EPICOR

Elevate Your Retail Business

10 questions to reveal if the cloud is right for you

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Introduction

Choose Your Altitude

As recently as 15 years ago, most businesses didn't have the option of deploying their retail business software in the cloud. Since that time, technologies have matured, broadband reliability has dramatically improved, and vendors have designed business software to be as easy and convenient as the phone and tablet apps we use for fun.

That means that where you deploy your software—in the cloud or on-premises— is now a legitimate and important choice. In other words, it's time to choose your altitude.

This eBook will help you dive into that question. First, let's get a clear understanding of the term "cloud."

When we use the cloud, we use technology over the Internet. Most of us do this every day—when we check social media, traffic, or mapping apps on our mobile phones or in web browsers. When we say "cloud solution," we mean:

Software tools, apps, features, and capabilities designed for organizations to manage their business

Software installed on servers in secure data centers—not at your business location

Software that you don't own and don't manage—instead, you pay a predictable monthly subscription fee

A system where you and your team can use all the tools and capabilities through a web browser and with just about any device

Cloud solutions help retailers do all the things traditional on-premise solutions let retailers do. The difference is you don't buy, install, or maintain the software or servers—someone else does.

Would that be a better choice for your organization?

10 Questions to Consider When Deciding if the Cloud is Right for You

The Business Questions

1   What are we in business for?

Whatever you offer to your customers— garden supplies, hardware, outdoor sports equipment, pet supplies , or donated/thrift items—you're doing it for a reason. It might be to make a profit, or it might be to help the community.

You have goals. That's one of the reasons you need retail technology. Of course, that doesn't mean you're doing retail for the joy of managing retail technology. Managing technology requires IT resources that you may not have, or would prefer to direct toward more strategic tasks.

Technology is critically important, but it's just a tool. If you're like most retailers, it's all about the customer and the sale so you can meet your goals.

In that case, look upward. The cloud likely makes more sense because:

It removes all those IT distractions

It gives your team better tools to do what they do best—help customers and move merchandise

2   Do we want to grow?

Assuming you want your volumes and revenues to grow, your technology should support it. That's more investment and more work for your team—but if your solution is in the cloud, it can expand effortlessly to fit your needs.

Epicor can help.

