GRBS Software Technical Requirements

An overview

Author's note

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Introduction

We aim to keep our software products as easy to use as possible. This philosophy is also extended to the technology that we use to create them, and the way they are developed and implemented.

Simply stated: we use proven technologies, and while we see the need to keep current with the technical developments in the world, we stay far away from the "bleeding edge".

On the other hand, the better the quality of your data, the more efficiently you will be able to work, and the higher will be the quality of the end-results.

Still, with the ever increasing complexities of the technical world, we often get questions about technical requirements for our applications. Unfortunately the initial answer most of the times is "That depends…" as there are so many factors that play a role.

Through this document we will address a number of technical areas that have an impact on the way our software products work. Unless specified differently, the explanations offered are applicable to all our software applications:

- ✓ **Retail Shelf Planner**
- ✓ **Retail Floor Planner**
- ✓ **Retail Merchandising Center**

We trust this document will support you and answers any questions you may have, but are available to answer any questions that remain unanswered. Send us an email to info@retailshelfplanner.com, and we'll respond as quickly as possible.

Kind regards,

Erwin Bergsma
Managing Director

Online vs. Offline / Cloud-based

The fact that we work with annual subscriptions gives some people the impression that our software applications are "cloud-based" and only available when you have a connection to the Internet. This is not correct! Our software products are Windows applications, more or less comparable to e.g. the classic Microsoft Office Word, Excel and PowerPoint applications. They are installed on the local hard disk of a PC, so that you can work with them whether you are online or offline.

Windows versions

Before we release our software applications, they are tested in a variety of environments:

- ✓ Windows XP
- ✓ Windows 7
- ✓ Windows 8 / 8.1

In addition to testing against the Home and Professional versions, we also test against various language versions.

Single-User vs. Multi-User/Network versions

Our applications are single-user versions. They have to be installed under the Windows user-profile of the person who will be using them. To unlock all features, the software has to be registered. During registration the application is locked to the PC/User combination.

It is not possible to "transfer" a single license between multiple users at any point in time a user wants to work with the software. If you want to share a license with two or more users, we recommend to install the software on a separate PC (laptop or desktop) with a specific user account, where users can log in when they need to work with the software. In case multiple users have to be able to use the software at the same time, multiple licenses are required.

Citrix / Windows Terminal Server

We don't test our software application in Citrix or WTS environments, so we can't give you a 100% guarantee that everything works smoothly. However, several of our clients use e.g. **Retail Shelf Planner** without problems in such an environment.

We are aware of one specific situation that requires a bit of extra attention. That is if the underlying architecture uses multiple servers for "load balancing" where users are dynamically assigned to the least busy server when they log-on. If that's the case, we need to do some additional work with your IT department around the registration of the software. Alternatively, your IT department could assign the user of the GRBS software to one single server.

Multi-User Aware

As stated above, our applications are single-user versions. However, when **Retail Shelf Planner** or **Retail Floor Planner** are used in combination with a central database repository through **Retail Merchandising Center**, they are "multi-user aware". This means that when a planogram or floorplan is opened from the database by one user, it is flagged as "locked" / "in-use". When another user wants to open the same planogram/floorplan they are notified about its status, and can only open it as "read-only".

Local PC, Network, USB-stick

Even though our products are not multi-user, network applications, they are perfectly capable to load files from, or save file to, network drives, USB-sticks, etc. in addition to the local harddisk. We strongly recommend our clients not to save their work only on their local PC, but ensure the fruits of their hard labor are securely backed up to e.g. a network drive so that in case of a disaster, not all is lost.

Apple PC's & iPads

As stated above, our applications are Windows applications. This means that they don't work on an Apple iPad.

They _may_ work on an Apple PC if that has been installed with Windows, or if there is a Windows emulator installed on it. Note that we don't test against these environments, and therefore cannot guarantee that everything functions properly.

Hardware requirements

Retail Merchandising Center will provide an acceptable user experience on any PC that is capable to run Microsoft Office 2007 or beyond.

Retail Shelf Planner and **Retail Floor Planner** are applications that combine graphical display with underlying statistical calculations. Therefore they both benefit from more powerful processors such as the Intel i5 or i7. Another important component, especially for **Retail Shelf Planner**, is a dedicated powerful graphics card, from e.g. NVIDIA or MIS, with at least 1GB of memory.

