



NUCLEUS
RESEARCH

THE VALUE OF UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS WITH ECS⁵

ANALYST

Isaac Gould

THE BOTTOM LINE

In October 2020, ECS Global announced the release of Enterprise Communication Suite 5 (ECS⁵). ECS provides an enterprise application platform to consolidate and automate communication channel activities. ECS⁵ is the result of continuous updates to keep pace with both physical and digital signage technology. Added mobile, analytics, and store planning capabilities improve ECS⁵'s value proposition as customers report hundreds of thousands of dollars saved in reduced revenue leakage as well as annual employee time savings of over 3000 hours.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT

In October 2020, ECS Global announced the release of ECS⁵, the newest version of its Enterprise Communication Suite (ECS) platform. Building on the success of its previous versions, ECS⁵ will deliver advancements to channel management capabilities, graphic design tools, and store planning functions. Additionally, ECS⁵ has added mobile functionality and analytics on product sales performance via external data signals. The launch of ECS⁵ modernizes the communication platform with integrations into new communication channels to keep pace with the increase in interactive displays and online marketing campaigns. ECS⁵ ensures that messaging is consistent and accurate across all forms of signage, including digital price tags, interactive kiosks, TV displays, print, social media, and web banners. Businesses leveraging the new solution can synchronize all signage, promotions, and pricing data to automatically update online marketing engagements and digital displays or provide stores with the correct information for printing.

As the vendor pursues a platform approach to solution development, ECS⁵ contains multiple modules centered on broadening its range of functionality. For example, the Planogram component supports the design of shelf and store layouts to maximize product visibility and minimize planning time. Media Manager and graphic design tools enable users to quickly design and disperse videos and images without the need for costly and time-consuming third-party designers. Mobile integration means retail workers can also scan products with handheld devices to ensure pricing and promotional offerings are up to date.

ECS GLOBAL

ECS Global is a marketing solutions provider that supports the distribution of images, video, and messages across print, digital, and online communication channels. ECS has grown rapidly in recent years, increasing its customer base along with the scope of its solutions. Serving a range of industries, such as retail, manufacturing, healthcare, non-profit, government, academia, sport and leisure, tourism, and hotel services, ECS's customer profile now includes both small to mid-sized businesses (SMBs) and enterprise-scale organizations. While the concept of unified communications is typical of most marketing solutions, ECS has taken the unique approach of consolidating both physical and digital channel management onto a single platform. Prioritizing its customers' need for consistent messaging, regardless of medium, ECS continuously updates its platform to ensure it supports the latest developments in signage technology.

KEY BENEFIT AREAS

Nucleus interviewed both ECS⁵ users and users of the current version of ECS to identify the three primary benefits of their deployments:

INCREASED EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

Both retail and head office employees can leverage ECS⁵ to expedite various day to day activities and reduce overall labor. Retail workers can scan products with mobile devices to select and print relevant signs and labels if anything is missing, damaged, or out-of-date. This eliminates the need to search through a pricing or graphics catalog for every carried product, which often costs stores thousands of work hours. Head office employees no longer need to manage the individual communication systems but can instead disperse messages across all channels from a single point. Likewise, retail employees are not required to update digital displays and price labels manually. Interviewed customers have expressed that leveraging ECS⁵ has allowed them to open store locations in half the time previously required.

REDUCED OPERATIONAL COSTS

Integrating with an organization's solution ecosystem, ECS⁵ sources accurate pricing information at all times, eliminating unnecessary discounting and thereby saving ECS's SMB customers hundreds of thousands of dollars every year. Graphic design and video editing functions are available and easy to use by marketing teams, thereby eliminating the costs of third-party designers and the time-consuming back and forth between parties. Centralizing the management of communication channels may also lower operational costs by retiring legacy solutions and hardware.

ALIGNED COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

ECS⁵ places the central office in control over its various communication channels. As ECS⁵ natively integrates with all name-brand Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) applications, users can consolidate their pricing, sales, and marketing data under the solution to generate a single source of truth. This guarantees that all information put out by ECS is the same version across all communication channels and messaging has the same look and feel to maintain brand identity. In turn, users can take

**A customer reported
annual savings \$150,000
- \$400,000 from reduced
erroneous discounts.**

a proactive approach to promotional and seasonal campaign planning by creating signage updates in advance and automating the dispersal.

CUSTOMER PROFILES

CONSUMER GOODS RETAILER

This consumer goods retailer has nearly 30 retail locations in Canada and the US with big box and large mall stores with over 5000 unique products, including eight to 12 popup shops every year. Previously armed with a legacy solution from the early 2000s, the company was challenged by the labor-intensive nature of developing ad hoc signage, where the creation of a sign often took up to an hour. As each store had its own layout and merchandise, the company also needed location-specific signage while still maintaining a uniform look and feel across the entire organization. Searching for a solution that could reduce the labor input and manage the signage of multiple store locations, the retailer selected ECS in 2012 for its ability to streamline the creation and printing of signs and labels.

Immediately, the retailer shifted sign making from a store manager duty down to an associate and seasonal employee responsibility. As sign creation has been shortened to about 20 minutes, a third of the time under the legacy solution, the reduction in labor at both the management and shop floor levels has enabled increased productivity to be transferred to higher value-add tasks. The company has also eliminated discounting due to pricing errors as it implemented automatically updating digital price tags. With over 70,000 price adjustment events every year before ECS, the company now reports between \$150,000 and \$400,000 saved annually.

The consumer goods company has deepened its investments with the solution and is now an ECS⁵ user, leveraging the latest features. The marketing team utilizes drag and drop functions within the design tool to quickly create self-adjusting pricing and promotional signs since a connection to the ERP guarantees the accuracy of the information. Store managers design store and product displays with Planogram, and retail workers then select and print the correct signs all from their mobile devices. The combination of mobile capabilities, intuitive graphic design tools, and integration with its on-premise Microsoft Dynamics NAV ERP system has enabled the company to accelerate store openings drastically. By reducing the average opening times of just its popup shops by over 50 percent, the company saves over 3000 personnel hours every year.

VETERINARY HOSPITAL

This veterinary hospital is one of Australia's oldest and largest animal shelter and care facilities. Previously relying on siloed and manually managed signage channels, the hospital lacked a unified marketing communications solution. Besides modernizing its signage capabilities, the hospital also sought to launch a digital display companion with its cage-free adoption center initiative to boost adoption rates. Recognizing ECS as a communication channels expert, capable of supporting both its traditional messaging needs and its specialized project, the animal care organization implemented ECS in 2016.

ECS helped establish the first cageless adoption center by creating a rotating display of each animals' information upon large screens surrounding the new open and interactive setting. By providing placards that can be seamlessly edited and managed on TV screens and the adoption center's website by even volunteer workers, ECS enabled its users to support a more client-friendly adoption experience as opposed to the traditional pen and cage facilities. Over the deployment, annual adoption rates have increased by the hundreds, with over 1000 animals finding new homes every year. The hospital also utilized ECS to build customizable ad banners, donation options, and other useful information on its TV displays, posters, and website to drive revenue and further enrich signage to remove the stigma surrounding animal shelters.