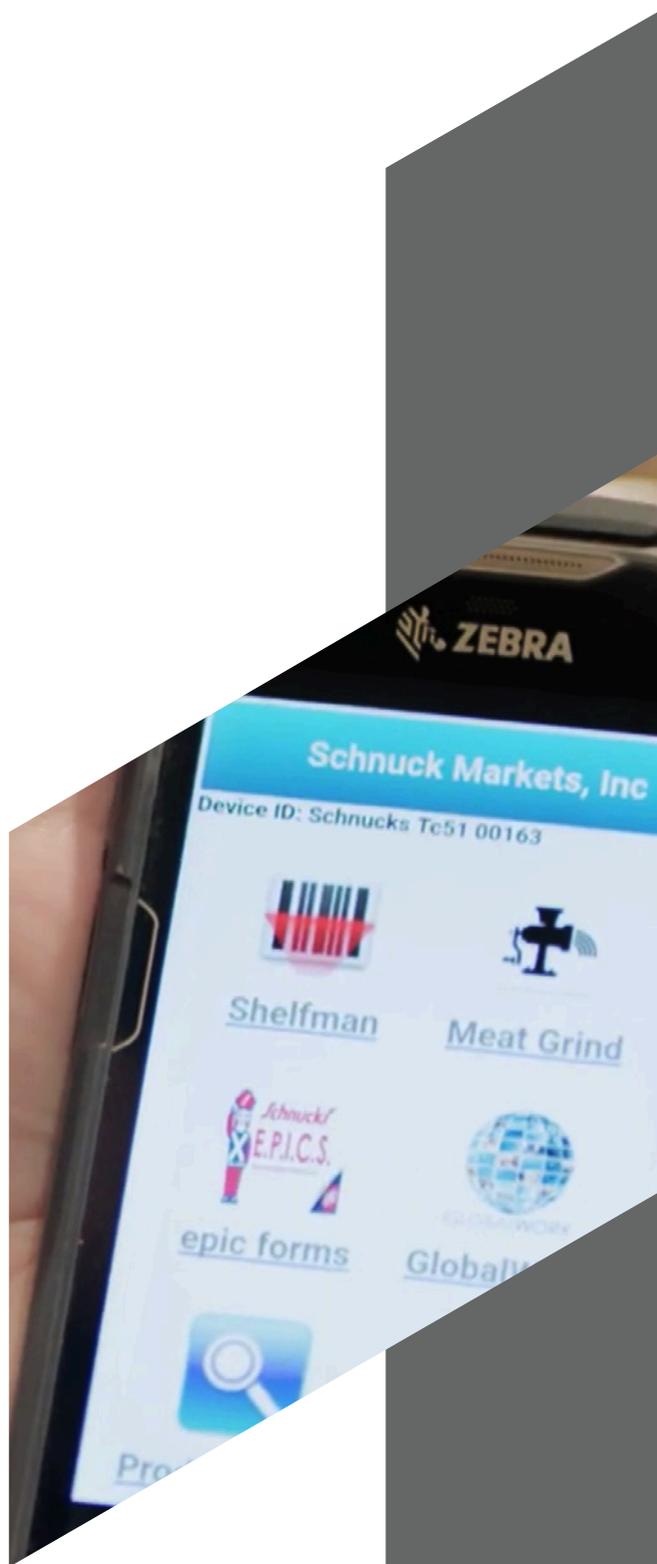
More Flexibility, Better Results

One upgrade that the Zebra equipment delivered was the ability to support the GS1 Barcode, which can be used to label loose produce and thus support faster checkout, better inventory and superior product quality management.

"With the GS1 Stacked DataBar, we can now embed serial number, produced date/expiration date on the barcode," said Steck. "So, we can scan the item and determine right off the bat if that product is expired – so we don't sell it to customers."

Better-looking, More Useful Shelf Tags

Zebra's QLn320 printers give workers an easy way to print shelf tags in the store, which is a big improvement from the previous system.



“Prior to using Zebra printers, you saw a lot of handwritten tags in our stores, which led to an inconsistent look and feel,” Hoelscher said. “With the ability to print stores tags using the Zebra QLn320 mobile printers, we’re able to automate that process. This gives our stores the ability to create better-looking shelf tags that are consistent across all departments.”

The capabilities supported by the Zebra devices also allow Schnucks to capture additional data to verify that the information on the shelf tag actually matches the merchandise.

“Most retailers just embed the UPC of the product in the barcode that allows the product to be identified whenever a barcode is scanned,” Hoelscher said. “We’re taking the UPC and also embedding additional data into the barcode that allows us to automatically audit and validate that the information on the shelf tag is correct every time one of those barcodes is scanned.”

Looking Toward the Future

Schnucks is in the process of converting from 1D barcodes into 2D data matrix barcodes, a key capability that is supported by Zebra’s imagers, mobile computers and printers. This gives the grocer the freedom to embed additional data into the barcodes in the future without redesigning the shelf tags.

“A lot of devices that we looked at aren’t capable of printing a 2D barcode at this point in time,” Hoelscher said. “The QLn320 printers provide us with that ability. Overall, the Zebra devices are helping us innovate and create a framework that allows us to grow in the future.”



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Caleb Hoelscher, Technical Lead, Schnuck Markets

“Having the modern technology and being able to integrate that into what the teammates are using gives us nearly limitless capability that we can continue to expand on,” said Steck. “We are not limited by technology anymore.”

Happier Staff, More Satisfied Customers

According to Schnucks, the Zebra solution has resulted in increased satisfaction levels for both customers and employees.

“One of our core values here at Schnucks is putting the customer first. Putting these devices in the hands of the teammates makes them more efficient and happier, which leads to better customer service,” Steck said. “If you’re constantly struggling with technology, you’re going to be frustrated on the floor, and that’s going to reflect in your customer service.”

Given Schnucks’ long-standing focus on customer service, the company also expected a high level of service from Zebra – and Schnucks couldn’t be happier with the personalized attention it has received.

“Zebra has met us at briefing centers. They’ve come onsite,” said Steck. “They’ve worked hand-in-hand with us – both with our IT department and the teammates in the stores – to understand what we needed so they could help us fill in the gaps.”

“We’ve been able to get Zebra on the phone instantly, and numerous times they’ve been able to come onsite within 24 hours,” said Hoelscher. “Whether it’s an issue that we’re dealing with or just a general question, the customer support from Zebra from day one has been phenomenal.”



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To learn more about how Zebra can help you better serve your customers, visit www.zebra.com/grocery



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