



HARRY ROSEN

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TAILORING

Digital shopping with a personal touch

Harry Rosen takes luxury menswear online with IBM Cloud

by Kristin Fern Johnson

5-minute read

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When it comes to providing exemplary customer service, luxury menswear retailer Harry Rosen Inc. doesn't just break the mold—it creates its own.

Quality, craftsmanship, attention to detail and impeccable service have long distinguished the family-owned Canadian company from its competitors. Since its namesake, Harry Rosen, and his brother, Lou, opened their first made-to-measure menswear store in Toronto's Cabbagetown in 1954, the business has expanded to include 15 retail stores, three outlets and a robust e-commerce platform.

In the early days, Harry recorded details about each of his customers on



recipe cards—their likes and dislikes, previous purchases, new job roles and family members' names. He used the information to help customers hone their individual styles, establishing long-term relationships in the process.

Today, clothing advisors create the store's signature one-on-one customer experience, equipped with expertise in every aspect of the business—from the product and exclusive brands the store carries to custom tailoring techniques—and a robust customer relationship

management (CRM) system that mimics Harry Rosen's recipe card system for storing customer details.

As customers' needs have changed, the Harry Rosen company has shifted to accommodate them. In 2015, the retailer had outgrown its existing IT infrastructure and undertook a digital transformation of its business. But it was no generic transformation—true to form, the company aimed to provide the same level of personalized service online as in its stores.

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Steve Warriner, Chief Technology Officer,
Harry Rosen Inc.

Shortened time to
develop new website
platform by

50%

using IBM Cloud® technologies

Increased website
performance speed by

100x

following digital transformation

Transformation in the cloud

Aiming to keep the customer at the center of its business evolution, the Harry Rosen company collaborated with [IBM Garage™](#), a proven development framework that integrates people, processes and technology to transform business and culture. The company chose [IBM Cloud for VMware Solutions](#) in combination with [IBM Cloud Kubernetes Service](#) as the foundation for its new public cloud infrastructure. Together, the solutions provide a flexible IT environment that enables Harry Rosen to swiftly and safely adapt to shifting market demands in an increasingly fast-paced world.

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hardware in our IT infrastructure—we know our data is secure and accessible,” says Warriner. “IBM has provided that level of confidence.”

In tandem with its digital transformation, the company began modernizing its applications, including its CRM system. “We broke down

applications into loosely coupled microservices, containerized them and orchestrated management of those containers with Kubernetes,” says Warriner. “Performance of our CRM system increased by a hundred-fold and the resources needed to manage it were greatly reduced.”

Fast track to innovation

When COVID-19 hit in 2020, traffic to the website jumped as customers shifted to online shopping. But the website wasn't equipped to handle the uptick. Customers had issues searching for products and, worse, with finalizing purchases at checkout. The company quickly fast-tracked a plan in its three-year digital transformation roadmap to re-platform its website—shortening the timeline from 12 - 14 months to six months.

Fortunately, the right technology was already in place. "We were able to spin up more containers to handle the data exchange between our on-premises and e-commerce systems," says Warriner. "Without the performance

and capabilities of IBM Cloud, we never would have been able to get there."

That ability to pivot proved invaluable across every aspect of the business. When customers wanted more comfortable activewear for working from home, the company was able to expand its offerings to accommodate them. "Pre-COVID we weren't looking to do that," says Warriner. "Fortunately, due to the way our ecosystem was built—with microservices in containers and different endpoints—we were able to transition very quickly."

The improvements in website performance were dramatic. "With our new e-commerce platform running

microservices, we're taking advantage of the best tools out there to speed up our website," says Warriner. "I would say, without even batting an eye, that our new website is a hundred times faster than the old one."

Searches now take microseconds and inventory information is available in near real time. "With IBM Event Streaming—the Apache Kafka event streaming platform—and IBM service bus, we can trigger any inventory updates in seconds," says Warriner, "whether from in-store or online purchases or store-to-store transfers."

The company sees many of the adjustments it's made due to

COVID-19 as having lasting impact. “The things we’ve undertaken—to be able to function remotely, sell to our clients online and have them pick up in the store—we don’t see those changing,” says Warriner. “The world is changing every five minutes—probably every five microseconds—and we need to keep up.”

Staying true to its customers in that changing world has remained at the heart of Harry Rosen’s digital transformation—and has required a willingness to rethink its business from the inside out. “We changed the dynamics of our warehouse and of our buying department. We broke things apart and repositioned people within the organization to support our vision. It’s a new future. A new landscape,” Warriner concludes.

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Steve Warriner, Chief Technology Officer, Harry Rosen Inc.



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About Harry Rosen Inc.

Founded in 1954 by Harry Rosen and his brother, Lou, [Harry Rosen](#) (external link) is a luxury menswear retail chain headquartered in Toronto, Canada. With an emphasis on quality, craftsmanship and exemplary customer service, the family-owned business has expanded to include 15 stores, three outlets and a robust e-commerce channel. The company is currently led by Harry's son, Larry Rosen, as chairman and chief executive officer. Larry's son, Ian Rosen, is serving as acting vice president of digital strategy.

Solution components

- IBM Cloud® for VMware Solutions
- IBM Cloud Kubernetes Service
- IBM® Event Streaming
- IBM Garage™

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