



RFID self-checkouts introduced
in record time with GK

Making the impossible feasible



Quick Facts

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About Shoprite

The Shoprite Group is the largest South African retailer by market capitalisation, sales, profit, number of employees and customers. Since opening our first store in 1979, the Group has grown to more than 3 152 stores across 10 countries. Our purpose is to uplift lives everyday by pioneering access to the most affordable goods and services, creating economic opportunity and protecting our planet.

Challenge

The Shoprite Group, Africa's largest retailer, is currently upgrading its entire POS software architecture with GK OmniPOS to meet its requirements for a future-proof omnichannel platform that

easily supports upcoming innovations,

goes hand in hand with SAP developments, and

meets the fiscalization needs for the retail group's business across several Southern African countries.

In September 2022, the executive team of Africa's largest retailer approached GK about launching a completely new apparel banner, known as UNIQ, prior to the transition of its first grocery store to GK OmniPOS.

The Group's goal was to launch UNIQ in just six months with RFID-based self-checkouts that automatically capture items and employ Electronic Article Surveillance (EAS) technology.

Faster than originally planned, the Group's existing loyalty platform had to be integrated with GK OmniPOS by the time the first UNIQ outlet opened

Solution

In a record time of only six months, the Shoprite Technology, GK, and the RFID platform solution provider succeeded in developing and implementing a complete RFID-based, cashless self-checkout solution for the retailer's new apparel banner operation, UNIQ.

The launch of the first RFID self-checkouts in Africa was smooth and trouble-free. In parallel, the integration of the Shoprite Group's existing loyalty platform into GK OmniPOS was successfully implemented faster than originally planned.

GK OmniPOS was integrated into the Shoprite Group's SAP system in only eight weeks. This was accelerated by making use of solid, standardized integration patterns based on the GK Model Company.



Overview

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The Shoprite Group is currently upgrading its entire POS software platform with GK OmniPOS to meet the retailer's requirements for a future-proof omnichannel platform. The platform will easily support upcoming innovations, goes hand in hand with SAP developments, and meets the fiscalization needs for the retailer's business across several Southern African countries.

In September 2022, the executive team of Africa's largest retailer approached GK about launching a completely new apparel banner, known as UNIQ. The launch was planned to take place prior to the transition of its first grocery store to GK OmniPOS. The goal – to launch UNIQ in just six months with RFID-based, cashless self-checkouts that automatically capture items and integrates with an Electronic Article Surveillance (EAS) system – seemed unreasonable. In addition, its existing loyalty platform had to be integrated with GK OmniPOS by the time the first UNIQ outlet opened – significantly faster than originally planned.

Making the impossible feasible

In the middle of the Shoprite Group's multi-year program to modernize its in-store technology for around 2,500 stores with GK, its senior executives surprised teams with a request to set up a new apparel banner in just six months. The challenge: The new clothing stores under the UNIQ brand were envisioned with RFID-based, cashless self-checkouts instead of traditional tills. However, what seemed unreasonable at first was achieved in partnership with GK. When the first UNIQ store opened in Cape Town as planned, teams at the Shoprite Group, GK, and its other technology providers performed magic: the first RFID self-checkout on the African continent worked without fail.

Finding the best solution for the Shoprite Group

Through its multi-year program, the Shoprite Group is currently modernizing its in-store technology for about 2,500 stores with GK. A number of factors played a role in the group's decision to go with the German-based software house, which has a presence in South Africa along with a subsidiary and a team of developers. These factors included the flexibility of GK's platform, its omnichannel capabilities, experience with fiscalization in Southern African countries, and the ease of integration into SAP with the GK Model Company's standardized approach.

"After external and internal analysts' extensive evaluation of many solutions, as well as visits to other retailers using different POS software platforms, we decided to go with GK," explains the Shoprite Group's CIO, David Cohn.

Solution

Solution



Analysis found GK to be the best

“Our point-of-sale solution is critical to our business, which is why we were looking for nothing less than the best software partner for our needs,” continues Cohn.

“For our 30,000 tills, we wanted the most robust solution with the best omnichannel capabilities. We looked at many potential solutions, spoke with many retailers and analysts, and did our own analysis, eventually selecting GK for a number of reasons. Crucial were their omnichannel capabilities, their roadmap, and their technology – also their spirit. We felt that GK is a company that understands our needs as Africa’s largest retailer – a company we can partner with beyond buying a piece of software from them.”

Integration of multiple fiscalizations simultaneously with GK

Another reason for choosing GK was their experience with fiscalization – including in Southern African countries. Many markets in which the retail group is present, such as Angola, Zambia, Botswana, and Malawi, require this. Cohn indicated that GK’s architecture, which allows multiple fiscal integrations simultaneously, was key in the selection.

