

The Perfect Storm:

Advances in technology, combined with pressure to cut costs are influencing industry-leading retailers to switch to Linux

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Novell Linux – A Competitive Advantage for Retail

Retail Linux Tipping Point

Retailing is tough business. Profit margins are universally thin, and mega retailers like Wal-Mart and Target reduce these already tiny margins. To compete, many retailers are turning to Linux technology to cut costs and grow customer loyalty. Industry-leading retailers are deploying Linux throughout their organizations - from corporate analytic applications down to the Point of Service (POS) terminal. For example:

- Circuit City is replacing Windows-based POS terminals
- Hannaford Brothers is consolidating in-store servers and POS terminals
- Pep Boys automotive is deploying Linux-powered POS terminals and in-store servers at 600 locations, as well as back-office Linux servers
- Burlington Coat Factory processes customer gift cards on Linux servers, through 3,500 Linux POS terminals
- Boscov's Department Stores consolidated 70 NT servers and specialty applications with Linux on their mainframe

From brick-and-mortars to pure-play web outlets, retailers are turning to Linux to improve operations, extend customer services, and save money.

"Linux gives us a level of reliability that retailers never could have afforded before," said Michael Prince, CIO at Burlington Coat Factory. "Novell's SUSE Linux was the only solution that allowed us to move forward with our chosen architecture."

The retail industry has reached a tipping point. Several factors have emerged that together are driving mass adoption of Novell's Linux solutions for POS, in-store servers and headquarter servers for retailers around the globe:

- Old POS terminals running DOS or Windows need replacement, opening the opportunity to rethink long-term platform strategy.
- Linux and other standards (JavaPOS, UPOS, ARTS, etc.) have created an extremely stable and open platform for retail applications.
- These same standards created a large ecosystem of retail-specific application vendors, reducing the need for in-house software development.
- IT executives tested Linux and now plan to implement it throughout their organization, so deploying Linux on in-store servers and on POS terminals fits their strategic direction.
- Open standards drive down the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) for retail technology, with Novell's Linux solutions for Retail leading the way.

Let us look at these factors in more detail.

POS terminal replacement

Almost 70% of POS terminals in production are over five years old, and as many as 40% still use DOS.¹ These outdated devices prevent retailers from delivering better customer service applications to the place where it matters most - the POS terminal, the primary point of contact with the customer.

These twin factors - aging technology and the drive for better customer service - explains why POS equipment replacement is the second highest spending priority for retail IT executives.²

Burlington Coat Factory understands the issue well. The company moved to an Intel infrastructure for nearly 2,000 Linux servers and 3,500 POS devices in its 350 stores. "The systems in our retail stores are so stable they can run for six months or more without being rebooted, and we have yet to see a virus attack. Stability is crucial for these systems in order for our associates to provide top-notch customer service," said Prince.



"Novell came in like a knight on a white horse. They were extremely responsive and addressed our 10 biggest issues right off the bat. Novell Linux was the only solution that allowed us to move forward with our chosen architecture."

- Michael Prince, CIO
Burlington Coat Factory
Warehouse Corporation

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1 "Retail Sector Executive Outlook", Gartner, 2004

2 "3Q04 IT Decision Monitor: Vertical Markets' IT Solution Investment Areas and Priorities", IDC, 2004

What are Novell's Linux Solutions for Retail?

Novell offers the most comprehensive Linux distribution for each area of the retail IT infrastructure - from the Point of Service machines to the headquarter servers. The two Linux solutions are: Novell Linux Point of Service and SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 9.

For Point of Service:

Novell Linux Point of Service (NLPOS) – NLPOS is the only Linux distribution designed specifically for retail point of service. It allows centralized management and provisioning, as well as a choice of multiple POS client images to fit your IT environment and application requirements.

For In-Store Servers:

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 9 (SLES9) – SLES9 is a secure, reliable open-source platform for secure in-store computing. SLES9 supports a broad range of hardware platforms and leading retail applications, and is the foundation of NLPOS.

For Headquarter Servers:

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 9 – SLES9 is also a mainframe-grade Linux server. Built for reliability and flexibility, SLES9 is unique in its ability to run on every popular platform of mainframes down to POS terminals. This provides retailers the opportunity to rapidly integrate application layers (POS, in-store servers, business analytics, etc.) while simultaneously simplifying operations.