At Epicor, we've been helping thousands of retailers face these challenges for 50 years. Many use our powerful on-premises software solutions—but for some, our cloud solutions are a better fit.
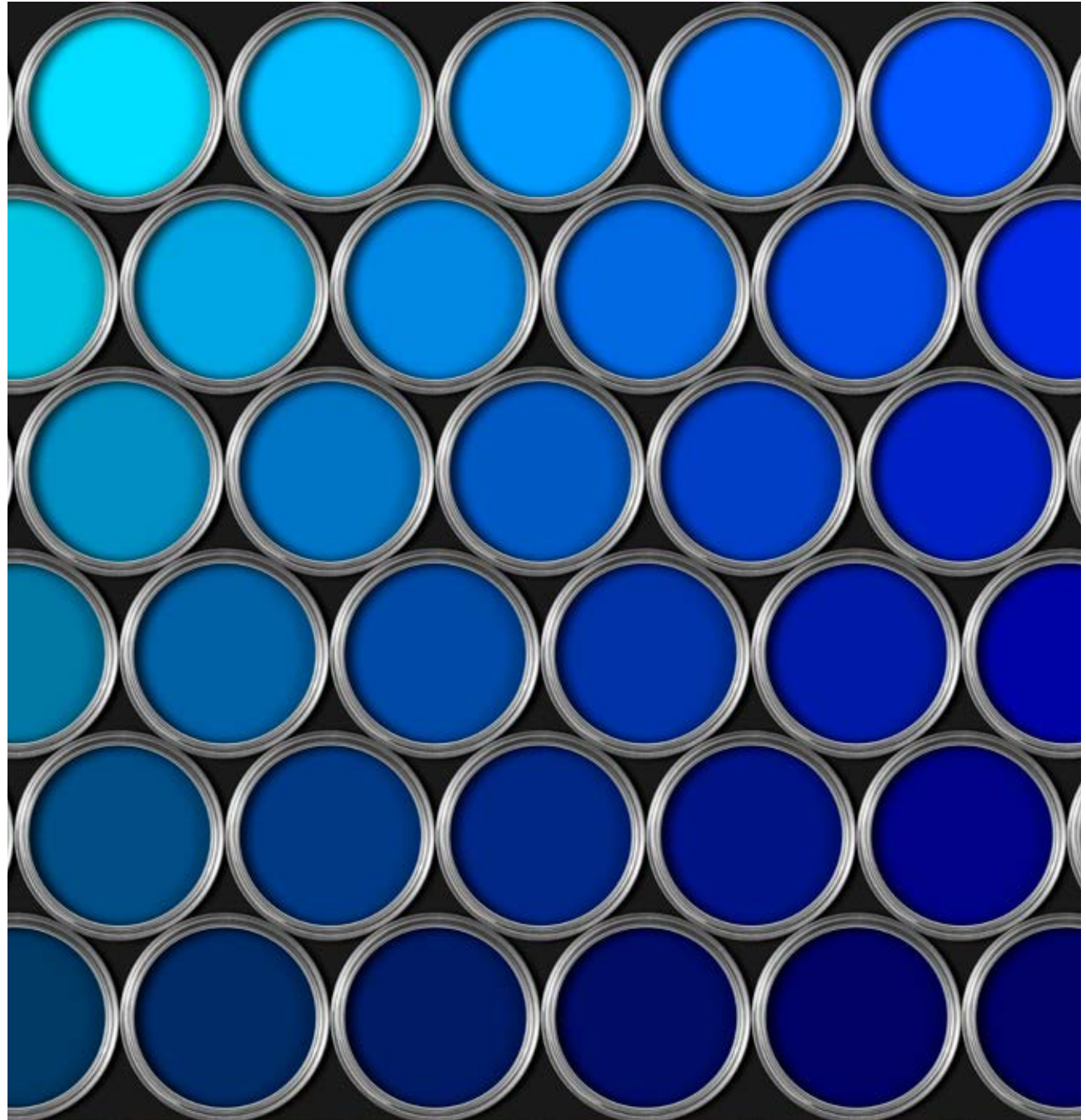
The Tech Team Questions

3 How much technology do we want to manage?

Consider if your organization has IT staff who like doing the following:

1 → Installing and updating third-party software and the underlying server software needed to run it

4 → Helping users keep track of multiple apps on multiple types of devices, making sure everyone has the right version, and more.

2 → Keeping server software and hardware running smoothly and chasing down issues

5 → Applying security updates to ward off threats

3 → Adding more computing capacity every time your volumes increase

If your IT staff has time to do all these tasks—and if they prefer these tasks—then an on-premises retail management solution might be right for your business.

Otherwise, if you're short on IT resources or you would rather focus on what's unique about your organization, then look upward. The cloud likely makes more sense for you because a cloud retail management solution eliminates most of those IT distractions, along with the costs and risks that go with them.

The Getting-Through-The-Day Questions

4 How much complexity do you and your team want to take on every day?

Even the most straightforward retail operations have daily challenges. Point of sale (POS), inventory and purchasing, and merchandising and pricing all present their own difficulties. That doesn't even cover customers—who must be pampered, rewarded, and lured back again and again. That level of service takes the right kind of promotion and loyalty-building tools.

The list goes on, but you know there's plenty to do every day to keep your business running. It's time-consuming. Errors happen. Important decisions get made. New staff face learning curves. Experienced staff wants to do more and learn more.

On-premises retail solutions can certainly address these tasks. However, cloud solutions offer some advantages for organizations that want to work more quickly, effectively, and accurately.

1 Newer cloud solutions better reflect the way businesses and users work today.

2 Cloud solutions look and work about the same on any device because they're accessed through browsers—making them easier to learn and use.

3 Retail staff move around—to the aisles, the warehouse, and even to customer locations. Mobile tools are essential, and cloud solutions simply do a better job of enabling the mobile side of retail.

