

# Hardware & Lumber | Powered by VAI



## The Company

The best place in Jamaica to go for home renovation supplies is Hardware & Lumber (H&L). With two prominent brands—Rapid True Value, where the company is a licensee of True Value Network, and H&L Agro, which specializes in agricultural supplies—the company has 15 stores throughout the nation. H&L operates both in retail and wholesale markets. They provide wholesale services to other hardware stores located across the island of Jamaica. They are a major importer of paint supplies and lumber to the island. Most of the island's large hardware retailers and resellers are served by the company.

### Industry

Retailer, Non-Durable Goods, Construction, Agricultural, Home Improvement

### Requirements

Retail Point-of-Sale, Cloud Computing, Mobile Order Entry, Analytics

## The Solution

H&L runs its entire operations on VAI S2K ERP. This includes core accounting functions, retail point-of-sale for their 15 stores, analytics, and inventory management. There is also a wholesale sales team that uses VAI S2K mobile on their tablets. Said Gordon Webster, General Manager, eChannels & Technology at H&L, "Procurement, receivables, inventory management - everything runs on S2K. On top of everything that we have, we run VAI's Analytics which pulls information from all the various modules to help us better understand our business."

When faced with the need to upgrade at the back end, the company decided it made more sense to shut down their on-premises data center and move to the VAI Cloud, with 24-7 availability, removing the management, backups, and responsibility of the server from the company's IT staff and helping the company achieve its expansion goals.

H&L has 15 stores across the company, with six referred to as big box. A typical store will have between 5,000 and 10,000 SKUs. "Our average store will have four tellers and four point-of-sale machines, running Windows, all with barcode scanners, and then with either dedicated or shared printers for each of them," continued Webster.

The VAI Retail Point-of-Sale system gives H&L the ability to flexibly serve their retail and wholesale customers. Some wholesale customers such as tradesmen and contractors can either interact with the company's sales team who are servicing them through the VAI S2K Mobile app, or they can walk into a store, pick up what they need, place it on their account, and walk right out.

According to Webster, the retail point-of-sale is a key application for the company. It's been very helpful to the business, with its ease of use and quick and efficient customer transaction processing. "The most powerful thing for us has been the integrated inventory management where at any point in time we can see what our inventory levels are across the entire network, without having to synchronize or refresh anything," said Webster.

H&L uses a transfer feature in S2K, which allows them to initiate a transfer if the item is out of stock at that location, transfer it into that location, or sell the customer that item, which they can pick up at another location. "On top of that is the easy extensibility, so we're just in the process of rolling out a new loyalty and promotions platform and we've found S2K very easy to extend the functionality, which has also been a key differentiator for us," said Webster.



*The Solution continued:*

H&L employs 12 to 15 salesmen who handle all aspects of the company’s wholesale operations, from agricultural supplies to home renovation, throughout the entire island. The S2K mobile software is installed on tablets for the salespeople. When they’re with a customer, they may access the customer’s account, take orders, update them on account status, and inform them of the

whereabouts of their orders inside the system, including whether they’ve been picked up and sent.

Continued Webster, “The feature that’s been helpful for the sales team has been the ability to synchronize and work offline. In some parts of the island where we do have some challenges with data connectivity, they’ve been able to get the job done. As soon as they’re back into data range the order is synchronized and moving.”

The company has been using VAI Analytics to roll out custom reports

and look at specific pain points that the business has – and ways to solve them. Concluded Webster, “We’re really trying to understand the various drivers and purchasing patterns, feed that data into our point-of-sale system, and then use that data for suggested items based on the basket of goods in the customer’s cart.

H&L is enthusiastic about the future and the directions they wish to see the company go. As they expand, VAI will be there for them.

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## The Results

For H&L, VAI’s mobile application is helping some of their stores reach their targets because of the improvements in how the sales reps in the field service their customers by taking and processing orders and then delivering them immediately from the store. This contrasts with how things were done before the VAI mobile solution was implemented, when sales representatives had to write down the order and then walk back

to the store to place it, which might take a day or two for delivery. Utilizing VAI’s mobile solution has greatly improved customer service.

The retail point-of-sale software allows some of H&L’s retail clients who have tradespeople working on projects to use gift cards rather than cash. These gift cards are for use only at H&L and serve to further increase sales for the business.

Since the launch, Hardware & Lumber has been using VAI’s ERP software to:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the business with analytics to extract application data
- Improve accessibility and streamline processes in the cloud
- Synchronize and move out offline orders immediately following data connection
- View custom reports and look at business pain points – and ways to solve them
- Roll out a loyalty and promotions platform
- Place orders quickly from the field

“When we looked at the economics of our existing co-location servers, we decided from a security and scalability standpoint that it made more sense to move to the VAI Cloud environment, which would enable us to achieve our goals of expanding throughout the Caribbean.”

– Gordon Webster, General Manager, eChannels & Technology, Hardware & Lumber