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Promotion Optimization Institute, LLC

2023 Vendor Panorama for Consumer Goods Retail Sales Execution Capability & Solution Advancements

SoftServe Business Systems

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Profile: SoftServe Business Systems (SSBS) has developed a single digital ecosystem for all FMCG sales processes. The SSBS Eco-System of products & services is coherent and flexible, which aims to empower businesses to grow and improve efficiency. It includes capabilities for Data Management, Distributor Management (DMS), Retail Execution (SFA), Trade Promotion Management (TPx), Business Intelligence (BI), Integrated Business Planning (IBP), as well as modules to support AI Shelf Recognition, eCommerce (B2B & D2C), and Telesales for B2B sales and self-service capabilities. SoftServe Business Systems is a part of the global IT-outsource company SoftServe group.

Geographic Presence: Europe (90%), AsiaPac (10%).

Total Consumer Goods Users (seats): 19,000.

Tiers Represented: All.

Solution Offerings: Retail Execution, Merchandising DSD, Van Sales, Distributor Management (DMS).

Industries: All FMCG, except Durables and semi-durables.

Configuration/Customization: In addition to flexible configuration options, the SSBS Eco-System does allow for customized plug-in modules when a desired business need cannot be met. Plug-ins are designed to add a specific feature to the solution without having to edit the main source code.

Technology Architecture/Delivery Options: On-premise, hosted/private cloud, Multitenant SaaS.

Service Partners: None.

Technology Partners: Microsoft, Cisco, Dell, HP, AWS. Also, for Hosting: Kyivstar, Xelent, Dataline, Hetzner. And Azure, OKTA, Pindentity for identity capabilities.

User Experience:

Field Users: The SSBS mobile app provides field users with quick access to key information, including planned calls/routes, stock, shipments, POS, and sales plans. There is closed-loop linkage with the trade promotions tool for promotional plan information, scheduling and inflight monitoring, and course correction if necessary.

SoftServe Business Systems has strategically applied AI and ML to deliver AI-driven retail execution. They apply artificial intelligence to the retail POS and SFA input to guide reps on store calls and daily routes. A key component is the AR (augmented reality) enabled image recognition which SSBS refers to AI Shelf Recognition.

AI Shelf Recognition works fully offline and will determine item presence (an out-of-stock), share of shelf, planogram compliance, and current price (from shelf tags). The AR component streamlines and speeds up the image recognition process, providing immediate feedback on shelf conditions and eliminating the need to stitch multiple images together. The AI component then takes this information and drives it right into the call process, providing direction on actions to take. Depending on required actions, this can be communicated through additional tasks in the call process or with a pop-up

right on the photo image directing the rep on actions to take. This is all part of SSBS's "Smart Helper" capability, providing automatic recommendations of steps to take to attain a Perfect Store.

The SSBS Eco-System also includes AI-based suggested orders to guide the rep to ordering the proper items and quantities. AI and advanced analytics assist sales agents on how to improve overall portfolio performance by adding new SKUs which have the highest volume opportunities for a specific store.

Customers: The SSBS Eco-System extends the user experience directly to customers through the B2B eCommerce and B2B Telesales modules, which are geared towards effectively and efficiently addressing current CPG challenges. The B2B eCommerce solution is a web application where retailers with full support of personalization can place and track an order online, activate trade promotions, participate in loyalty and motivational programs, and give feedback in real-time. It is fully integrated with the SSBS Eco-System, so complex pricing, discounts, promotions, and loyalty incentives can be fully personalized and defined per retailer location. The B2B eCommerce solution can provide assortment and stock recommendations, as well as cross-sell/up-sell recommendations.

The Telesales module is also fully integrated in the eco-system to allow for a true hybrid approach to retail coverage and execution. Retail execution functions can be addressed by any combination of field reps, virtual telesales agents, and by the retailer themselves with B2B & D2C. All activities and interactions are visible to all parties.

Back Office (HQ): The Eco-System also includes a desktop webtool, which provides the back-office worker with the instruments and visibility to manage routes and retail activities. Field tasks, activities, and suggested orders can be pushed to SFA to guide sales reps and merchandisers. SSBS's Sales Manager supporting tool for field managers/back-office users enables them to manage field teams, assign territories, and effectively execute key managerial functions remotely. It also allows for task assignment, providing feedback, and sharing guidelines and best practices within the team.

Analytics: Built with data as a core foundation to the SSBS Eco-System, analytics is one of the company's strengths. SoftServe Business Systems prides themselves on data accuracy and has applied ML algorithms to deliver. Their Data Quality Management solution is a set of algorithms responsible for checking, correcting, and managing data received from different data sources with guaranteed accuracy of 98%. It helps gather data, clean it, and make it accurate for further processing and analysis. Over 35 data validation rules can be enhanced, adjusted, and modified based on the needs of a specific market.

