What are your customers trying to tell you? Learn how intelligent systems allow you to communicate and build business insight across your organization more effectively and efficiently, driving improvements in customer service.

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Introduction to Intelligent Systems

Most embedded devices are now connected to the Internet or internal systems, or have the capability to do so, and they’re capturing unprecedented quantities of data about both customer interactions and internal operations. To extract the most business value from this data, businesses need intelligent systems that address identity, security, connectivity, manageability, analytics and user experience.

“We’re generating information through all these devices, through all these different industries, and all these different services. The challenge comes in gaining access to that information and creating an inclusive ecosystem where information can be exchanged,” says Dr. Abel Sanchez, executive director of MIT’s Geospatial Data Center and an expert on the creation of large-scale distributed computing systems.

Windows Embedded delivers this by extending the power of Windows and the cloud to intelligent systems. Encompassing operating systems, tools, and systems and services, Windows Embedded enables enterprises to generate tangible, real-time benefits with anytime, anywhere access to executable data. And it does so through a user interface that people around the world find familiar and easy to use.

How Do Intelligent Systems Work?

An intelligent system enables data to flow across an enterprise infrastructure, spanning the devices where valuable data is gathered from employees and customers, to the back-end systems where that data can be translated into insights and action.

What Industries Can Benefit From Intelligent Systems?

Microsoft’s extensive suite of technologies for enterprises and approach to intelligent systems is being applied across a variety of industries, including manufacturing, health care, retail and hospitality.

What Do Intelligent Systems Mean for Customer Service?

Companies can use this information to deliver highly personalized and efficient service, all while better controlling inventory and labor costs.

Enriching the User Experience

Intelligent systems improve customer service by dramatically improving the user experience, offering a level of unprecedented personalization.

Royal Caribbean, the global cruise brand, is among the businesses leveraging Windows Embedded to harness their data to create insights, uncover new business opportunities and improve customer service. The company improved customer service by adopting a point-of-sale (POS) solution that shares data from multiple devices and systems, including digital signage, show-tickets systems, photo galleries and in-room entertainment systems.

For example, Royal Caribbean deployed more than 300 digital signs running the Windows 7 operating system on each ship. Pulling real-time data from the POS solution, the signs display information such as the number of guests in a particular restaurant. If the venue is too crowded, passengers can go to a restaurant with more room.

The company also wanted to speed payment transactions, reducing the time passengers spend in line. One of its initiatives included replacing paper with digital receipts using DataMagine, which connects with POS terminals to collect digital signatures and store electronic receipts. The solution automates processes for waivers and releases that passengers need to sign before participating in potentially risky activities.

Retailers also use intelligent systems to improve the the customer shopping experience while keeping tighter control over inventory and ordering for higher profitability. Nakajima USA, a specialty retailer best known for distributing Sanrio “Hello Kitty” products, recently replaced its aging POS solution with Retail Anywhere’s POS and retail management system.

Nakajima’s customers now enjoy faster service with the new POS. “The register system is much easier to use, and touch-enabled in most locations, which has increased overall transaction speed by 30 seconds,” says Jennifer Pearce, Director of Company Stores, Nakajima USA.

The retailer is also better able to coordinate ordering with customer demand through live in-store inventory control. “We can now gauge in-stock status of products in the stores in real time, instead of relying on periodic back-office reports,” Pearce says.

Case Study

Learn how “Hello Kitty” retailer cut operating costs with new POS system.
Promoting Connectivity

Today’s retail and hospitality environment requires that POS systems connect seamlessly and securely to the Internet, corporate intranets and back-office systems.

Douglas, the largest cosmetics and fragrance retailer in Europe, takes advantage of the connectivity of intelligent systems to deliver the high level of face-to-face customer relationship its customers expect. The company, which operates more than 1,200 perfumeries in 23 countries, sells a broad range of high-end brand name perfumes and cosmetics, including Clinique, Chanel, Dior, Estée Lauder, Giorgio Armani and Lancôme.

“Nearly everything we do in the store requires connectivity to the outside world, whether it’s registering a customer for a rewards program or checking our inventory system,” says Alexander Rack, head of department, IT infrastructure at Douglas.

For example, redeeming a gift card purchased on the Intranet requires reliable and fast coordination between the central Douglas online systems, back-office Microsoft Server systems, and a store-based POS device.