4 When things change, cloud software updates are automatic and immediate. Each time a user logs into a cloud solution, they are seeing the latest and greatest features and refinements.

5 How do you feel about interruptions?

Technology hardware—and the sophisticated software that keeps it running— suffers hiccups from time to time. Sometimes it's the weather and natural disasters. Other times, it's simply an old part that fails to keep up. For your organization, that can spell downtime. Interruptions like this can disappoint customers and trigger headaches and frustration for your team.

Cloud solutions have some advantages. They run every process and store every piece of data with backups—and they have professionals on hand 24/7 to quickly clear up any issues that arise. With well-managed cloud solutions, your risk of downtime is dramatically reduced.

6 Does your team ever need—or want—to work remotely?

With the cloud, if you have an Internet connection, you can work. You can give your employees the ability to be productive wherever they happen to be. They can enjoy the work-life balance that suits them, and you can enjoy greater loyalty and increased output.

This also means that you can access your system at any time and from anywhere, effectively and efficiently driving success across your organization.

The Finance Questions

7 How much capital do you want to tie up?

On-premises retail solutions are purchased, which usually means a hefty upfront cost and ongoing expenses for upkeep. Cloud solutions come with low, predictable monthly subscription fees. These fees are based on the number of users and certain other variables.

**8** How long can you afford to wait for a technology investment to pay off?

Cloud solutions can be deployed, launched, and in use in a fraction of the time required for on-premises technology. These modern systems also tend to be easier to learn, so you start seeing value right away. You won't have to wait months to complete hardware and software installations, set up your network, and train your staff.

9 What long-term financial benefits do you want from your technology?

All software evolves, and it's constantly improving. With cloud solutions, real-time updates mean you don't have to wait for new capabilities that can help you work faster, track and boost profits, or improve customer service. Updates are regular and frequent. This saves both dollars and "softer" costs associated with waiting to take advantage of new features.

