



Case Study

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Faronics Deep Freeze For Mac and Guitar Center



About Guitar Center

The rise of e-commerce has placed greater pressure on retail outlets to provide customers with a better in-store experience.

When customers have the option to shop from their comfort of their home, retailers need to put more effort into driving consumers to their brick-and-mortar stores. The trick is offering an in-store experience that cannot be achieved by simply clicking through a digital storefront, such as sampling apps and testing DJ controllers.

Perhaps no business understands this concept better than Guitar Center. As the premier provider of musical

instruments and audio equipment in the United States, Guitar Center finds itself in a unique position given the current retail climate. In-store demonstrations are a critical part of the company's sales process, as both recreational and professional musicians need to try out and thoroughly vet a product in person before making a purchase.

"It's a computer on a sales floor in a store. Anybody could come in and make edits or changes, and those computers would be down for long periods of time."

-Vince Rowland

Merchandising Manager for Guitar Center

The Challenge

Despite Guitar Center's commitment to the in-store experience, the company struggled to maintain consistency across its more than 250 stores in the United States. About five or six years ago, company leaders realised that employees and customers alike were encountering vastly different experiences with in-store computers - sometimes machines operated as expected, and sometimes they didn't. This fostered a very frustrating environment for both employees and consumers.

Further complicating issues was the fact that the workers who oversaw these computers and were ultimately responsible for installing updates and general upkeep had drastically different levels of technical expertise.

As Guitar Center Merchandising Manager Vince Rowland noted, some would be

well-versed in operating computers, while others were aspiring musicians with little knowledge in that area. This contributed to the drastically different experiences that customers were met with when shopping at different Guitar Center stores.

These challenges extended to showroom hardware as well. If a salesperson wanted to demonstrate a particular piece of software, such as a recording application or DJ program, there was no guarantee that it would run as expected. This could potentially lead to lost sales opportunities, as prospective buyers were unable to take apps for a test run, as well as give the impression that the software was buggy.



Solution

To stay competitive in today's retail environment, Guitar Center officials knew they needed to achieve a level of stability and consistency across all of their stores. One method they used was to introduce some conformity with the type of hardware present at brick-and-mortar locations. By making a concerted shift toward Mac-based platforms, the company took a step toward stability, but more work needed to be done to ensure that hardware operated the same way at every single store. The answer was Faronics Deep Freeze.

Because they were now primarily running off of Mac platforms, officials looked to Apple and its consumer-focused stores to see how they could keep that hardware running reliably. This led them to Faronics and its Deep Freeze product. With Deep Freeze, Guitar Center's centralized IT team has been able to create a unified set of system configurations that can be implemented across all store computers. In addition, when needing to install a critical system update for every machine, IT staff can use Deep Freeze's built-in command line scripts to automate that process.

"Guitar Center's in-store experience has dramatically improved since implementing Deep Freeze. Sales people can demo products whenever needed, and trust the computers will be refreshed in a moment."

-Vince Rowland
Merchandising Manager for Guitar Center

"Being able to do [system updates] via command line is huge," Rowland stated. "Without remote management, I wouldn't have the ability to do any of the things we're doing."

This way, the company can ensure that regardless of what store a person visits, he or she will enjoy the same great customer experience.

Results

Deep Freeze facilitates this process by allowing such changes to be made, but then resetting the machine to its ideal settings once the computer is restarted.

Since acquiring approximately 850 Deep Freeze licenses for Mac platforms, Guitar Center IT staff and sales teams have seen many of their everyday headaches disappear. With Deep Freeze, IT stakeholders can provide store employees with the access needed to make application changes without compromising the integrity of the system.

For instance, if a customer wanted to test out a DJ controller or audio software, that may require a new driver or application to be installed. Even a minor change in this regard could drastically affect the overall performance of a computer.

This eliminates any concerns that IT members might have about making changes that ultimately be detrimental to in-store computers. Meanwhile, salespeople can demo products whenever needed, and trust that the computer will be refreshed in a moment's notice.

"I don't have to worry about breaking things," Rowland noted. "We're looking at a system that has up to 200 different applications, many different hosts and different plugins, and we're expecting all of them to play nice on a single operating system."





According to Rowland, Guitar Center's in-store experience has dramatically improved since implementing Deep Freeze. In addition to achieving stability across all stores, the company has also been able to provide new services to their customers.

For example, Guitar Center offers free recording music tutorials on a regular basis. Customers can take one lesson at one store and then pick up where they left off at another location.

This high level of customer engagement is critical in today's retail industry, especially when the products being sold are musical instruments and audio equipment.

Guitar Center's experience with Deep Freeze has been so successful, it has recently decided to bring its total number of licenses up to 1,000, ensuring that they will continue to enjoy reliable operations across all stores.

"I told my boss, if you take Deep Freeze away, then you can find someone else to do this job."

-Vince Rowland
Merchandising Manager for Guitar Center



FARONICS
DEEPFREEZE



Faronics' solutions help organizations increase the productivity of existing IT investments and lower IT operating costs. Incorporated in 1996, Faronics has offices in the USA, Canada, and the UK, as well as a global network of channel partners. Our solutions are deployed in over 150 countries worldwide, and are helping more than 30,000 customers.

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