



## Sunshine Ace Hardware Nails Customer Satisfaction with Innovative Voice Technology

## Sunshine Ace Hardware Leverages Theatro to Digitally Connect Frontline Workforce

Sunshine Ace Hardware, situated in twelve locations along the western edge of the Southwest Florida coast, prides itself on being more than a hardware store. The company is staffed by knowledgeable people who have worked here for a long time, including two associates in 2023 that are celebrating their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversaries with the company. They carry everything you'd expect from a hardware store including paint, plumbing electrical supplies, outdoor power equipment and BBQ grills as well as an assortment of fishing tackle and gifts.

The retailer wanted to reimagine its customer service and its frontline employee engagement with a modern and accessible solution that would connect its entire team—leadership, groups and individual associates—in real-time. The goal was to create consistent in-store communications across all stores and to overcome challenges caused by manual processes and legacy communication tools. In both cases, Sunshine Ace Hardware lacked the necessary technology to set up a fully connected workforce and eliminate the communication gaps that were negatively impacting employee engagement, productivity, responsiveness, and store operating efficiencies.

**“One of our top focus areas as a company is increased productivity,”** says Michael Wynn, President from Sunshine Ace Hardware. **“We needed tools and resources that would help us to increase overall labor productivity and did quite a bit of digging into different solutions before we came across Theatro. We quickly recognized that their unique proposal provided the perfect intersection of improved communication between associates and access to real-time information that would empower our team and increase their ability to be more helpful to our customers.”**

Sunshine Ace Hardware wanted to increase overall sales per labor hour and to build a solid communication foundation that would help employees to improve selling, connections and engagement. One of the competitive differentiators for the company is its commitment to providing customers with hands-on expertise and support, so Sunshine Ace Hardware was eager to explore how the Theatro solution would allow for them to meet essential key performance indicators (KPIs) while providing them with the opportunity to increase team member output and communication.



**CHALLENGE****The Challenge: To provide fast and reliable service to customers through empowered frontline employees**

Frontline employees are vital to a retailer's operation and the quality of any customer's experience is directly related to how they engage with employees within the stores. At Sunshine Ace Hardware, there wasn't an optimized way for associates to communicate and this resulted in noticeable dips in responsiveness, engagement, productivity, and store operational efficiency.

There were six key issues that Sunshine Ace Hardware wanted to resolve:

1. **Associates struggled to reach critical resources at speed**, which led to an inefficient use of labor.
2. **Managers faced challenges when providing daily direction**, resulting in repeated communications to ensure everyone was on board with the day's planning.
3. **Associates were not connected to each other in an efficient way or to critical information they needed**, which eroded engagement and productivity.
4. **Associates had to walk to find a manager or use dated technologies like walkie-talkies or overhead paging to get assistance**, which impacted customer service and time.
5. **Associates could only access product and inventory information from static terminals**, often requiring them to abandon customers in-aisle while they searched for an answer.
6. **Slow employee response times to customer questions often led to missed opportunities** to upsell or increase the basket of each customer transaction.



**“Speed of service is key, regardless of how loyal customers are,”** says Chris Todd, CEO from Theatro. **“If they can get faster service somewhere else, they’ll go there. Competition is fierce and creating an in-store experience that attracts and retains customers is critical. This is especially true when it comes to order fulfilment or providing customer assistance. These processes must be frictionless, agile and truly convenient.”**

There was also a need to elevate the associate experience to help Sunshine Ace Hardware employees feel part of the team faster and be empowered earlier in the onboarding process. This not only directly impacts the customer experience but strengthens the commitment to an employee-centric culture and ultimately reduces turnover.

Theatro, in collaboration with Sunshine Ace Hardware, implemented the Theatro Mobile Communication Platform that is delivered as-a-Service and leverages in-store Wi-Fi networks to connect all the company’s associates across its 12 locations. It comes with voice-enabled Workforce Optimized Apps and Digital Workflows and provides every member of the team with a mobile device to use daily. This ensures everyone is connected to the enterprise network so that they are always reachable and able to get the information they need without friction.



