



AMERICAN SIGNATURE, INC.

Since 1948,
American Signature, Inc.
has helped furnish
America's homes with
quality furniture at the
guaranteed best prices.

American Signature believes that, "Everyone has the right to a well furnished life." Making that purpose attainable are the the company's two retail store brands, American Signature and Value City, it operates 119 stores, 4 distribution centers, 3 manufacturing facilities, and has more than 4,000 team members in 18 states.

American Signature's vision is to "Make Furniture Shopping Easy." The company regularly examines the customer experience to identify opportunities that make fulfilling its vision more attainable. Two key areas that required enhancements were personalization of the in-store experience and streamlining the furniture delivery process.

Home furnishing consultants (HFCs) needed an easy way to digitally capture customer information, preferences and product interests in real-time. The HFCs process was to capture information manually without the opportunity to share information or to easily access notes if the customer returned.

The second key area identified for enhancement was to find a way to digitally manage the delivery process. Company and contracted drivers manually reviewed paperwork to fulfill orders and capture customer signatures. This made order fulfillment cumbersome and difficult to ensure a positive customer experience. In addition, American Signature had difficulty realizing its goal of a one-hour delivery window because there was no easy way for drivers to plan their routes.

In-Store Tablet for HFCs Enhances Customer Engagement

Solution.

American Signature knew if they could keep HFCs with the customer at all times while they were in the store, that they could improve year-over-year store sales. They looked to their IT partner MAPSYS to collaborate on a tablet-based solution that integrated with its existing IBM Power8 System server.

Prior to developing the application, American Signature-MAPSYS team met with HFCs to understand needs and concerns. Meetings were also held with customer service, sales and marketing to ensure the right type of information was collected.

Using a partition on their Power8 server, a Zend Server environment was created to enable the use of the PHP language to create the application to be used in conjunction with an Apple iPad. All information captured with this application integrates and populates the American Signature CRM system. This information will be vital for future customer analytics.

Every HFC involved in the initial pilot, used provided iPads containing the information so it was important to make the user interface easy to grasp to ensure adoption.

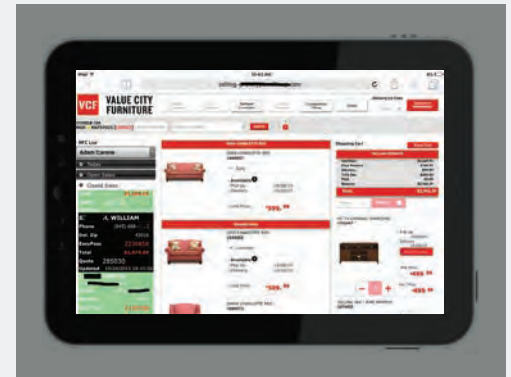
The tablet solution was piloted in four Central Ohio stores and is part of a larger customer engagement initiative.

Results.

The solution, which is still in pilot phase, has already seen great results. Sales in the Columbus, Ohio market alone are up 30 percent year-over-year. In addition, initial fears of adopting a new process were also reviewed and training processes are being put into place.

On top of enhancing customer engagement during the sales process, closing the sale has also become simpler. HFCs are now able to finalize the sale on the floor so all the customer needs to do is walk over to the kiosk to process payment.

The initial pilot was so successful that two additional markets have been identified to become part of the pilot program, with complete rollout planned within two years.



“It makes it easier for the customer because we have all the information on product, delivery, competitors and prices at our fingertips. We can show pictures of product that may not be on the floor which gives us more time to build a relationship rather than chasing down a computer.”

Adam Carone, HFC

“It makes the customers shopping experience easier because I do not have to leave them multiple times to get information from a computer.”

Tyler Biggert, HFC

Enhanced Delivery System Improves Customer Satisfaction

Solution.

For American Signature to meet its goal of a 1-hour delivery window and ensure customers received the right order, they needed an easy way to automate its manual-based system. American Signature has more than 450 company and contract drivers delivering furniture nationwide on a daily basis so it was critical that the solution was easy-to-use and deploy. Based on these objectives, it was determined that an application that worked with smartphones and tablets was the ideal approach.

The first step in the process was to meet with delivery managers, particularly those who were former drivers to identify end-user requirements. Stores were also involved in the planning process. Because American Signature uses both company and contract drivers it was important for the application to work on both Android and Apple devices.

American Signature tapped into MAPSYS' extensive IBM experience to write an application in PHP that would talk to its IBM DB2 Database and would leverage its existing IBM Power System server.

The application includes the driver's complete delivery manifest, guiding them through the furniture loading process. It also enables them to follow their planned route. Steps were also taken to keep the customer informed on delivery status. When the driver is 30 minutes (or the time specified by the customer) from the customer's address, a text message or an email is sent to the customer with the projected arrival. The customer can also log-in to the store website to determine the number of stops the driver has to deliver before arriving and the approximate arrival time.

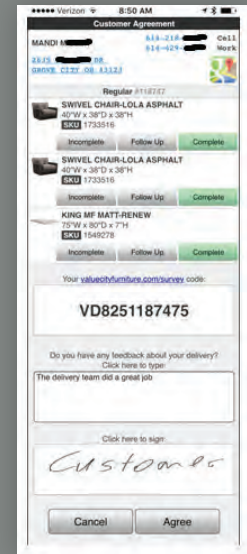
When the driver arrives at the customer's home, they can view an image of the order along with other relevant delivery details. The driver can then confirm the order with the customer and capture an electronic signature that they received their order.

The initial application prototype was tested in two stores. The application was then enhanced and American Signature moved into a pilot with seven stores.

Results.

The initial pilot was so successful that the in-field delivery application has now been rolled out in all stores.

Prior to rollout of the solution, the delivery window was three hours. Within just months, the window decreased to two hours. Driver efficiency has improved overall due to features such as route navigation, delivery route guidance and the ability to validate order accuracy by showing customers photos of their orders. These efficiency improvements have also resulted in lower delivery costs. Customer satisfaction surveys have also indicated increased satisfaction with the delivery experience.



“The new delivery application is really advanced. I can plan my routes more effectively and don't have to worry about keeping track of tons of paper work. Bottom line, it makes my job easier.”

American Signature

Delivery Driver

Ready to maximize your technology investment?

Let MAPSYS put its expertise to work for you.
Contact us at 614.224.5193 or visit mapsysinc.com to learn more.