10 Can cloud solutions lower your overall costs?

Typically, lower upfront costs, predictable monthly subscription costs, faster deployment times, and ongoing reduced IT costs mean a lower total cost of ownership for cloud retail solutions. Add to that the extended value your IT team can bring by focusing on more strategic work, and you can see how the cost savings start to stack up.
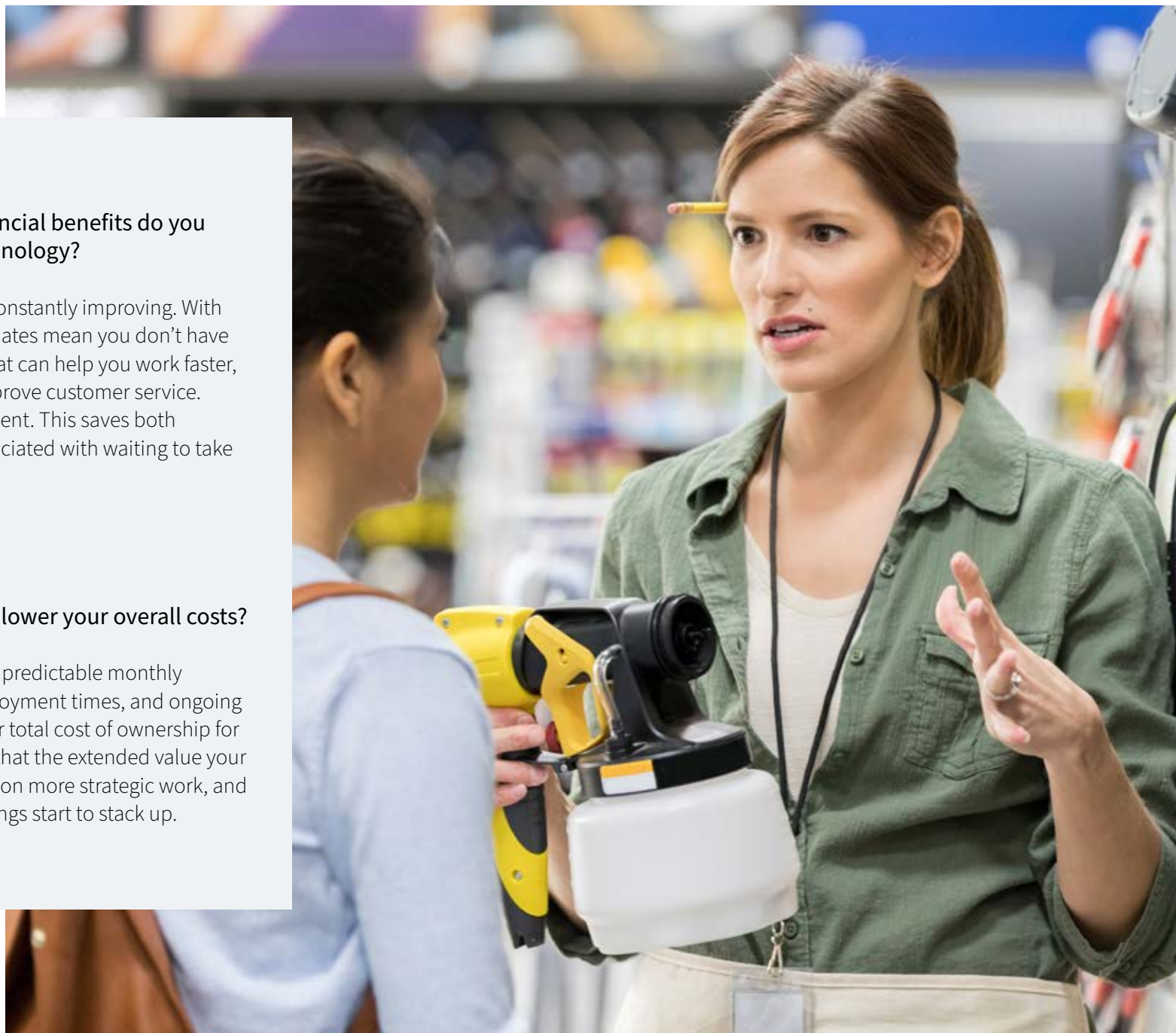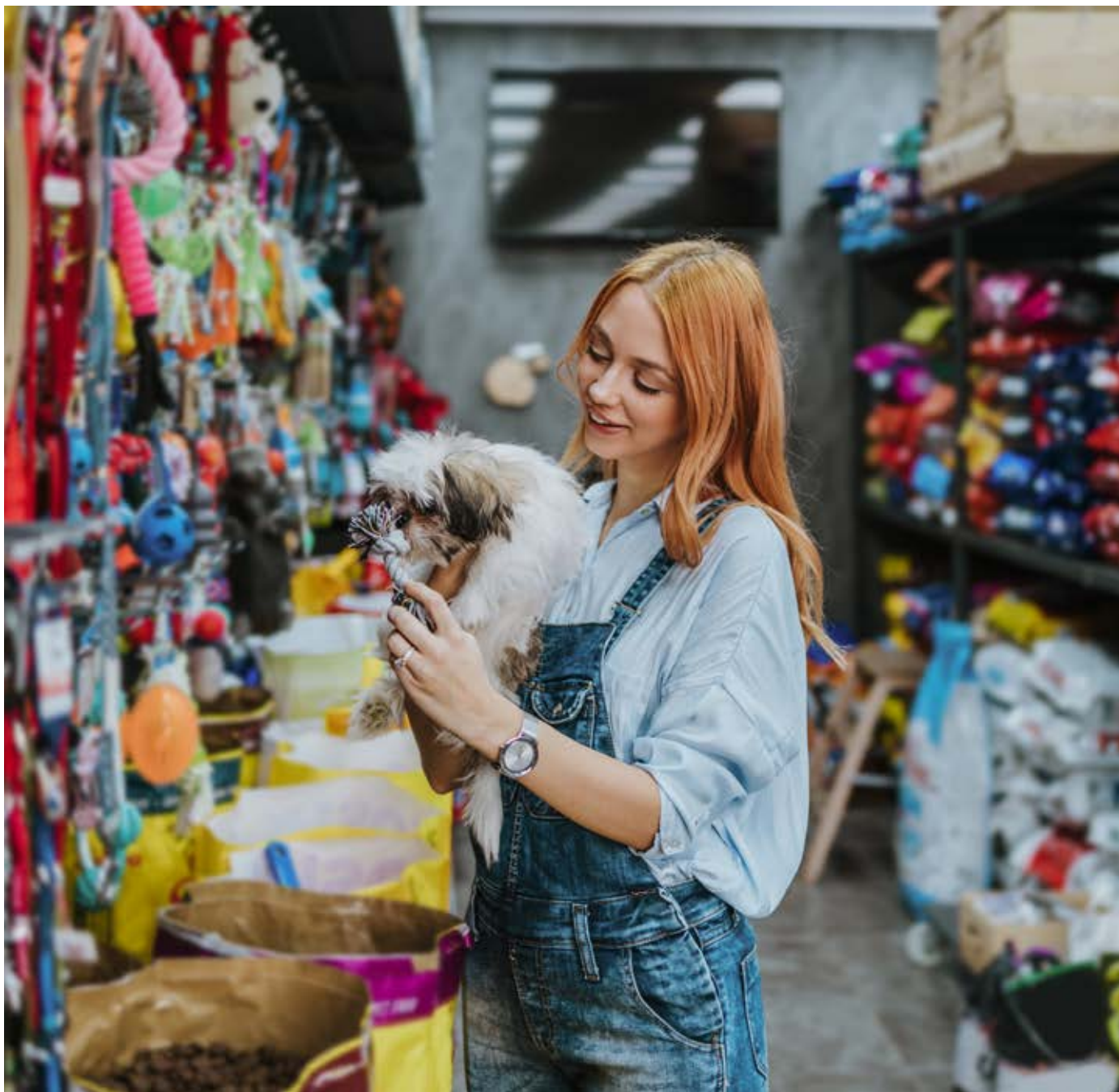
Recap