**SOLUTION****The Solution: Building collaborative foundations to create operational consistency**

The solution had to address all the challenges outlined, while also ticking some very important company boxes. It had to seamlessly improve in-store communications across individuals within the company—from associates to leadership—and it had to do so in a way that was easy and accessible. The solution needed to connect the entire enterprise with a OneTeam approach that was agile, strategic, and capable of giving employees and the business a competitive edge.

For managers, the solution had to allow for fast, effective communication with associates across shifts and in multiple locations. Communication could no longer be fragmented, sporadic or complicated. It was critical that wait times were reduced for customers and associates alike. Finally, the platform had to integrate into existing systems and infrastructure so that teams could access critical information without abandoning customers to retrieve it.

There were also non-negotiable factors that the solution had to meet. It had to connect all associates, not a chosen few, and provide a heads-up and hands-free experience for associates as well as customers. It also had to include an easy interface that would be accessible to all generations in the workplace. Likewise, it needed to automate and increase process efficiencies for customer assistance requests to enable a seamless experience.

Running on Microsoft Azure Cloud, the solution includes key applications like One-to-One and Group Chat; Sales Announcement; Daily Huddle; One-to-One and Group Messaging; Associate Location; and In-Ear Training. In addition, Sunshine Ace Hardware is also utilizing Theatro's closed-loop Request and Response Workflows and Inventory Management Workflow Suite to equip associates with product, pricing and inventory information so they can stay engaged with customer in-aisle.

**“The biggest headache we had in the implementation process was building the Access Point foundation for the Theatro technology to work,”** says Michael from Sunshine Ace. **“Once that was done, the technology was easy to implement—it was plug-and-play, including the training of our associates. It was the smoothest pilot we’ve ever experienced as a company.”**



## RESULTS

### The Results: Redefining communication to increase labor productivity and employee engagement

Sunshine Ace Hardware has experienced measurable returns on their investment in the Theatro platform. The first was increased labor productivity. The seamless connection and collaboration between associates, experts and core leadership saw a reduced walk-to-talk time and a significant increase in employee engagement.

**“There has been an increase in overall communication trends in terms of one-to-one chat and group chats. In the last week 41.2% of our communication was one-to-one chat and 50% was group chat,”** says Michael from Sunshine Ace. **“Our response times have increased, and we have seen measured improvements in our most important metric—customer satisfaction. Our CSAT scores have never been higher than they are today.”**

The company has also experienced improved leadership effectiveness with easy communication between store managers and teams, and significantly better collaboration throughout. As Chris from Theatro points out, “Pre-installation, Sunshine Ace Hardware had no streamlined communication processes and team coordination was challenging due to device limitations but now they are engaged in the right ways. Thanks to the efficiency of the solution, managers and associates will need to find another way of getting in their 10,000 steps a day.”

Michael from Sunshine Ace agrees. **“Theatro has allowed us to add accountability into our communication process and to incentivize our associates. The transparency of reporting and communication has inspired our employees, and we have seen impressive shifts in response times, customer engagement and productivity. In fact, it is maybe one of the most important innovations we’ve implemented into our organization in the last decade.”**





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**— Michael Wynn, President, Sunshine Ace Hardware**

## About Theatro

Theatro is a Dallas-based company serving the world’s most notable brands, including The Container Store, Bass Pro/ Cabela’s, Macy’s, Tractor Supply Co, Walgreens, Wawa, World Market, and many more.

We are...innovators for the forgotten hourly worker, the game-changers who want you to win, and the locksmiths who can help you unlock the value of your most valuable assets—your frontline team members.

We have experienced the struggle with gaps in communication caused by subpar technology and disconnection. That’s why we are on a mission to connect every frontline employee with our “Heads Up & Hands-Free” voice-powered Mobile Communication Platform. Not only does it help our customers optimize operational performance, improve productivity, and drive long-term competitive advantages, but it also contributes to why their frontline teams report higher satisfaction levels than ever before.

For more information about Theatro, visit [www.theatro.com](http://www.theatro.com) or request a no-obligation [demo](#) to see our digital workflows in action today!