



Business challenge

TJ Morris Ltd. combines low prices with customer-centric service; a philosophy that is helping it expand fast. To support the next phase of its growth, TJ Morris looked to refresh its in-store technology.

Transformation

Discount retailer TJ Morris has its sights set on doubling its retail-store footprint in the UK. To sustain aggressive growth and maintain the razor-sharp efficiency that helps it keep prices low, the company is deploying IBM® Power® Systems S914 servers to support retail operations in every store, with help from IBM Business Partner Chilli IT.

Results

16x faster end-day processing

freed up staff and protected the business from disruption

Zero data loss

across all operations enabled by Power Systems technology

Removes barriers

to expansion and innovation

TJ Morris Ltd.

Powering a winning growth strategy by ramping up in-store computing

TJ Morris, trading as Home Bargains, is a discount retailer with more than 500 stores in the UK. Established over 40 years ago by Tom Morris, the company has grown fast to become one of the largest privately owned enterprises in the UK.

“The IBM Power Systems S914 servers are the engines that drive our sales activities. With IBM technology, we’re maintaining a zero data loss record, which means that we continue to get the right products in store for our customers.”

—Frank Christiansen, IT Director, TJ Morris

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Building the business

The discount retail market is flourishing in the UK, with consumers returning again and again to stores that offer them high-quality goods at budget-friendly prices. TJ Morris, trading as Home Bargains, is making its mark in the sector by providing a combination of appealing price tags and luxury shopping experiences. The approach has helped the company become the UK's largest independent grocer.

"We've been expanding rapidly over the past few years, and we have no intention of stopping," says Frank Christiansen, IT Director at TJ Morris. "Our goal is to open another 30 to 50 stores this year, until we reach 1,000 sites."

For more than 20 years, TJ Morris has relied on IBM servers to support its retail operations, including stock control, inventory and point-of-sale (POS) systems. Throughout that period, the technology has proven highly resilient. As the servers aged, however, the company's IT team found it increasingly challenging to locate replacement components. At the same time, the limited compute and storage resources reduced the company's ability to innovate with data-driven services and support in-store teams.

"Our legacy IBM servers were so robust that we've been able to cope by replacing disks and power supply units when they fail with no impact on our operations," recalls Christiansen. "But as time went on, it was getting harder to find parts. We were also hitting the limits of what we could do with the older technology. It was time for us to reinvest in our in-store computing, but it was vital that we found something that fit our unique requirements."

Unleashing new capabilities

TJ Morris looked to long-term adviser and IBM Business Partner Chillit IT for help finding a new platform that satisfied all its selection criteria. Convinced by a compelling proof of concept (PoC), the company chose the Power System S914, based on IBM POWER9™ processor technology and running the IBM i operating system.

Christiansen explains: "Our top priority was retaining the same level of resilience we've had for so many years. In new sites we install a purpose-built server room, but many of our existing stores only have a cupboard under the counter to house a server, making low heat generation very important to us. And since we were replacing hundreds of servers, agreeing on the right price point was crucial. Chillit IT helped us confirm that IBM POWER9-processor-based servers could meet all these goals."

With support from Chillit IT, TJ Morris selected 475 Power Systems S914 servers, taking advantage of a financing agreement with IBM Global Financing to spread the cost over two years. Each server is configured to deliver exceptional service continuity, with data replicated to the company's head office and dual power supply to accommodate surges and outages.

TJ Morris engineers are installing an IBM Power System S914 server at each of the company's new sites, and replacing legacy equipment at existing stores incrementally. "The beauty of the IBM Power System S914 is that it can slot into our current stores with no issues, packing lots of processing power into a small footprint that doesn't super-heat our staff," Christiansen says.

Clearing the path to growth

By rolling out Power Systems S914 servers, TJ Morris is increasing IT performance at its stores dramatically. The company is now seeing the impact on end-of-day processing times.

"Our sales transactions systems already ran so quickly that the new IBM POWER9-based servers took response times of milliseconds and drove them down even further," says Christiansen. "But where we really notice a difference is when our employees run day-end processes

like stock-taking. In that case, IBM Power Systems S914 servers reduced processing times from one hour 20 minutes to just five minutes. Since we run them once stores are closed, it means that our staff can go home much sooner. They're happier, and the risk of processes over-running and affecting the next day's opening is smaller than ever."

TJ Morris reports that it continues to be impressed by the resilience of IBM technology, with the new IBM Power Systems S914 servers providing 100% availability. Supported by Chillit IT, the company remotely monitors the environment, taking advantage of automated alerts to proactively administer the infrastructure.

"The IBM Power Systems S914 servers are the engines that drive our sales activities," comments Christiansen. "As a highly transactional business, we need to know that we can access and save data on a 24x7 basis. With IBM technology, we're maintaining a zero data loss record, which means that we continue to get the right products in store for our customers."

Backed by advanced in-store IT infrastructure, TJ Morris is free to focus on realizing its ambitious growth strategy. The company is investigating how it can use its new IT capabilities to do more of what it does best: delighting customers with the best deals around.

Christiansen concludes: “With IBM Power Systems, we’ve got a formula that works for our stores that we can replicate easily as we scale up the TJ Morris business. We’re investing more in IBM technology, as we’re confident that it’s the right choice to support us in the next phase of our expansion.”

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Solution components

- IBM® Global Financing
- IBM Power Systems S914
- IBM Power Systems running IBM i

Take the next step

To learn more about IBM Power Systems, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website: ibm.com/power

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