How did you do?

Let's take a quick look at your answers.
Do these statements sound familiar?

1. We want to focus on retailing, our customers, and our goals. The fewer distractions, the better—and the easier it is to use retail technology, the better.

2. We think we may want to grow, and we don't want anything holding us back.

3. Given a choice, we'd rather focus the IT resources we have on strategic efforts—not mundane tasks. If we can increase security and reduce risk, that's even better.

4. We want to streamline, simplify, collaborate, and stay mobile. That is, we want to make it easier to serve customers and grow our team.

5. We want the flexibility to log in, get things done, and make smart decisions from just about anywhere.

6. Capital investments are fine, but we'd rather not make a huge one when there's a lower-cost alternative.

7. When we get new technology, we want to use it sooner, not later—both at the beginning and whenever enhancements are available.

8. We want to keep costs lower while getting the retail technology solution that serves us best.

If this sounds like you, then a cloud-based retail management solution is the right choice for your business.

Things Are Looking Up

If you're like so many organizations today, the upside for cloud-based retail technology is significant. Since these solutions are becoming more capable every day, it makes sense to investigate them thoroughly when you're looking to elevate your retail operation.

The Epicor for Retail cloud solutions have been developed with retailers, for retailers. We would love to show you how they can help you do business better.

To learn more—and see how easy it is to get started—just contact an Epicor representative.

Epicor for Retail Cloud Solutions.

At Epicor, we've been helping retailers succeed and grow for 50 years, so we know retail. With a large and growing family of cloud solutions already serving hundreds of organizations, we know how to make cloud technology work for you. To elevate your retail operation with cloud technology, look to Epicor.

EPICOR

We're here for the hard-working businesses that keep the world turning. They're the companies that make, move, and sell the things we all need. They trust Epicor to help them do business better. Their industries are our industries, and we understand them better than anyone. By working hand-in-hand with our customers, we get to know their business almost as well as they do. Our innovative solution sets are carefully curated to fit their needs and built to respond flexibly to their fast-changing reality. We accelerate every customer's ambitions, whether to grow and transform, or to simply become more productive and effective. That's what makes us the essential partners for the world's most essential businesses.

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