



## At a Glance

United Fashions of Texas

## Industry

Women's Apparel

## Headquarters

San Antonio, Texas

## Number of Stores

85

## Employees

1,200 Employees

## Solution

Epicor Retail

## Business Challenge

To maintain its competitive advantage and keep pace with company growth, United Fashions of Texas (UFOT) sought to integrate its merchandising operations with a single, best-in-class solution that would provide more visibility while supporting the company's established business processes.

## Solution

UFOT deployed the Epicor Retail software suite, which includes Merchandising, Planning, Sales Audit and Warehouse Management modules.

## Business Benefits

- Streamlined operations and improved productivity and agility
- Improved planning capabilities and data visibility
- Increased speed and accuracy of stock flow from receiving to store shelves
- Improved sales audit efficiency and reporting
- More overall efficient use of resources

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United Fashions of Texas, a San Antonio-based chain of women's apparel stores, was founded in 1976 and operates under the Melrose banner ([www.melrosetore.com](http://www.melrosetore.com)). With 80 stores throughout Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California, UFOT focuses on the local needs and tastes of young Hispanic women, offering accessories and apparel for juniors, misses, plus sizes and maternity segments.

A private, family-owned company, UFOT prides itself on fashion, value and excellence in presentation. But being able to quickly identify and respond to the changing needs and desires of its customers is what's kept them ahead of the competition. By deploying new retail systems, UFOT has found a competitive edge through information technology.

"A few years ago we were working with some older software products that didn't offer us the opportunity to drill down to the level of detailed information that we needed," said Tom Ellison, Merchandise Planning and Allocation Manager at UFOT. "Having the right infrastructure to support the company's growth was a concern, and moving forward we wanted to retain our existing data, achieve better reporting, and add more robustness to our overall planning process. Basically, we needed more and better ways to leverage our data."

In his quest to gain more visibility to store systems, Ellison looked at 30 different retail software products. After reviewing the top six, he selected the Epicor Retail suite, which includes Merchandising, Merchandise Analytics, Planning, Sales Audit and Warehouse Management modules.

Since implementation in 2006, Ellison's team – consisting of himself, four allocators and eight buyers/merchandisers – has experienced tremendous time savings and streamlined operations.

**"This product gives us greater visibility, greater retention and a more granular level view of our business to determine what to do and where to go next."**

Tom Ellison,

Merchandise Planning and Allocation Manager, United Fashions of Texas

As UFOT's sole planner, Ellison is very close to the **Epicor Retail Planning** module, and relies on it to keep business moving forward during the good and bad times. "In the bad times, when it gets tough such as it's been for the last 18 months and for the foreseeable future, you need to understand what drives your business," advised Ellison. "This product gives us greater visibility, greater retention and a more granular level view of our business to determine what to do and where to go next."

For example, using their previous planning product, UFOT could only drill down to view a handful of attributes – company, department and class – and history was only maintained at store/class level. "Using the Epicor application, we can view company, department, sub-department, class, sub-class components – all the way down to a particular style," Ellison explained. "Because of this visibility and the amount of data we retain, we can look at anything we want to – and at any level – down to the store, style or color level for any specified period of time."

Ellison explained further, UFOT groups merchandise both within and across the hierarchy. Once the buyer suspects a new trend is emerging, they can quickly group the styles that exhibit the characteristics of this trend – independent of hierarchy restrictions. As an example, with "dark zip-front hoodies," the buyer can track sales and inventory of this specific group from separate sub-classes. Styles can be quickly added or deleted to this group, and the group can then be used to buy into, to allocate to base store inventories, or to and distribute store displays, and promotional/marketing instructions.

More efficient use of resources is the biggest benefit the UFOT team has experienced since implementing **Epicor Retail Sales Audit**. Sales audit is operated by the control division within UFOT, and is used to balance sales with deposits as well as identifying any missing transactions, cash shortages, credit out of balances, etc. Epicor's exception reporting allows potential problems to be quickly identified and corrected. "The new solution gives us more ability and visibility from a sales audit perspective," said Ellison. "Without it, we would've needed at least one additional person at this point, with future team additions as our growth continues. However, using Epicor's system, we can now audit 85 stores with only one person; we've dramatically cut our auditing time – it's phenomenal."

Providing UFOT with the tools and functionality needed to analyze, order, price and distribute merchandise, **Epicor Retail Merchandising** gives this small company the opportunity to manage big. "Let's face it – today we're small, we're lean, we're mean – and so we're just touching the surface in this area when it comes to functionality," said Ellison. "The amount of things we can do with Epicor Merchandising will only be limited by our imagination. The product is scalable to support our growth now and well into the future."

To support activities in and around its 100,000-square-foot facility, **Epicor's Retail Warehouse Management** module allows UFOT to track and locate merchandise in real time, dramatically increasing the speed and accuracy of stock flow from receiving through distribution to store shelves. Ellison estimates units processed per man hour in the warehouse have increased by 10%. "This enables us to get the product to the store much faster, especially during peak periods," he stated. "It's not unusual for merchandise purchased in market on Wednesday or Thursday to be selling in the stores the following Wednesday or Thursday."

As UFOT's footprint continues to grow in the women's apparel market, Epicor Retail will grow with them. "Through little steps, we are exploring the robustness of this product and leverage its functionality to enable our small, nimble team to best serve our fashion customers," said Ellison.

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## About Epicor

Epicor is a leading provider of enterprise business software solutions to the midmarket and divisions of Global 1000 companies. Founded in 1984, Epicor serves over 20,000 customers in more than 140 countries, providing solutions in over 30 languages.



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