POS terminal replacement is not a step taken lightly. It is expensive, the return on investment can take time, and the disruption to business can be painful. IT executives are adopting Linux for POS in part because they know it will be a solid, viable operating system now and in the distant future, forestalling forced migrations to new platforms. Linux gives retailers the ability to change POS hardware without replacing their infrastructure software.

IT executives also want a standard operating system "in store" to facilitate upstream data collection as well as downstream application and customer data delivery. Linux is the right choice because of its openness and extensive support of standards for data communications, security, application presentation, and more.

Such standardization brings new efficiencies and improved profitability. Take for example billion-dollar grocer Hannaford Bros. In the Feb 2005 issue of Integrated Solutions for Retailers magazine, Hannaford Bros. CIO, Bill Homa, said: "We thought the new system would be so efficient we could get by with fewer lanes. And that's proving to be the case."

Having deployed Linux on their 1,700+ registers, on in-store servers, on back-office systems, Hannaford's is seeing measurable ROI - cash register rings per minute are up 3-5%, and customer check-out time down 20%. "Had we tried to implement this computer assisted order (CAO) application prior to upgrading our POS system, writing the interfaces to the old proprietary system would have been a difficult, expensive, and laborious process. We simply wouldn't have been able to maximize the CAO investment," Homa said.

New standards for retailers

Three standards have emerged that have redefined how retailers can better acquire and deploy applications and new customer services:

- **Linux:** Becoming the defacto operating system on all three tiers - POS, in-store servers, and back-office systems.

- **ARTS:** A set of data exchange standards to allow retail software from different vendors communicate and share data.
- **JavaPOS:** A retail industry specific standard interface between POS application software and POS hardware devices.
- **UPOS:** Universal Point-of-Sale Standard, another ARTS standard, is the combination of two different standards, OPOS for Microsoft technology, and JPOS for Java technologies.

JavaPOS³ eliminates the fractured alliances between peripheral manufacturers and POS software vendors. By creating a uniform interface for software vendors to use, and for device makers to write drivers for, JavaPOS allows compliant peripherals and software to integrate transparently. This makes more solutions available to retailers, and drives down the cost for POS hardware and software.

Another prominent standard is the Association for Retail Technology Standards, or ARTS.⁴ This retail industry group defined a set of XML-based data interchange documents for retail applications covering item & price maintenance, merchandise flow management, inventory management, POSLog, tender control administration, reporting, ordering, workforce management, customer relationship management and more.

Retail software that is ARTS compliant can share data with other compliant applications. This allows retailers to choose best of breed vendors for their POS, in-store server, and back-office processing.

Where does Linux fit into this? Both JavaPOS and ARTS are ready made and fully supported on Novell's Linux solutions for Retail. Linux hosts the most mature set of Java Run Time Environments (JREs). Linux also supplies native support for XML documents, data communication, and web services. Novell Linux is a primary test bed for Java and XML, and thus ready made for supporting these critical retailing standards.

3 For more information, visit <http://www.javapos.com>

4 For more information, visit <http://www.nrf-arts.org>

Novell retail application partner Triversity said it best. "Novell Linux Point of Service provides customers increased flexibility and a low total cost of ownership and is an exceptional platform for Triversity's Transactionware Enterprise POS solution. Novell Linux Point of Service provides the framework customers need to deploy and support Linux. These factors, and the proven cost advantages of Linux, make it very compelling."

More importantly, using open standards like Linux, JavaPOS and ARTS increases flexibility. Business needs change. Using a standard operating system, a transparent POS peripheral interface, and open data exchange formats allows retailers to quickly adapt to changing market needs without painful and expensive replacement of systems or POS terminals. This is the essence of competitive advantage - being able to adapt at will faster than your competitors.

A large retailer Linux ecosystem

Standards breed competition and solutions. In the 1980's many CTO's chose UNIX servers and, despite variations between different flavors of UNIX, the relative standardization led to a huge new set of solutions from powerful database technologies to competing ERP and CRM application suites.

