



## Editorial Backgrounder

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## StoreNext joint venture expected to provide stability for independent grocers in a fragmented information technology market

Representatives of the independent wholesale and retail grocery market welcome the formation of StoreNext Retail Technologies LLC, a joint venture dedicated to developing information technology (IT) systems that will drive costs and inefficiencies out of their operations and enable them to compete with larger, national chains. Fujitsu Transaction Solutions Inc., Dallas, and Retalix Ltd., Plano, Texas, announced the StoreNext joint venture on July 30, 2002.

“Without this partnership, the market for point-of-sale, back-office, and host platforms would have continued to be fractured and murky,” said Mike Brown, general manager of retail technology for **Unified Western Grocers (UWG)**, a \$3 billion retailer-owned, wholesale grocery cooperative that supplies independent grocers throughout the western United States. “We should now see more consistent product marketing planning and a common vision of the solutions that will be developed, marketed and supported.”

Glenn Gibson, vice president and chief information officer (CIO) of **Magruder Holdings, Inc.**, parent of the Washington, D.C.-based Magruder’s food chain, said that the joint venture will provide independent grocers a streamlined, efficient approach to IT management.

“It’s certainly a positive development,” Gibson said. We believe it will eliminate the ‘clutter’ in the marketplace and narrow the range of *real* solutions providers, reducing the time needed to do due diligence prior to the purchase.”

UWG’s Brown said that StoreNext “is the only company focused on the independent retail grocery segment. That should result in a common platform for our entire customer base, which will protect their capital investments and provide an easier migration path to newer technologies.”

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“The market has been too fragmented in the past,” said Gibson, “with numerous players moving in and out. There were many software houses who claimed to offer a ‘total solution,’ but they really didn’t. With StoreNext, there’s a clear combination of hardware and software expertise and leadership.”

Bill Bishop, president of **Willard Bishop Consulting**, a Chicago-based marketing and business development consulting firm specializing in retail and information technologies, characterized the StoreNext joint venture, “without question, a very big idea.”

Bishop, who has been recognized as an industry thought leader for more than 20 years, also said that StoreNext “will allow smaller retailers the opportunity to realize the same efficiencies that previously were available only to the large chains.”

“This has never been more important, since every retailer needs to reduce costs without negatively impacting the value and service they deliver to the customer in order to remain competitive. By outsourcing vital IT needs and services to StoreNext, retailers can now concentrate more of their energy on what they do best – running a great store and providing great customer service.”

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