



# IBM Network Station and BeanStore perk up the point-of-sale.

Datafit, Inc., a Burlington, Mass.-based software company that specializes in retail in-store systems, has spent years developing innovative solutions that meet the demands of the fast-paced, ultracompetitive world of retailing. Now, the firm's latest offering, a point-of-sale (POS) application called BeanStore, combines Java™, object-oriented programming disciplines and the ability to run on thin clients such as the IBM Network Station Series 1000 to bring unheard-of flexibility to the point-of-sale environment.

David Preston, CEO of Datafit, says BeanStore is one of the first truly mission-critical applications for thin-client architectures. Teamed with the IBM Network Station Series 1000 and IBM 4694 POS terminal, it offers an ideal solution for today's retail POS environment. "In retail, stores are geographically dispersed, yet businesses want centralized control for inventory, pricing and so forth," Preston says. "Thin clients address this issue by being low-cost, low-maintenance devices that access applications and data from central servers."

Additionally, Preston points out: "Thin clients let you change an application quickly – for example, to respond to a competitor's discount promotion or introduce a new customer loyalty function – and deploy it to stores almost immediately.

All you do is reboot the client, and that client automatically gets the latest version of your application from the server."

Chris Belk, vice president of sales and marketing at Datafit, adds: "Since BeanStore is 100% pure Java, all of the application's capabilities are stored in small, self-contained Java objects. When you make a change, you replace only the affected objects, not the entire application. That makes it easier to implement a change and get it out to the point of sale, often cutting weeks from the change process." Belk notes that with "fat client" PC cash drawers you have to visit each station and reinstall the software onto each hard disk.

<b>Application</b>	Retail point-of-sale and store automation solutions using thin clients and 100% pure Java
<b>Hardware</b>	Any IBM server (and others supporting Java), IBM Network Station Series 1000, IBM 4694 POS terminal
<b>Software</b>	Datafit BeanStore, IBM Network Station Manager



Using Java and thin clients, BeanStore supports highly customized POS displays.

## It's about business, not technology

Despite all its technology advantages, Preston insists that customer business needs drove the technology direction for BeanStore, and not the other way around.

"Price competition isn't the issue in retailing," Preston declares. "There's little room to compete on price. What retailers must compete on now is innovation." He explains that BeanStore facilitates innovation through rapid application change and deployment, and by bringing more functions — even customer-facing functions such as self-service kiosks — out to the point-of-sale.

Another benefit is BeanStore's open design. "BeanStore has JavaPOS interfaces to the industry-leading IBM 4694 POS Terminal along with just about every cash drawer, scale, scanner or other POS device out there," Belk says. "And it maps to any back-end database. Plus, with Java you can deploy the same objects across network computers, the Web, kiosks and handheld devices."

Reliability is also enhanced with the IBM Network Station and BeanStore. As Preston puts it: "Nothing is more critical to the retailer than the point-of-sale; if that goes down, you stop taking in money." The inherently simple Network Station design has no disk drive, CD-ROM or complex internal mechanisms to break down; its only moving part is the power switch. "If a Network Station stops working," Preston says, "you simply plug in another one and turn it on. It's like changing a light bulb."

And what if the network went down temporarily? "We've anticipated that," Belk says. "BeanStore has a unique ability to cache transactions in the client's memory, allowing business to continue despite network problems. When the network comes back online, the client empties its cache back to the server."

## Customization adds value

According to Preston, the added value in retail today is customization, which BeanStore makes easy with its reusable objects and rich development tools.

"The entire product is highly customizable. Retailers can create customized networks, introduce new solutions or manage their brand image right down to the check-out counter," he says. In fact, while BeanStore's business logic is based on Datafit's proven and widely used Windows®-based product, GM-POS, it has been entirely reengineered to take advantage of Java technology and its user interface is completely independent from the business logic.

While several vendors can tailor retailer-specific solutions, Preston promotes IBM Global Services. "In my opinion, IBM provides excellent added value," he says. "Particularly with a large, mission-critical system — because you know if it goes wrong, they'll fix it. The comfort of IBM service and support is a vital factor."

Preston has no doubt that Java and thin clients are exactly what retailers need. Thin clients in particular, he says, have evolved from products that reduce capital costs and total cost of ownership to strategic tools that enhance business flexibility and offer increased control over business operations.

## For more information

To learn more about how network computing with the IBM Network Station and the IBM family of servers can help you make the most of your business opportunities, call 1 800 IBM-7080 in North America. Outside North America, call 416 383-5152. Or, if you have access to the Internet you can find additional information via the World Wide Web at [www.ibm.com/nc](http://www.ibm.com/nc).

For information on BeanStore and other Datafit products, visit [www.datafit.co.uk](http://www.datafit.co.uk).

To find out about IBM solutions for the retail industry worldwide, visit [www.ibm.com/solutions/retail](http://www.ibm.com/solutions/retail).



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