Linux is driving a large set of solutions for retail. Practically every retail application - regardless of which tier system it resides - now runs on Linux. And the set of solutions is growing. This means more choice for retailers and less in-house software development overhead. Michael Jones, CIO at Circuit City, told Retail Technology Quarterly [Jan. 2005]: "Spending so much on software development and customization begs the question: Are you a software development house, or are you a retailer?"

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 9

Retailers Choice for In-store and Back-office Servers

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 9 provides retailers with a uniform operating system for all server platforms. This universal operating system eliminates cross-platform operational issues, and delivers unparalleled benefits:

- Scalability across 32 and 64-bit platforms, from x86 white boxes to mainframes
- Mainframe-grade stability and uptime
- Certified security (Common Criteria and DiCOE)
- Built-in high availability and fail-over capabilities
- TCO 36% less than Windows and 87% lower than Solaris

A Partial List of Retail Partner Solutions that Run on Novell Linux

Hardware	
IBM	SurePOS POS terminals and servers
HP	rs5000 POS terminals and servers
Unisys	Servers and POS peripherals
Dell	Servers and POS peripherals
Software	
IBM	IRES
360 Commerce	POS, Back Office, Workforce Management, Inventory Management, Returns Management
ACR	POS (operator security, loss prevention control, transaction control options, layaway, charge, special ordering)
ADS	POS
Cornell-Mayo	POS (layaway and layaway search, electronic journaling, background checking, credit authorization, international currency support)
JDA	POS (sales, returns, exchanges, layaways, special orders)
PCMS	Java Bean retail components.
Retail Business Solution	POS
Retalix	Head-office and back-office applications.
Retek	POS, cash management, inventory management, customer management, labor management.
SIVA	POS, time and attendance, labor scheduling, inventory.
Sweda	POS
Triversity	POS
Volanté	POS - hospitality

"I am always looking for ways to cut my overall cost of computing. Novell Linux provides us a baseline opportunity for systems consolidation. Linux provides us an inexpensive and robust environment for that transition."

- Harry Roberts
CIO, Boscov's Department Stores

Novell Linux for Retail, JavaPOS, UPOS and ARTS have led to a tipping point with retail software vendors. Customer demands have made Linux the preferred operating system going forward, and retail application vendors are meeting customer demands. Retail application vendors are happy about this turn of events as it simplifies their development and support activities and brings them new customers.

Since Novell's Linux solutions run identically on every platform from POS terminal to mainframes, software vendors have a unified environment for developing incredibly rich sets of retail applications. At the POS level, a cornucopia of solutions have appeared from established retailing vendors like 360 Commerce, ACR, ADS and Triversity. The synergies of Linux, Java and JavaPOS eliminated platform variability, freeing ISV developers to add more features and functionality to their offerings.

In the back-office, retail specific and general business solutions are readily available on Novell Linux for Retail. Several Novell partners- notably 360 Commerce and Retek- provide integrated suites that tie POS data functions into back-office systems. Running on Novell SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 9, retailers can install and run solutions for:

- Supply chain management
- Demand forecasting and promotions
- Inventory management
- Labor management and scheduling
- Customer relationship and loyalty management
- Layaways, returns, gift registries
- Invoice matching
- Merchandising
- Pricing
- Auditing
- Warehouse management

"As recently as the 1990s, it made more sense to roll out your own solutions simply because the market didn't have the appropriate applications to offer retailers," said Circuit City's Jones. "But vendors have come a long way since then, and it's far more feasible to address retail needs with off-the-shelf solutions."

Linux favored in the back-office

CIO's and CTO's (CxO's) are deploying Linux throughout their back-office operations. It is their preferred platform, and the center of their technology strategy. In fact, 53% of all IT organization expect open source - particularly Linux - to be their dominate operating system by 2007.⁵

Boscov's Department Stores is a case in point. The store is centralizing its 70 servers onto a Linux partition on its z900 mainframe. One Linux instance is using Samba for the main headquarters location and stores. Another instance for advertising materials, timecards, and other administrative tasks. And another instance is serving UDB for our invoice matching application, and a DB2 gateway.

CxOs at retailing companies see synergies in extending the "Linux Everywhere" strategy to stores and their web operations. "The beautiful thing about Linux for us is that it applies everywhere in our environment," said Overstock.com's VP of Technology, Shawn Schwegman. "We are 100% Linux in our production environment. There is not a single system in our production environment that is not Linux. At the end of the day, we use Linux for everything."