After the data in the system is validated, it is used for planning sales, retail execution, promotions, forecasts, and predictions. Both OEM analytics and in-house solutions are used depending on a client's needs and requirements. OLAP cubes provide the foundation and flexibility for creating reports and dashboards. SSBS can integrate data from multiple data sources and then leverage that data to provide analytics and insights across the ecosystem.

Data Approach: SoftServe Business Systems has established data management as a foundation to their Eco-System. This is critical to support their large distributor (DMS) user base as well as provide the fuel for their AI-driven approach to retail execution. Their Data Platform solution helps to orchestrate, receive, classify, and enable various data workflows of different nature to deliver better quality information and help organizations make better decisions. Centralizing the data across their ecosystem enables real-time visibility and AI-enabled processes for field teams, HQ teams, and customers (via SFA, B2B, TPx, etc.).

Enterprise Integration: The SSBS Eco-System has the ability to integrate with internal and external data sources in near real-time streaming (every 15 min) or via batch ingestion. The Data Platform serves to cleanse, organize, and efficiently maintain the data in order to provide accurate and structured data to all business functions. In addition, the SSBS Eco-System provides managed access to company data to approved external clients.

Strengths and Key differentiators: SSBS's ability to integrate with distributors and a client's systems is a core strength. The eco-system approach supports integration and instant data exchange with multiple distributors and logistics providers. The complex Data Platform ensures a high quality of data and eliminates errors and duplications. Their forward-thinking for B2B integration and communications with their B2B eCommerce and B2B Telesales modules provide flexibility and efficiency to retail coverage. SSBS's approach to planogram compliance with Image Recognition technology provides real-time feedback, including recommended actions to take on how to improve the situation. Also noteworthy is their flexible approach to retail execution, allowing and integrating multiple coverage options (visit, telesales, self-service) to drive efficiency.

Opportunities: SoftServe Business Systems has built a solid foundation on their single eco-system approach to data management. They will have the opportunity to fully leverage this foundation as technological advances continue to evolve.

Vendor Trends & Outlook: SoftServe Business Systems has built a data platform as a standalone solution to orchestrate, support, and enable various data workflows. They have enhanced their B2B solution to become the marketplace, allowing manufacturers and other providers to participate and sell their goods from one single platform. They continue to advance and have enabled more ML/AI into the SSBS Eco-System via Augmented Reality Image Recognition, as well as more intelligent price analysis to support promotion planning. This foundation, together with their commitment to data and data quality, positions SoftServe Business Systems to continue to support an efficient and flexible approach to retail execution.

Adjacent Offerings: SoftServe Business Systems offers a variety of distinct capabilities that can be implemented independent of their SSBS Eco-System solution. These include:

- **Distributor Management System (DMS)** – a service that provides data management, execution, and analytics/reporting for distributor-managed sales.

- **TPx** – a tool designed to improve ROI of multiple promotional activities, provide better planning, accurate forecast, and ongoing tracking of results.

- **IBP** – Integrated Business Planning – a tool enabling creation of sales forecasts and plans in collaboration with different functions.

- **BI Tool** – A set of pre-defined reports and interactive dashboards visualizing the most critical business & financial KPIs.

- **AI Shelf Recognition powered with IR technology** – Artificial Intelligence and computer vision automates shelf audit and collection of assortment, pricing, and competitor product information, with full planogram compliance, dynamic steps generation based on the real-time situation at the store.

- **B2B eCommerce** – a self-service portal for retailers enabling them to place and track orders and payments with full personalization, loyalty programs, and motivational programs.

- **B2B Telesales** – a tool enabling order collection and processing over the phone.

Evaluate SSBS When: You need a partner with a flexible platform for working in a diverse environment (distributors, merchandisers, internal field sales teams) with the capabilities to serve and motivate all users. The potential for plug-in customization also makes them a consideration for unique business requirements that may not fit standard offerings. When you want your TPM, retail execution, and cross-functional end-to-end planning capabilities within the same ecosystem.

RetX Best-in-Class Distinctions: Advanced Imaging Technology (IR/AR), Analytical Insights, Distributor Management, and Guided Selling.

About the Promotion Optimization Institute

POI brings together manufacturers, retailers, solution providers, analysts, academics, and other industry leaders with the specific objective of collaboratively improving holistic enterprise planning and the promotion and distribution of consumer goods. Members of POI share cross-functional best practices in both structured and informal settings. Additionally, members benefit through our industry alliances, the Certified Collaborative Marketer (CCM)™ program, and industry-leading summits around the globe. POI aims to instill a financial and metrics-based discipline not typically found with other trade groups. The goal of our innovative approach is collaborative promotion optimization. The focus is on the customer/shopper through sales, marketing, and merchandising strategies. Executive advisory boards keep us apprised of industry needs and help us provide desired outcomes for members, sponsors, and academia.

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