Over and above these considerations, the Group was impressed by GK’s capabilities to rapidly integrate into the retailer’s existing SAP systems. The German retail technology specialist offers standardized mapping into retailers’ SAP landscapes, which has proven many times to significantly reduce the implementation times for new POS solutions.

GK Model Company

The in-store technology expert offers standardized mapping into retailers' SAP landscapes, which has proven many times to significantly reduce the implementation times of in-store solutions. This standardized approach, based on best-of-class process integration, enables GK to map its in-store solutions into a retail organization's SAP-based merchandise management system, usually in just six weeks. This is especially beneficial as it enables retailers to rapidly set up test environments at the beginning of a project with their live SAP system.

SAP integration in just eight weeks

"When GK showed us their timeline for the integration into our SAP system, we were skeptical", says Cohn. "But they were right. The integration into our merchandise management environment went not only as promised; it was done in a record-breaking eight weeks. The native integration of GK into SAP was remarkably painless and slick."

Exciting new challenge in the middle of the project

In September 2022, in the middle of its preparation to go-live with GK POS in its grocery stores in 2023, the Shoprite Group's senior executives surprised their teams with the request to start a new apparel banner in just six months. The challenge: The new clothing stores under the UNIQ brand were envisioned with RFID-based self-checkouts instead of traditional tills.

What seemed unreasonable at first glance was accomplished: when the first UNIQ store opened in Cape Town as planned on March 30, 2023, the teams from Shoprite Technology, GK, and the RFID technology provider had performed a miracle. The first RFID self-checkout on the African continent worked extremely well when shoppers put their items into the self-checkout wells. With no barcode scanning, all items appeared on a self-checkout display immediately. Everything was remarkably error-free.

"The Shoprite Technology team we brought into the new store for the first two weeks was impressed by how well everything worked," reports Cohn.

"By realizing an RFID self-checkout in only six months, GK supported us in implementing future-proof technology at lightning speed."

David Cohn, CIO Shoprite Group

The integration in the implementation

The success of implementing an RFID-based self-checkout in only six months was only possible because GK has well-defined integration points available, with which the provider of the RFID technology was able to integrate. Through the integration, RFID labels are used for both item identification and Electronic Article Surveillance (EAS). The unique identification number on items that are paid for at self-checkout is transferred to a cloud-based system, which ensures that an alert goes off only if an unpaid item passes through the store's security gates.

For the start of the new UNIQ apparel banner, GK had to complete the integration to the existing loyalty scheme and the Shoprite Group's PIN pads significantly faster than planned. Integrating its existing loyalty platform was particularly challenging under the new schedule.

"It was like making someone who only speaks Japanese and someone who only speaks German, speak fluently to each other", says Cohn, describing the difficulties of integrating GK into their established loyalty program. Additionally, the Group offers a wide variety of promotion types, from "buy two, get 50% off" and "buy three, get the cheapest free" to personalized discounts or free articles on shoppers' birthdays.

By June 2023, The Shoprite Group had nine UNIQ stores operating throughout South Africa, and the technology is running smoothly. Further store openings will follow.



“I can’t overstate the stability of this first release. It worked out of the box, with very few defects or issues.”

David Cohn, CIO The Shoprite Group

Better than expected

As a next step, the Group plans to go live with GK, in the first South African grocery stores in September 2023. By then, GK’s platform will be managing more complex Shoprite Group customer promotions, value-added services it sells at tills, as well as cash handling. By the end of the year, if everything goes well, the first liquor and pet stores are also planned to run with GK. Cohn is happy with the progress of the project: “GK has delivered on schedule. The results were better than expected.”

POS data in almost real time

One of the many benefits the Shoprite Group will have with GK in its core grocery business is the near-real-time sales data integration into SAP CAR.

“This will be tremendously advantageous to our customers, especially with online orders”, explains Cohn. “Going forward, we also trust GK to consistently support future SAP developments.”

Shared accountability

“With GK, we were able to successfully form a single team with shared accountability. We solve challenges together,” says Cohn. “Collaboration and transparency are keystones in our working relationship. GK is a partner that makes sure they really understand what we want, before they start working on it.”

Outlook

The Shoprite Group plans to go live with GK OmniPOS, in the first South African grocery stores in September 2023. By the end of the year, more grocery stores in South Africa and the first liquor and pet stores are planned to run with GK, too. In 2024, Africa’s largest retailer will roll out GK to all stores, step by step, including operations in the rest of Africa. GK’s experience with fiscalization in other Southern African countries will support an efficient and successful completion of the project.

GK Software SE

Waldstraße 7

08261 Schöneck

Germany

P +49 37464 84 - 0

F +49 37464 84 - 15

info@gk-software.com

www.gk-software.com



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