Some of the key benefits retailers expect from Linux include:

- **Streamlined operations:** With Linux already in operation in the back-office, it is a relatively minor extension to use Linux for in-store servers, and for POS terminals. Staffs are already trained for Linux, and deploying Linux in the store reduces operational variations.
- **Extended value of tools:** Tools acquired to provision, patch, monitor and manage back-office Linux servers can do the same throughout a store network.
- **Skill set consolidation:** IT skills are currently fractured across multiple platforms. Migrating in-store servers and POS terminals to Linux consolidates skills and makes IT skills portable from store systems, to headquarters mainframes, and back again.

Skill set consolidation and portability may be the biggest benefit for retailers. "Skill portability is becoming much more important," said Boscov's Department Stores CIO, Harry Roberts. "We used to have two separate operational units - one for servers and another for mainframes. SUSE allowed us to smash the groups together and begin to cross-pollinate their expertise."

Lowest TCO

The final factor in the Linux/retail tipping point is costs. Retailers are always conscious of the cost of technology as well as the value. That is why Linux has such a broad and rapid deployment rate with retailers.

The lower Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) stems from many different sources. Retailers are reaping cost savings and cost containment via lower:

- **Cost of acquisition:** The Linux software itself is typically less expensive to acquire than other operating systems. But more importantly, Linux and retail standards are promoting competition and driving down the acquisition costs of other software, servers, and peripherals as well. This is especially noticeable with POS devices.
- **Cost of support:** The skill set consolidation that CxO's experience by deploying Linux in the back-office leads to cost savings. Staff sizes are smaller and fewer specialists are needed as the skill set becomes portable.
- **Cost of enhancement:** Linux POS devices, in-store servers, and back-office systems run on industry standard hardware, all of which are readily expandable. The cost of hardware additions is reduced since plug-and-play components from competing vendors cost less, and upgrade rarely require complete box swaps".

TCO is painfully apparent at the POS terminal layer. Circuit City had used Windows XP Embedded in some of their stores, but as CIO Jones noted in Retail Technology Quarterly: "Off-the-shelf POS solutions have matured a lot since 1999. Circuit City no longer needed a heavily customized solution at the POS."

Circuit City is installing a 360 Commerce solution on IBM IRES, which is powered by Novell Linux Point of Service. He is anticipating a TCO reduction of 30%.

Gaining competitive advantage

Circuit City's CIO said it best: "Retail is moving toward extremes. You've either got the Every Day Low Price play personified by Wal-Mart and Costco, or you've got the premium service play you see at Starbucks and Nordstrom. Those are the retailers that are going to survive."

Any technology investment must compliment your strategic plan and improve your operational competency. Novell Linux for Retail addresses both the strategic imperatives of the retail industry as well as improving your operational effectiveness.

Take Hannaford Bros. for example. They are seeing competitive benefits on many fronts, including the operational efficiencies throughout each store. "We are tapping into some remarkable information. That will help us more accurately forecast orders and allow us to make decisions - almost in real time - on what to order by product and store," Homa said.

Strategic competitive advantages

When mapping your IT strategy for retail, there are four basic issues all retailers face. Novell's Linux solutions for retail helps you address all of them: Advanced Points of Service, future-proofing investments, containing costs, and extending back-office strategy.

Advanced Point of Service: Retailers must extend customer services applications to all Points of Service. This will be the primary weapon retailers have against web stores and mega retailers like Wal-Mart.

More and more, retailers are turning to technology to enable customer service, which experts say will soon be the key differentiating factor for retailers.

To drive customer service throughout an organization without a high degree of risk, retailers need to use open systems that can

"Strategically, we have three goals in selecting IT components: stability, performance, and to a lesser degree, expense. Novell made all three happen."

—Sam Peterson
Director of Network
Engineering, Overstock.com

"SUSE LINUX has spent a lot of time working on Open Systems and on IBMs. All of that experience makes me more successful. I can rely on SUSE LINUX installations and distributions. It is so much easier because of their expertise."

