

Stanchion®

# Becker's Central Canada Affiliate Stores (Alimentation Couche-Tard, Inc.)



## Customer

- Becker's Central Canada Affiliate Stores (Couche-Tard, Inc.)

## Industry

- Retail

## Challenges

- No networked system
- Diversity of stores' point of sale (POS) equipment
- High cost and downtime of POS maintenance
- No sales information for store owners or the company
- High Purchasing costs, uninformed by metrics
- Difficulties with Inventory Control

## Solution

- Full LCM solution (including POS hardware, software, services)
- NEC's Stanchion® Store Software
- Speedy network Integration and training
- Network portal with customized dashboard

## Results

- Real-time sales and customer metrics visibility to streamline all operations
- Reduced supplier costs with smarter inventory control
- Item Management implementation for simplified pricing
- Lowered total cost of ownership (TCO)

## Becker's Central Canada Affiliate Program

Alimentation Couche-Tard, Inc. (Couche-Tard) is one of the largest company-owned convenience store (c-store) operators in the world, and is the Canadian parent company of over 16,000 c-stores worldwide, including a large presence in the USA. Most of these Couche-Tard stores are corporate owned, while some are franchise stores and others are "affiliate" stores.

These affiliated store locations receive the company's mentoring, marketing assistance and a more corporate look and feel, and yet operate autonomously. Each store owner manages their own budgeting, inventory, vendors and purchasing, merchandising, and daily operations.

Couche-Tard's corporate growth through the acquisition of many brands resulted in an array of store names, including "Becker's," an older Canadian brand that began as a dairy distributor and evolved into neighborhood convenience stores. The Becker's Central Canada Affiliates program includes 150 privately owned stores holding affiliate licenses with Couche-Tard.

## Challenges

These affiliated c-stores had been working with equipment that was not standardized. In fact, store owners were accustomed to working with outdated retail equipment from different manufacturers, making maintenance and servicing difficult and costly, and some store owners simply used printing calculators and a cash drawer. The initial challenge was to educate owners that the transition to a better system would improve their business and show lasting value.

"It's an easy system to operate, and I can now see the sales and the products as they are moving out, in real time."

# NEC's point of sale (POS) and Life Cycle Management solution (LCM) brings efficiency and cost effectiveness to convenience store operations.

Without standardized and integrated technology in place, a network was impossible, and neither Becker's Affiliate Program nor the store owners could access any sales information in these stores. Store Owner, Mohamed Fahid, stated that "The old system would not allow me to see anything--when to replenish, what the sales were--and those numbers really matter." Given the high failure rate and turnover of privately owned c-stores in Canada, of primary concern to the company was their limited ability to effectively advise these store owners and to help them succeed.

Becker's Affiliate Program's Sr. Manager, Jeff Poulin, said, "The Field Rep's job was really challenging without a true picture of what's going on in the stores. They would review the store's appearance... maybe a little bit of merchandising, talk about minor issues." Without sales data, the company was limited to providing general retail advice, making it extremely difficult to support the survival of stores with diverse challenges and unknown issues.

## Solution

Becker's Central Canada Affiliates program worked with NEC and Gexin Inc., NEC's Canadian partner, to offer the affiliate store owners a customized retail solution.

Many of the c-stores had seen the importance of a security system and already had security camera systems in place. NEC and Gexin began to standardize the affiliate stores' equipment by first creating an internal



wireless network. The new NEC POS solution was fully integrated with the Gexin security and reporting system. Ethernet cable was laid to connect the different devices (POS, PCs and Cameras) in the creation of the internal network.

Deployment was a smooth process. NEC and Gexin networked the first 10 affiliate stores--each taking about 8 hours, including personnel software training, and completed all store installations within 90 days, fully integrated with Gexin's security and reporting system. This networked retail solution would provide stores with their sales information and metrics for smart product ordering and overall operational efficiency.

"This NEC system allows stores to be more organized and to understand their business and customers better."

With this integrated system, the back office computer, the NEC POS terminal, and the Network Video Recorder computer (NVR) can talk to each other. The information gathered from the POS and security systems provide real-time sales analytics to Becker's Affiliate Program. NEC's Stanchion® store software transmits the sales data in real time. The system allows dashboard visibility and reporting, empowering both store owners and the company by enabling sales monitoring and customized support to the affiliate stores to increase their sales and profitability. Mr. Soolil Kim, a Becker's store owner, put it simply, "Now I have all the data, and it helps me to operate my store."