This connectivity allows store associates to spend more face time with customers, as there are far fewer reasons to need to walk away to find the answer to someone’s question, notes John Doyle, director of product management for Windows Embedded Systems and Services. Without an intelligent system in place, most retail workers would have had to walk off to another location to look up product details or find out if something is in stock.

Intelligent systems can improve customer service by making workers more productive. Training is a breeze with the familiar Windows interface. Real-time access to product information at front-line workers’ fingertips means they are able to spend more time engaged with customers.

Douglas is among the companies that has found success in improving productivity by adopting an intelligent system. A convenient touch-screen keyboard user interface makes it easier to train new personnel and enables the company’s beauty advisors to see customer information more easily and faster at the moment of service, company representatives say.

“With the information we have about a customer, such as past purchasing habits and membership in loyalty reward programs, we can service them better and achieve higher profitability at the same time,” says Alexander Rack, Head of Department, IT Infrastructure at Douglas. “For example, if a beauty advisor sees on the POS system that a customer is only a few points away from the next reward level, they can use that information to encourage the customer to make an additional purchase.”

Restaurants have also found that intelligent systems can help improve their customer service. Carl’s Jr. is a quick-service restaurant chain with more than 1,200 locations worldwide. In the Las Vegas metropolitan area, SL Investments owns 38 restaurants.

Carl’s Jr. of Las Vegas wanted a POS solution that would improve business intelligence and customer service. At the restaurant level, Carl’s Jr. hoped to improve service and operations. “It all comes back to customer experience,” says Bill Thorson, vice president of facilities and IT, SL Investments. “Customers just want to come in, get their food and go home. So the more reliable the system is, the faster we can serve them, the better.”

Royal Caribbean also found that they were able to improve their work flows. Before the upgrade, it would take inspection teams almost an entire shift to complete mandatory food safety inspections. Now, they can automate processes and reclaim their work day for other projects. “We reduced inspection times from five to two hours,” says Jason Miller, technology analyst at Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd.

These streamlined systems also make training and onboarding much simpler, which is critical in industries where turnover is high, says John Doyle, director of product management for Windows Embedded Systems and Services. The Windows interface is already familiar to most users, and front-line workers don’t need to be experts on the products -- they can quickly get the information they need from their devices.

Case Study
Carl’s Jr. of Las Vegas improved profitability with POS solution based on Windows Embedded.

Case Study
Learn how Royal Caribbean improved employee efficiency with an intelligent system.
Harnessing Big Data & Predictive Analytics

Intelligent systems allow your business to access data that would otherwise be out of reach. They allow you to bring business information gathered from intelligent devices at customer interactions into the heart of the organization for more informed decision-making that leads to improved customer service.

AMC is among the companies using intelligent systems to optimize the movement of information through the enterprise and use it to fine-tune the way it allocates resources to improve customer service.

With its upgraded system, detailed sales information from the theater quickly reaches AMC corporate offices. The company can switch movies from one auditorium to another within a theater to better match audiences to screening room sizes; it can increase or decrease the number of screens showing a particular movie; and it can expand or contract the number of showings per screen.

AMC estimates that it will boost ticket sales by 1 percent as it fully phases in theater optimization strategies. At the current level of ticket sales, that’s an annual increase of $17 million.

“Ticket sales optimization is huge, huge for us,” says Derrick Leggett, vice president, enterprise information systems at AMC Theatres. “But it’s only the start … Knowing what ticket sales are will enable us to optimize staffing—ensuring that we have the appropriate level of staff to provide great service to our customers, while avoiding excess staffing and unnecessary costs.”

Royal Caribbean Cruises is also taking advantage of the information they gather into their central database to tailor experiences for their guests more effectively. “The more information we can collect about our guests, the more we can customize our products for them,” says Bill Martin, vice president and chief information officer at Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. “We can capture data in numerous ways, and that’s incredibly enabling information in the hospitality industry. The guests love it because they know we’re catering to them, and we like it because we can make more money.”

About Windows Embedded
Windows Embedded extends the power of Windows and the cloud to intelligent systems. Encompassing operating systems, tools, and systems and services, Windows Embedded enables enterprises to generate tangible, real-time benefits with anytime, anywhere access to executable data. Microsoft entered the embedded marketplace over 15 years ago and continues to lead the evolution toward intelligent systems with an extensive suite of technologies for enterprises across a variety of industries. Visit www.unlockintelligence.com for more information.

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