— Rob Schwartz,
Systems Programmer,
Boscov's Department Stores

"The systems in our retail stores are so stable they can run for six months or more without being rebooted, and we have yet to see a virus attack. Stability is crucial for these systems because if they go down, hundreds of people can't do their work."

- Michael Prince, CIO
Burlington Coat Factory
Warehouse Corporation

adapt to changing customer service demands and application challenges. This means open systems using industry standards. This means using Novell's Linux solutions for retail.

Novell SUSE Linux customer, Burlington Coat Factory, discovered this imperative when they encountered demand for gift registries. "Customers were constantly asking us if we had one," said Burlington's CIO. "We had also been keeping our eyes open for some good point of sale software, prior to looking for a registry solution, and 360 Commerce is in both marketplaces." The combination of a Linux-based POS system, combined with the right service application, generated more revenue for Burlington.

Future proof investments: The switching cost of POS terminals and in-store servers is huge, so retailers need a migration strategy that is flexible and cost-effective. Take Burlington Coat Factory as an example. Burlington Coat Factory, with more than 3,500 POS terminals in 300 stores, can not afford to "rip and replace" their entire enterprise technology whenever business needs change. They needed to adopt technology that would flexibly adapt to unknown future needs.

"You don't upgrade your point-of-sale systems because you want to," said Prince, having held the CIO job at Burlington for 25 years. "We milked an 18-to-20-year-old POS system to death." But the openness of Linux and JavaPOS may buy Burlington another 20-years before updating their POS systems.

Contain costs: Spending on technology is a requirement, but overspending is not. Containing costs is a universal goal for retailers trying to improve painfully thin profit margins. This requires spending only what is necessary to meet today's requirements and not replacing technology for tomorrow's requirements.

"I am always looking for ways to cut my overall cost of computing," said Harry Roberts, CIO of Boscov's Department Stores. "Novell Linux provides us a baseline opportunity for systems consolidation. Linux provides us an inexpensive and robust environment for that transition."

Novell's Linux solutions for retail requires amazingly little in terms of hardware resources. It is Linux after all, an operating system known for being lean without sacrificing capabilities.

More importantly, the open and vendor neutral design of Linux keeps both current and future costs in check. By creating a large retail vendor ecosystem for Linux, prices for in-store hardware, POS peripherals, and applications are driven down. And since systems can be readily upgraded - as opposed to being replaced - growing your in-store environment is less costly as your applications expand.

"Five years ago, Linux was a test environment. Now, it is truly production-ready. [Now] it's a TCO evaluation," said Circuit City's Jones in Retail Technology Quarterly. Jones estimates that support and post-deployment costs would drop at least 30% using Linux on POS terminals. "Our TCO has been significantly reduced, and we owe the organization and the shareholders that."

Supportability: Retailers cannot afford solutions that lack support. Downtime is critical when selling merchandise or supporting customers. If your systems are down, so are your profits.

Linux stability is legendary, and that is a primary factor behind many CIO's decisions to put Linux at the center of their IT strategy. Burlington Coat Factory understands the issue well. The company moved to an Intel infrastructure for nearly 2,000 Linux servers and 3,500 Wincor-Nixdorf Point-of-Sale devices in its 350 stores.

This mainframe-grade stability translates into real-world cost savings. Overstock.com's Schwegman broke potential downtime into hourly revenue losses. "We are 'guesstimating' that downtime for a single hour in the 2005 Christmas season would cost us upward of \$2.5 million. So downtime at Overstock.com is unacceptable."

Novell is a trusted partner: Support during implementation is equally critical as a lack of support means rollout delays and lost

Novell Linux Point of Service

Novell Linux Point of Service was created specifically to accelerate this sea change in retail technology. Based on Novell's SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 9, Novell Linux Point of Service consists of three Linux platforms, and retail industry specific services:

Novell Linux Admin Server: Admin Server is a central point for defining, administering, and provisioning in-store servers and POS terminals.

Novell Linux Branch Server: This general purpose in-store server also manages POS terminal provisioning, and can operate offline from the Admin Server.

Novell Linux Client: Based on Novell Linux Desktop, this POS platform supports JavaPOS and multiple POS terminal personalities that can be changed (from the Admin Server) based on customer service needs.

