



Talking with...

## Pete Catoe

Founder and CEO  
ECR Software Corporation



**ECRS automates the complex science of retail, enabling customers to focus on the art that catapults them above competitors. From front-store systems including point-of-sale and self-checkout, to comprehensive back office, warehouse, inventory and extensive supply chain automation, ECRS products solve challenging loss points with innovative technology.**

**Progressive Grocer:** What is “technical debt” and its bottom-line impact on a grocery enterprise?

**Pete Catoe:** Technical debt is a term used to describe systems that are poorly designed or cobbled together over time, which places headwinds in the form of ongoing hidden costs to daily operations and strategic inflexibility. There are examples of technical debt in today’s grocery store systems, like how POS and self-checkout are really different systems and how backroom or enterprise systems are decoupled from the POS. In many cases the grocery is stuck customizing various elements within many components to accomplish the new task, but that actually adds more technical debt. In the end, all debt must be paid; in many cases, that payment comes in the form of lost opportunity because the grocer’s system is simply too inflexible or too costly to change. Technical debt has a way of compounding, too.

**PG:** How do older models of retail systems compare to modern systems?

**PC:** The predominant older systems are based on a best-of-breed customization methodology, which essentially means cobbled-together software solutions comprised of many vendors. In some cases, the same vendor may have provided disparate software components, not necessarily designed from the ground-up to work together, but instead added to the vendor software stack through acquisitions over time. Modern systems, on the other hand, use best practices and are data driven with a unified synchronized DBMS and business logic. The HQ and Store Maintenance UI and reporting fits with the POS and self-checkout business logic, allowing for a more capable and or complex transaction execution set.

**PG:** Why should grocery retailers look towards a modern, best practices-based system?

**PC:** The more organized your system is, the more time you have to make it better and or react to rapidly changing market conditions. When all of the software components are designed to work together from the ground up, it can take you to a lower cost and higher performance capability, which is very difficult using the previous methodologies. Both large national and regional grocers are better off quickly deploying cutting-edge features that are baked into a modern best practices system.

**PG:** How can cutting-edge technical architecture redefine the boundaries of point of sale?

**PC:** As consumers, we are busy and often don’t have the energy to have a close relationship with our favorite grocery store. With this in mind, the point of sale should make the consumer’s life easier -- not more complex. It’s not enough to just mail or email a coupon to a consumer: the POS needs to execute the coupon during the customer’s next visit, without the customer having to hassle with paper coupons or smartphones. In addition, the system should execute the coupon only when all restrictions are met, regardless to how complex, and do all of this without the cashier having to do anything.

Another example is web-based store pickup and/or delivery. When a customer orders off your web site, they expect to have the same transactional experience as when shopping at your store, including rewards, loyalty points, circular offers and special pricing. This can only be done with a modern POS that can serve up the transaction no matter where it occurs.

**PG:** What technology does ECRS currently offer to grocery retailers?

**PC:** Our long-term philosophy and vision has guided us to build a system that unifies and reuses data and business logic to create systems with far less technical debt. From this perspective, we’ve built Catapult, an enterprise class vertical system that has built-in plug-and-play best practice business logic from HQ and to the store. Catapult also has POS and self-checkout capability that is completely integrated. Catapult’s modern architecture and best practices approach provide the strategic flexibility to compete cost effectively.

*For more information, visit <http://ecrsoft.com>.*