



Is Your Route Accounting System (RAS) an Asset Or a Liability?

How to Ensure Your **RAS** is Working For Your Direct Store Delivery Business... Not Against It

Accounting System (RAS) an Asset or a Liability? How to Ensure Your RAS is Working For Your Direct Store Delivery Business... Not Against It

If you're reading this report, chances are you've noticed some areas where your route accounting system (RAS) is making things harder than they need to be. Legacy (older or obsolete) systems can hold back an organization due to their inflexibility, slow processing and time-consuming maintenance.

Do any of the scenarios below look familiar? If so, your legacy RAS could be not only holding your direct store delivery (DSD) operations back, but costing the business unnecessary time and expense to maintain.

- Our processing times seem to be getting slower and slower.
- We spend days trying to extract data for reports we need to run our business.
- Does it have to be so hard to get applications to work together? It seems like we're spending a lot of time and money making integrations work.
- I think there's only one person here who understands the necessary workarounds of this RAS – and he's retiring next fall.
- Even connecting to simple peripherals like the printer can be problematic.
- The new staff that started last week are having a tough time getting the hang of this RAS – it's going to take a lot of extra time to get them up to speed.

No, we haven't been shadowing you. The fact is: the symptoms you're experiencing are quite common to DSD businesses running on dated technology. The good news is that migrating your legacy RAS to next-generation, industry-standard technology and architecture could eliminate these everyday challenges and also provide many advantages to your business. And making the switch is probably simpler than you think.

Read on to learn the top considerations for any DSD business evaluating a move to a modern route accounting system.

OK, we're struggling a bit, but the system isn't [completely] broken. Why migrate to a new technology?

It is great that your system may still work at a basic functional level, however modern technology can provide new features, better access to data and smoother integration with other systems. Gaining more insight from the inventory and sales data you're collecting, and spending less time maintaining systems gives you more opportunity to really improve your operations.

Maintaining older skill sets and dedicating staff to support a dated RAS, devices and applications can be expensive and time-consuming. Is it difficult for you to integrate your RAS with hardware and other applications? Limits of old platforms—including lack of flexibility and highly-restrictive customization – add to the headache of integration with other applications, and even simple connections to peripherals such as printers. Compatibility issues often call for creative workarounds to get the system to perform. What will you do when the only guy who knows the work-around to process your reports leaves the company?

Slower processing times can be a major drain on productivity. Migrating to a next generation platform is a sound way to improve operations because newer technologies, including operating systems, hardware and applications are often faster and provide easier access to useful data so you can make more informed decisions. Additionally, a modern platform fits within a broader trend toward Web-based technologies.

Downtime is also a perpetual worry when running a legacy system so essential to daily operations. When your system goes down, how much does it cost your company in lost productivity and lost sales? Can you afford to continue to lose that money month after month, year after year?

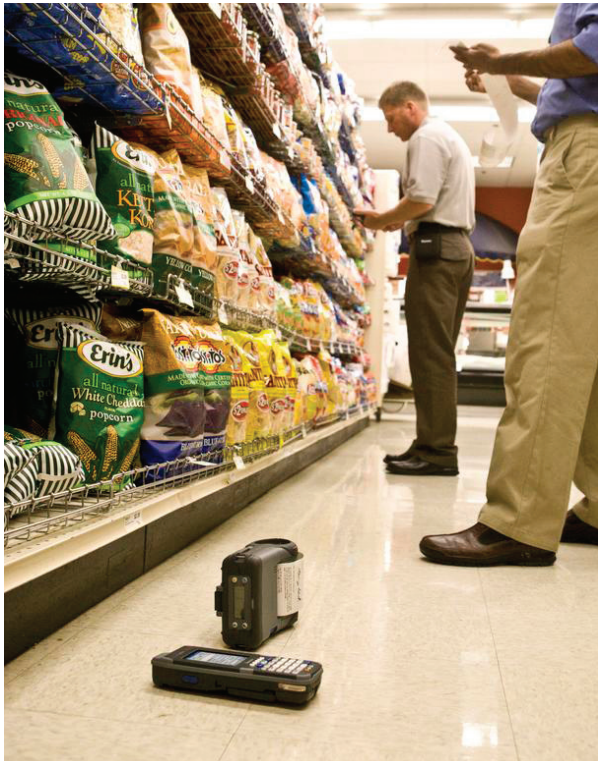


Accounting System (RAS) an Asset or a Liability? How to Ensure Your RAS is Working For Your Direct Store Delivery Business... Not Against It

Will the new RAS features really make our staff more productive?