Novell Linux Point of Service provides five POS Client images, or personalities. Each can be copied and customized depending on your needs. The provided images include:

Minimal Operating System: Designed for bare-bones, transactional POS chores, this image contains only the runtime environment for native code applications (e.g., C, C++) and the ncurses library to support user interfaces. This image is extremely lightweight, with a small OS footprint.

Java-capable Operating System: This image adds the Java2 Runtime Environment (JRE) support for running Java programs, an X-Windows GUI for application presentation, and support for the popular JavaPOS technology that provides a vendor-neutral interface for POS terminal devices such as card readers, scanners, cash drawers, PIN pads, and more.

Java and Browser capable System: This image adds the Mozilla web browser, necessary for web enabled applications, and is suited for retailers serving web-based applications from central locations.

Desktop Operating System: Store managers and other personnel often need a desktop computer to perform administrative work. This image adds either the KDE or Gnome desktop interface. These intuitive desktops support a wide array of office automation tools, notably the popular Microsoft Office compatible Open Office suite.

Combo client/server: This image works as both a store server and a POS client. The combo image is used for small store environments where a dedicated server is an unnecessary expense, and using a high-end POS client as both a server and POS terminal works well.

competitive positioning. Novell has been a global IT technology provider for over 20 year. With sales and support offices around the globe, 24x7x365 technical call centers, consulting and technical training services, and a rich history supporting Global 2000 enterprises, Novell delivers the level of support on which retailers can depend.

Operational competitive advantages at the POS

Operations are the heartbeat of retail. Any technology decision must weigh the effects it will have on how store operations are improved. Novell Linux Point of Service was

designed to reduce operational work and increase operational effectiveness.

Centralized management: Too often, store staff are called upon to manage technology. This reduces in-store productivity, raises training expenses, and often results in excessive store system down time.

Novell consulted with retailers around the world, and designed a system that allows POS systems to be centrally defined and monitored, relieving in-store employees from unproductive duties. More importantly, since Novell Linux Point of Service is built on SUSE Linux and industry standards, powerful

external remote management and monitoring tools are available today. Existing investments in back-office server or desktop management utilities can be extended to managing in-store servers and POS terminals running Linux.

Uniform operating environment:

Incompatibility between systems has long been a problem in retail. Ideally, POS terminals, in-store systems, warehouse systems, and back-office servers would all work identically.

All of the components in Novell Linux Point of Service - Admin Sever, Branch Server and Client -are built on the Novell SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 9 core. This eliminates inter-system variations and incompatibilities, reducing outages, support problems, and costs.

Intuitive applications: Retailers benefit when in-store employees can service customer needs. But training expenses can be huge, and increase as customer service needs grow. Providing intuitive, or even step-by-step applications allows almost any authorized employee to help customers at their point of service.

Novell Point of Service puts a desk-top grade interface at every POS terminal. Commercial or in-house applications can deliver customer-focused services with little or no employee training, or such applications can run on self-service kiosks.

Right applications: Not all applications should be made available to every employee. Certain applications are best reserved to customer specialists, store managers, etc.

Novell Linux Point of Service lets headquarters staff determine which applications are available on POS terminals. Isolating applications to specific POS terminals keeps untrained staffs away from potentially crippling capabilities. This level of security can be greatly enhanced by integrating sensitive applications with Novell Nsure Identity Manager. Nsure provides employee-level access based on roles and business rules within your organization.

The end game

Competition is the watchword in retail. With profit margin thinned by web and mega retailers, you have to leverage technology to its fullest to survive and thrive.

Novell Linux Point of Service and SUSE LINUX Enterprise Server 9 play a pivotal strategic and operational role for retailers. These two powerful OS solutions for retail centralize in-store technology management while expanding the horizons of point-of-service applications. Novell Linux for Retail gives retailers the agility and solutions ecosystem necessary to best the competition.

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"Microsoft's POS Move May Make It a Viable Retail Option", eWeek, Oct 5, 2004

"Circuit City Chooses Linux for Cash Registers in 600 Stores", ComputerWorld, Aug 16, 2004

Various Novell Retail Case-Studies

Linux Point of Service and SUSE LINUX Enterprise Server 9

If you would like to learn more about how Novell Linux solutions for retail can help you, please visit www.novell.com/retail or call 1-800-596-1800.