





## Petroleum Retailers: Ready to Fuel Omni Channel for a Seamless Customer Experience

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The petroleum retail industry is in a highly transformative phase with pervasion of emerging technologies like cloud and digital technologies. Retailers are busy embracing the Web, mobile and social touchpoints to complement their physical store to ensure a converged customer experience across multiple channels. In keeping with these trends, oil and petroleum retailers (gas stations), who now have multiple streams of business are redefining their channels of operations, employing omni channel strategies.

The intention is to provide their customers with superior value propositions and consistent service delivery across channels amid fluctuating fuel prices, stagnating demand and shrinking fuel

margins. The ultimate aim is to increase their profitability through cross-sell and up-sell opportunities across forecourt, C-Store, and other products and services.

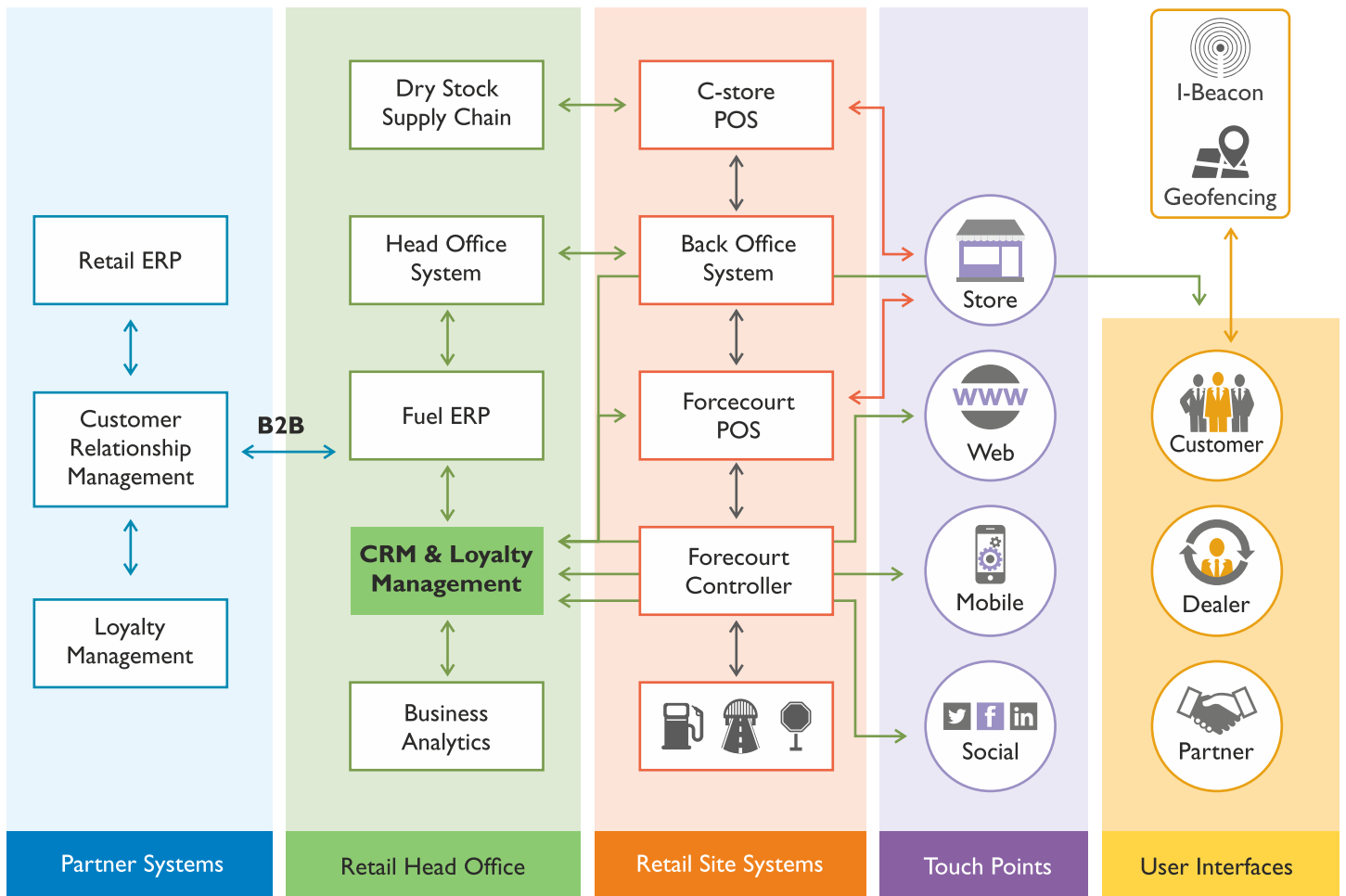
The need to do this is urgent. A study conducted in 2015 found that about a fourth of consumers will be influenced by digital shopping behavior. Consumers prefer a hyper or big box format to traditional stations for their fuel and non-fuel requirements. Why is that so? The answer is simple: hypermarkets and big box retailers - apart from fulfilling diverse consumer requirements - have loyalty systems, personalized offers, discounts and mobile and Web-based services which customers perceive as higher value.



The data related to customers, gas station dealers, franchisees and promotion partners must be funneled into an end-to-end system that stitches customer-facing processes, middle-office billing and back-end supply chain management.

This brings us back to the need of the hour: to transform

traditional marketing processes that have served the industry for decades into a technology-led omni channel approach. A future-proof solution architecture creates a strong foundation for the transformation (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** High level system context

The challenge is to manage the structured and unstructured data from the growing number of touch points and its implications on database infrastructure. Next is the challenge of standardizing point of sale (forecourt, C-Store, others) and order management processes across touch points and the core fuel retail system used by the enterprise and its retail promotion partners. Simultaneously, it implies integrating CRM and loyalty management systems of the enterprise and those of partners.

Luckily, the ground work for this has already been put in place by

traditional retailers. Petroleum retailers must pick the technologies that work best for their needs (location sensing technologies, augmented reality, and real-time enterprise visibility of retail inventory) to give customers an engaging experience combined with "endless retail aisles." Using a combination of these technologies, typical petroleum retailers and their franchisees could overcome the limitations of retail space and inventory they normally face for non-fuel retail C-Store products. For example, a customer could pre-order non-fuel products offered by fuel retailers over a mobile app or a Web page.

This would trigger the supply chain to ensure the order was fulfilled as desired by the customer, provide a seamless journey and superior consumer experience which will bolster growth and profitability.

Traditional business wisdom in retail has always dictated increasing the number of outlets to increase reach and profitability. The omni channel world allows you to do just that. An omni channel approach is becoming an unavoidable imperative for petroleum retailers to enhance their flexibility and scalability of operation, provide superior value proposition with respect to competitors and edge ahead on newer avenues for growth.





## About the Author

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