Are you getting by with lackluster features in your legacy system because it's too costly and problematic to go back to the vendor to have customized functionality added? Migrating to a modern platform will give you continual access to the latest industry features. Once on a modern RAS platform, new features can be streamed into your system through simplified upgrades. You'll never need to worry about a burning technology platform forcing you to either change systems or be left years behind in features and technology.

Are you spending a lot of time processing orders or invoices or modifying reports by hand? A platform migration gives you the ability to shift from manual to automated processes, saving significant time, eliminating errors and improving your delivery times. In addition to faster processing, you'll have detailed visibility into worker activities to identify areas for improvement. Say worker productivity is an issue; you have real-time access to detailed information on routes, time spent on stops and sales activity in order to pinpoint the problem and improve performance.



Sometimes it takes an hour or more to just get basic reports out of the system. Will a modern system make it easier for us to see how our business is really performing?

A modern RAS gives real time visibility into the workings of your business for better metrics and reporting capabilities. You will have access to the drill-down data when you need it, in order to make informed decisions. So if there is an issue, you'll know about it – and resolve it – faster. The bonus to your bottom line: your staff can sell more effectively with more accurate and detailed information at their fingertips. For example, wireless technology ties your mobile representative into the back office and enables them to manage situations in real-time rather than reading reports when it is too late to respond.

The open architecture provided with a modern RAS platform allows easier access to data. Your reporting requirements change regularly, and an open solution will give you an easier way to modify metrics and create new reports.

Can we make things a little easier on new staff trying to learn the ropes?

Training on next-generation technology has proven to be faster and easier for many DSD providers. Since there is a tendency for higher turnover rates in the industry, you are training new staff more often, so user-friendliness in the technology is vital. Many people are more comfortable with the modern look and feel of graphical user interfaces, making the system easier to learn and use. The result for you is fewer errors and lower cost in training time and lost productivity. A modern technology platform and a look and feel that employees are familiar with can be a positive recruiting tool, too!

Accounting System (RAS) an Asset or a Liability? How to Ensure Your RAS is Working For Your Direct Store Delivery Business... Not Against It

How do we know the investment in a modern RAS will be worth it?

Migrating to a modern RAS platform is part of a long-range plan for your company to take advantage of leading-edge technology to provide the best service to customers, at the least cost to your company. New technologies are highly stable, cost-effective and flexible to support your business as it changes and grows over time. A shift from manual to automated processes provides quick payback, as does the ease of integration with other applications and partners by giving you better access to real-time information for better decision making.

As a business leader, you need to minimize the risks and liability that the use of dated systems and applications can present. Does your legacy system increase the risk of downtime? Does it take a longer time to get the application running again because of limited knowledge of the solution? Are hardware replacement parts more difficult to locate? With a modern platform you have easier access to knowledgeable resources and hardware replacement parts to get up and running sooner.

You also have the option of moving to an on-demand hosting model when you migrate. This option removes the maintenance headache completely by having your software vendor host your system for you as an on-demand, scalable and elastic service. It shifts the burden of technology administration to the technology experts. There is no hardware to purchase or maintain and patches and upgrades are done automatically. The migration is dramatically simplified, no capital expenditure is required and there is less risk for you.

Alright, how do I take the next step toward a modern RAS platform?

You don't need to avoid the issue like a long-dreaded trip to the dentist. Migrating from your legacy RAS to a modern technology platform can be a lot easier than you'd expect. After all, the core functionality of the system is the same route accounting footprint that manages your DSD right now. A migration to a modern RAS gives you the features to sell, track and deliver your products and services in the timeliest manner, with the added benefits provided by an open platform.

You will work with the vendor who knows both systems, and understands the legacy technology and modern platform. Your technology vendor is an expert and can create a path for you, including prebuilt scripts to automatically transfer your existing data. The business problem the route accounting system solves hasn't changed, so the information required from your two systems is the same data. You can usually have your new platform up and running in a couple of months. Moving to an on-demand environment simplifies the migration even more.

You can leave behind the limits of the old platform, including highly-restrictive customization and integration. A new platform allows unprecedented access to data and custom, on-demand report generation. Plus, the solution drastically reduces downtime risk and provides real-time visibility into your operations for more timely, better business decisions.

This year may be the best yet for your business – your modern route accounting system can help you get there.

