

The Home Depot improves employee productivity with web-based store planner

The Home Depot has improved the productivity of store employees in carrying out corporate merchandising and promotional policies with a web-based Task Management system from Reflexis Systems Inc. that distributes store planograms to its 1,500 stores, the company says. "Using the Internet helps with everything, because it's a direct line into our stores," Shannon Roh, a director in Home Depot's store merchandising operations, tells *Internet Retailer*.

The Task Management system is geared to improve how central policies affect the workforces in each store. Rather than ordering tasks through a less flexible and less frequent paper document, Home Depot can adjust employee workloads to match changing demand. "We eliminate overload of things to do for employees, so they can concentrate on the most important tasks for serving customers," Roh says.

The system also saves time for field managers responsible for checking stores' compliance with policies. "They don't have to call on all the stores to see if they're in compliance, they only follow up with stores not in compliance as noted in the system," says Raju Sharma, director of marketing for Reflexis.

Roh adds that Home Depot set up its own employee training system, which entailed showing workers how to enter a web portlet, click on task messages and send back verifications of completed tasks. "It's very user friendly," she says. To support its training exercise, Home Depot distributed a training video through its task manager system to 1,500 stores.

Improved productivity in implementing store plans, says Paula Rosenblum, director of research at AMR Research Inc., enables Home Depot and other retailers to avoid price markdowns to move merchandise. "If stores do a better job of implementing plans, retailers don't have to hold as much safety stock and, therefore, get better gross margins," she says.

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