Mr. Poulin said, "With our NEC solution and our integration partner, Gexin, Inc., we can actually make use of heat mapping in some of our stores, utilize the analytics on the dashboard of our portal, and use that information to help get better results for the stores." This traffic data gives the company reps the ability to lend customized support to each store, to suggest smart purchasing choices, better product placement, the setting of pricing standards, and to help owners understand their traffic and buying patterns of their customers.



The integrated NEC POS system provides the data that gives store owners insights into their individual store's needs, to guide their operations, to help them realize increased sales to grow their business.

## Results

Since NEC's Stanchion software transmits sales data in real-time, the customized dashboard provides sales visibility and detailed reporting for each networked location. This solution empowers the affiliate store owners as well as the company by providing a store's metrics, showing its sales patterns, reductions in inventory, sales volumes, traffic times for sales of specific items, the gender and age of their customers, and much more. The new system enables mass pricing updating capabilities to resolve the pricing of a category of items at once, as well as fast credit approvals.

Mr. Poulin stated, "Our program is all about partnership. We're actually getting solid information now that helps us react. These sales analytics are extremely valuable to us to help them succeed. The integrated NEC POS system provides the data that gives store owners insights into their individual store's needs, to guide their operations, to help them realize increased sales to grow their business."

NEC's single-source retail solution has proven to do exactly what it was chosen to do, reduce their costs and reliably provide stores with up to the minute sales information and tailored metrics for smarter product ordering, smarter product placement and layout, and overall improved operational efficiency.

Mr. Fahid now reports, "The NEC system lets you see what is going on with your store on a daily basis, a monthly basis, even annually. It's an easy system to operate, and I can now see the sales and the products

as they are moving out, in real time." Other owners agree that the new retail system has made their lives much easier and has had a positive impact on their bottom line. The now standardized, new NEC technology, combined with ongoing support to the stores, not only brings critically needed visibility into the stores' business, it also prevents lost sales and helps with customer retention by providing reliable, continuous uptime.

## NEC's Relationship with Our Customer

NEC's channel partner and Canadian-based system integrator, Gexin, Inc., worked closely with this retail customer to develop a deep understanding of their business and technology pain points, and to implement the NEC retail solution that best addressed the unique needs of the affiliate stores and Couche-Tard.

According to Gexin's Project Manager for the Becker's store conversions, "NEC has worked closely with Gexin's Imaging, Staging and Installation teams, both in person and through online support, prior to, during, and post installation. We rely heavily on NEC support during the installation of each store."

Since the NEC system provides 24/7 support for the store owners as well, Mr. Fahid agrees, "Whenever you call (NEC Tech Support), there is someone to answer your questions, and it's a great thing to have that kind of support."

NEC's LCM retail solution is expected to be part of many more upcoming store conversions for Becker's Central Canada Affiliate stores (Couche-Tard). NEC's Integrator concluded, "This NEC system allows stores to be more organized and to understand their business and customers better. I would recommend this system to any store or organization."



---

**Corporate Headquarters (Japan)**

NEC Corporation  
[nec.com](http://nec.com)

**North America (USA & Canada)**

NEC Corporation of America  
[necam.com](http://necam.com)

**NEC Enterprise Solutions**

NEC Europe Ltd  
[nec-enterprise.com](http://nec-enterprise.com)

**APAC**

NEC Asia Pacific Pte Ltd  
[sg.nec.com](http://sg.nec.com)

**Latin America**

NEC Latin America  
[lasc.necam.com](http://lasc.necam.com)

**About NEC Corporation of America:** Headquartered in Irving, Texas, NEC Corporation of America is a leading technology integrator providing solutions that improve the way people work and communicate. NEC delivers integrated Solutions for Society that are aligned with our customers' priorities to create new value for people, businesses and society, with a special focus on safety, security and efficiency. We deliver one of the industry's strongest and most innovative portfolios of communications, analytics, security, biometrics and technology solutions that unleash customers' productivity potential. Through these solutions, NEC combines its best-in-class solutions and technology, and leverages a robust partner ecosystem to solve today's most complex business problems. NEC Corporation of America is a wholly-owned subsidiary of NEC Corporation, a global technology leader with a presence in 160 countries and \$28 billion in revenues. For more information, visit [necam.com](http://necam.com).