Mobile PetPad helps Pets at Home hit new customer service heights.

With pet welfare central to Pets at Home, the retailer wanted to provide an even better service to in-store-customers purchasing a pet.

Ensuring the buying experience was a smooth one for the customer and, of course, that the welfare of the pet was clearly explained to the new owner.

By transforming a traditional paper-based system that provided customers with the relevant information to care for a new pet, to an innovative, digital system with clear workflow – Pets at Home improved the customer and colleague experience simultaneously.

The new PetPad – a web-based version of the BT Clienteling tool on a mobile tablet device – has been embraced by store colleagues who see the tool as an opportunity to improve customer service in the store in more ways than one.

Pets at Home is committed to pet welfare and has processes in place to help ensure every customer has the information and environment needed to care for their new pet. Traditionally these in-store checks were paper-based – which made them time-consuming to complete and difficult to retrieve. As well, data duplication was a thorn in everyone's side – including the customer: whenever a fish was purchased, customers had to provide information already supplied during previous purchases. It was all very time consuming and required an overhaul.

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>
> **Dave Poole,**
> Head of Retail Operations, Pets at Home "

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❝ Our colleagues spend most of their time with customers and we wanted to enhance that and free up even more time for them.

David Poole,
Head of Retail Operations, Pets at Home ❞

With this in mind, Pets at Home introduced the PetPad, built on BT Expedite's web-based clienteling solution accessed via a wi-fi enabled tablet. The application guides store colleagues through processes, records customers' answers and stores the customer data and relevant information. In this way, data is entered once only – and a customer's data and pet ownership is easily viewed by the store colleagues at the next visit.

The project began in April 2013, when Pets at Home outlined the aims and benefits of a paperless, hand-held system, working with BT Expedite to build a business case. The main aims of the project were:

1. Move from paper-based to digital forms

2. Free colleagues from the back office to spend more time with customers

3. Improve the customer experience by providing instant access to stored data.

Head of retail operations, Dave Poole says: "The key to the project's success was having a core group of constructively critical colleagues and working with a technology partner with experience of mobile retail in general and our business in particular."

Through several phases of the PetPad project, Store colleagues came up with creative additional in-store applications for their new mobile tool that, when added together, make a terrific impact. So as well as improving operational systems, the PetPad means colleagues have access to customer data at their fingertips, can engage with customers anywhere in store – and use the device to scan items to help speed transactions.

Walkies! PetPad lets colleagues off the leash.

Pets at Home prides itself on the knowledge of its store colleagues, and the advice they share with customers. By providing customer data to the store colleagues, at their fingertips on a mobile device, away from the till point – Pets at Home has liberated its frontline team to assist a customer where and when the customer needs help, and not just at a till point.

PetPad is an interactive, integrated iPad mini with digital forms, fun creative in the spirit of the brand, guided processes and prompts – all driven by BT Expedite's Clienteling solution.

PetPad provides pet specific flows to ensure that all necessary care information is given and records the customer's acknowledgment of that information through an electronic signature. The on-board camera is used to scan product barcodes and VIP (Very Important Pet) customers' loyalty cards. In this way, a customer's basket can be built on PetPad, there and then with the store colleague.

Why is this important? The colleague experience is improved through a professional tool and customer experience is a smooth one:

- A customer's personal data is stored securely and accurately in a central database. Repeat customers don't have to provide personal information again and changes made in one touch point are updated on other systems automatically

- PetPad also makes the checkout process more efficient. Purchase data is recorded once on the mobile device and available to the fixed tills with no need for re-entry. This streamlines the process, improves stock control and enhances the customer experience

- As it's a web app, no data is stored on the device, although the PetPad can also be offline for up to 15 minutes. This means colleagues can move around the store, confident that customers will not have to repeat information they have given.

pets at home
have 401 stores in the UK

Window to a world of excellent service.

PetPad has grown in its capacity through several phases of consultation and deployment. It now provides a window to customer data, connecting several disparate sources, such that the store colleague can have a more connected, single view of the customer. However, PetPad does not provide access to all data, it is role-based and provides key information to the store colleagues or administrators (in the case of Support Adoption) such that they can better perform their roles, and further enhance the customer experience.

- Support Adoption – Improving the accuracy of customer gift aid data will lead to an estimated 25% increase in the amount of gift aid the Support Adoption for Pets charity can claim each year

- Pet consultations – in development, customers can see the effect of improved diet displayed on the PetPad over a series of nutritional consultations

- Store purchases – PetPad is a de facto queue – busting device. All the accessories required when buying a pet can be added to a virtual basket at the same time as the pet meaning the same colleague who advised on the pet sale can ensure the correct home, bedding etc

- Mobile printing – customers can choose to have pet related documentation emailed or printed in store – no handwritten notes; instead high quality, accurate pet care advice specific to the pet every time

- Call backs – colleagues are prompted to call customers who have recently bought or adopted pets to ensure all is well and check if they require any advice

- VIP sign up – no need for completion of printed forms and offline data capture – customers are guided through the sign up process by colleagues – data is accurate and immediate.

From evolution to revolution.

"We made a conscious decision to use the iPad mini," says Dave.

"By going for the most up to date, market-leading device, it underlined how serious this was to the business – and the buy-in was done for us."

So how big a change is this? "I would class the PetPad as a fundamental change," says Dave, "on a par with the introduction of barcodes or chip and PIN."

Colleagues can now recognise VIP (Very Important Pet) customers, collect (and retrieve) questions and answers to assess suitability and scan add-on items.

In turn, customers get a much more satisfying experience; baskets can be built on the shop floor and checkout becomes a much smoother, more efficient process. Since going live:

- colleagues are spending much more time on the shopfloor with customers because more processes are automated

- having customer details on hand instantly means colleagues can offer advice and upsell more easily

- integration with the point of sale system has reduced waiting times at tills while the ability to scan items for quick checkout has increased average basket size

- central management of forms and processes has saved time at stores and there is a full audit trail of all customer interaction related to buying pets.

Overall, the PetPad has transformed in-store operations.

"There are so many opportunities for next phases, and we have a wishlist that is very long, " explains Dave. "For instance, allowing our store colleagues to see what a customer purchases, whether instore or online, would really help with recommendations and advice to customers in the store. Our approach is phasing – we define key requirements for the next phase and then deliver on that successfully before moving on."

> We really see this as truly revolutionary as far as our operation is concerned.
>
> **David Poole,**
> Head of Retail Operations, Pets at Home

Find out more at:

0870 850 6880

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