

# Zumiez carves its way to extreme growth with smart IT sourcing from CDW.

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## Background

Zumiez ([www.zumiez.com](http://www.zumiez.com)) is a specialty retailer of action-sports clothing, music and hard goods for skate, snow, surf and active youth lifestyles now operating 236 company-owned stores nationwide. The Zumiez/CDW customer partnership started five years ago with desktop PCs and monitors purchased to support Zumiez's PC-based point-of-sale (POS) solution. Although Zumiez's POS solution originally included components from more than a dozen independent sources, Zumiez has consolidated its POS component purchasing with CDW over the last three years with CDW offerings focused specifically on retailers. Over time, Zumiez's purchasing from CDW expanded to include more comprehensive technical services including sales engineering and configuration support to help the company equip its corporate data center and disaster recovery facility.

## CDW's 360° Approach to Retail Solutions

CDW account managers and technology specialists join customers to conduct a comprehensive review of operations and integrate retail business processes into the technical objectives of each project. From server assessment to configuration, testing, installation, employee training and continuing support, the CDW team applies deep experience and vendor-neutral objectivity to size and design appropriate solutions.

## The Challenge: Unleashing Growth

Like many retailers, Zumiez is looking to accelerate revenue growth, and the company is expected to open more than 40 stores in 2006. To support this aggressive growth plan, the company focused on improving the logistics of supply and configuration for POS systems, a key element in managing the profitability in each store. "To keep our openings on schedule, we need confidence that our technology providers can deliver the right solutions to us when and where we need them, for new installations and replacement parts alike," says Kevin Sonney, Technology Specialist at Zumiez, Inc.. "Coordinating deliveries from a dozen or more vendors was no longer working for us — it was too slow and unreliable. Revenue flows as soon as we open a store, so delaying an opening because we're missing a bar code scanner or some cables was not an option."

The fast-moving retailer also needed more server capacity in its corporate data center, capable of supporting its wide array of applications on the growing network, as well as more capacity in its offsite disaster recovery facility. Says Sonney, "We're opening roughly a store each week and our data volume has grown dramatically." >



## Harnessing Technology to Drive Business Growth

With a five-year track record of success working with CDW, Sonney contacted his CDW account manager and discussed the solution requirements. The conversation quickly turned from a technology discussion to a business discussion, with the CDW account manager, Steve Ermel, honing in on Zumiez's growth requirements. "With 1000 technology partners, CDW can find the right technology solution, but the key to enabling success is understanding how the IT solution needs to impact the business," says Ermel. "CDW has a team of technology specialists who understand retailing in depth and can help our customers arrive at a solution that fits their business objectives."

CDW and Zumiez concentrated on building a POS solution that would eliminate any barriers to rapid deployment. As a first step, Sonney consolidated all of Zumiez's in-store technology purchasing with CDW, simplifying his ordering and allowing him to clean out his inventory of IT gear at headquarters. Either through his CDW extranet, CDW@work®, or the account manager, Zumiez orders all of the components and services associated with each POS system in a single action, eliminating the need to manage multiple vendors and coordinate shipping and payment with multiple parties. All of the components are delivered via UPS, often within 48 hours of the order.

"Most of the time now, we keep under five in-store setups in stock at any time, because we know we can depend on CDW to restock us promptly as we ship them out to our new locations," Sonney says. "The logistics are key, and CDW is facilitating our core business practices and the software platform behind them."

As a new location nears opening, the IT store team sets up, configures and tests each complete in-store system at Zumiez's Everett headquarters. Zumiez POS operations are a proprietary solution based on the Apropos retail management system now offered through Epicor CRS, and the in-store systems run on Red Hat Linux. Configuring each store system includes a download of data from the corporate system and synchronization of each new system with the corporate network.

When each configuration is complete, Zumiez IT then repacks the gear onto a pallet for shipment to the new location, where store personnel then are able to set it up with minimal reliance on the technical support team in Everett.

"The IT pallet is the last item loaded onto each new-store shipment, right along with the boards, apparel and other inventory," Sonney says. "Then it is the first item off upon arrival, and the system slides right into place for processing the inventory. As soon as we ship one system, we restock immediately from CDW and keep the process moving. Their turnaround for whole-store shipments and replacement parts alike has been crucial to maintaining our opening schedule — it's clockwork reliable."

## Harnessing Technology to Manage Growth

To manage and protect Zumiez's burgeoning data flow, Sonney needed greater capacity in the data center as well as at the company's offsite disaster recovery center. The company operates a wide variety of applications, including Exchange, Citrix, SQL and VMware Server, and Sonney believed that a blade server solution would be Zumiez's best bet for scalability, reliability and resilience.

"We needed a high-performance solution robust enough to support our growth across all of those applications, and we wanted to make the best use of our server space while economizing on power and leveraging our SAN infrastructure," Sonney points out. "We looked to CDW for assistance because we knew they could help us look at solutions from each of their server vendors while remaining hardware neutral — and that they would reliably deliver whichever option we chose."

After a discussion of the business requirements behind the technology, CDW technology specialists advised Sonney of a variety of configurations to meet those needs.

"When Zumiez called with interest in looking at blade servers, we knew that they needed to evaluate them firsthand," says CDW's Ermel. "We facilitated two visits for the Zumiez IT team at major manufacturer demonstration facilities, which led to a much more informed decision."

After the visits and presentations were complete, the Ermel and the CDW team reviewed all of the practical options with Zumiez, outlining the pros and cons of each against the company's business needs and objectives. The Zumiez team chose a solution based on IBM Bladecenter HS20 and LS 20 servers and Cisco switches to beef up the corporate data center and then relocated older servers from there to the offsite disaster recovery facility.

"With the tremendous growth we're experiencing and a very lean IT department here, we were concerned that just collecting what we needed to make an informed decision would have been a major disruption in our work flow," Sonney adds. "It was invaluable to work with CDW because they took so much of the work off of our shoulders in the evaluation process and made sure that we only spent time looking at solutions that would fit our business. To CDW's credit, their team was resolutely objective about all of the options, and we made our own choice with confidence that they could deliver it for us."

## The Results

In 2006, the company had grown dramatically, from 174 stores in 19 states to 236 stores in 22 states by year's end. Of the new locations, 19 came with the acquisition of a sports retailer, but most were the result of the company's organic growth.

Sonney links his single-source approach to the company's dramatic expansion. "We save time and money by working with CDW. Their technical knowledge and ability to respond promptly to our needs helps us make smart business decisions that support our growth, accelerate our revenue and create great experiences for our customers." ♦

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