All applications require a screen resolution of at least 1280x800 to work properly.

For a pleasant user experience when working with larger planograms and/or floorplans, we recommend a monitor of 24" or (preferably) larger.

Software dependencies

All our applications provide a direct link to Microsoft Excel for template based reporting. Both **Retail Shelf Planner** and **Retail Floor Planner** allow the user to import data from Excel spreadsheets. When creating a report, or importing data from a spreadsheet, the software creates a dynamic link with Excel. It is therefore required that a local install of Excel is available. (I.e. Excel as part of a cloud-based implementation of Office will not work.)

The Enterprise edition of **Retail Shelf Planner** offers a direct link to Microsoft PowerPoint for the creation of advanced, professional output-decks. Here too, a direct link will be created with PowerPoint, requiring a local install of that software.

Our applications have been tested against Microsoft Office 2003, 2007, 2010 and 2013 in various languages.

Product Photos / Live Images

When you are creating planograms with **Retail Shelf Planner**, you can use digital images of the products to get a "real-life" view of the layout. Image formats that are supported: PNG (incl. transparency), JPG, BMP, EMF & WMF (incl. transparency)

The images have to be stored in one or more folders that are accessible from **Retail Shelf Planner**. The software will automatically load the images for all products in the planogram, linking on ID or UPC. Note that this means that hundreds of images could be loaded at once. Hence it's important to pay careful attention to the size of the images.

The white paper "***Product Database & Live Images***" provides more details about the functional requirements, and how to use the images.

Database Environment

When you are using **Retail Shelf Planner** or **Retail Floor Planner** in combination with **Retail Merchandising Center** you have the capability to store planograms/floorplans in a central repository. The relational database environment used for this is either Microsoft's SQL Server, or Oracle's MySQL.

We have tested **Retail Merchandising Center** against the following versions:

Microsoft SQL Server	MySQL
2005, 2008, 2012, 2014	5.1

Our applications access the database through a 32-bit ODBC datasource. However, it's no problem if the database server environment is 64-bit.

Database Size

The exact size of a database obviously depends on a large number of factors. For an implementation in combination with **Retail Shelf Planner**, we'd be looking at the number of planograms, the number of products, how many fields of the product-definition are used, how much history has to be kept, etc.

It's therefore not possible to give you an exact number, but based on various tests, we can give you an indication. A database with 100 planograms and 5000 products will have a size of approx. 10MB. So, we estimate that a **Retail Merchandising Center** database in an operational environment that is managed properly will likely never reach a size of 500MB.

Note: it is foreseen that in the future our applications will provide the ability to update planograms/floorplans with financial data from the database environment. If in such a situation performance data by product, store, week are stored in the database, its size could be significantly larger.

About the author:

Erwin Bergsma is a Dutch national with an international mindset. He has an extensive background in the retailing industry that started back in the 1980's with a regional chain of bookstores in the Netherlands. Later he worked in the buying and merchandising department of Albert Heijn, the largest Dutch grocery-retailer.

During a 14 year career in consulting, account management and marketing with the global market information specialist A.C.Nielsen he built up an in-depth knowledge in the areas of data analysis, Category Management, floorplanning, spacemanagement and assortment planning. Having had local positions in the Netherlands, as well as European and global Marketing positions, Erwin has a broad understanding of the differences and similarities of retailing in many parts of the world.

In 2005 he founded Global Retail Business Solutions, providing specialist software applications and consulting services to companies in the FMCG and CPG business.

Over the years he has worked with many retailers and suppliers, ranging from relatively small locals to large multinationals, in virtually all distribution channels, including Food, Drug, Do-It-Yourself, Convenience, and Mass Merchandising, providing him with a unique and multi-faceted view on the retailing business.

Global Retail Business Solutions is a Belgium based company with 25 years of experience in data analysis, Category Management, assortment-, floor- and space-planning. Our software and services are delivered directly and through partners to clients around the globe.

In those 25 years we worked with hundreds of local and international retailers and suppliers in Food and Non-Food, guiding them in the implementation and successful use of specific software applications supporting their sales, marketing, buying and merchandising departments.

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