

## **Day in the Life of a Retail I.T. Director**

The recent merger of Mosaic Fashions (Coast, Karen Millen, Oasis, Odille, Whistles) and Rubicon Retail (Principles, The Shoe Studio, Warehouse) has created a £1bn global, multi-channel, portfolio of differentiated fashion retail brands.

The I.T. strategy is to provide a common skills base and infrastructure that underpins the brands ability to compete within a highly fragmented and mature fashion retail marketplace.

Despite having similar supply chains (fashion retail), in virtually every other way the I.T. structure differs across the merged businesses. Differing technical platforms, operating systems, services (in-house v outsource), supply chain and POS applications.

Not surprisingly this has resulted in diverse core competencies across an I.T. team based in three separate geographical locations.

Having recently assumed (December 2006) the role of Group I.T. Director it has become apparent that no one day is the same. Working across three locations, typically commencing at 7.30am and if I am lucky finishing at around 6pm. However the reality of a global business is the requirement to provide 24/7 service and resultant need for "real-time" availability, this is a key challenge across the I.T. industry.

My initial task is to establish a structure, systems and shared values within the team, as a foundation to delivering the I.T. strategy. Having restructured the I.T. team in February 1, 2007, I have recently established a single supply chain systems strategy to be delivered over the next 18 months – 2 years.

Whilst the business is in transition we need to focus on project delivery and build credibility, by recognising as a group support function no "one size fits all" and the need for the I.T. service to align to the individual brand values.

Our vision is in 18 months – 2 years, having delivered a successful single systems strategy, the team will have experienced a paradigm shift in its relationship with the business, from where I.T. is only noticed by the customer when things go wrong, to an enabler and integral part of the business strategic direction. Perhaps at that tipping point will "real time" become "my time".

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