

# CASE STUDY

Transforming Operations With  
Real-Time Traffic Analytics





## BRAND BACKGROUND

**Dave & Buster's** is America's premier entertainment and dining destination, combining restaurant-quality food with an expansive arcade experience featuring hundreds of games. With 177 locations across the United States, the company has built its reputation on creating memorable experiences where families and friends can "eat, drink, play, and watch" together.

The brand's unique dual-revenue model sets it apart in the entertainment industry. Customers enjoy both food and beverage service alongside an extensive arcade featuring everything from classic games to cutting-edge virtual reality experiences. This hybrid approach requires sophisticated operational management to optimize both dining and entertainment experiences simultaneously.

### Leveling Up Location Complexity

Dave & Buster's stores vary significantly in size, ranging from 30,000 to over 70,000 square feet, with many locations featuring multiple entrances, often including direct store access and mall connectivity. This complexity demands a precise understanding of customer flow patterns and occupancy levels to deliver exceptional service across both revenue streams.

# THE CHALLENGE:

## From Intuition To Intelligence

For years, Dave & Buster's relied on a patchwork of manual processes and proxy metrics to understand their store performance. The company used what they called "unique power card swipes" as a traffic proxy, essentially counting how many customers purchased and used their arcade cards. While this provided insight into gaming customer behavior, it created a significant blind spot.

The operational challenges extended beyond incomplete customer counting. General managers relied on team members with manual clickers to walk the store and count occupancy. This is a time-consuming, inaccurate process that pulls valuable staff away from customer service.



The problem was that only tells you who was actually coming to the locations to play games," explains Ayotunde Gibbs, Vice President of Enterprise Systems and Data at Dave & Buster's. "But if you've been at Dave & Buster's before, you'll know that part of our experience is games and also food, which means if you came to our locations and you were eating, then we missed you in that traffic count.

**Ayotunde Gibbs,**

Vice President of Enterprise Systems  
and Data, Dave & Buster's



# WITHOUT REAL-TIME VISIBILITY INTO ACTUAL FOOT TRAFFIC, STORES STRUGGLED TO:



Optimize labor allocation during peak and off-peak periods



Understand true customer segmentation between dining and gaming



Make data-driven decisions about store operations and layouts



Provide accurate forecasting models for revenue planning



# OBJECTIVES:

## Playing To Win With Data

Dave & Buster's partnership with RetailNext focused on transforming their operations through comprehensive foot traffic analytics.



**Their key objectives included:**

### Complete Customer Visibility

Moving beyond power card proxies to capture every person entering their locations, regardless of whether they engaged with arcade games, dining, or both experiences.

### Real-Time Operational Intelligence

Providing general managers with instant access to occupancy data through mobile applications, eliminating the need for manual counting, and freeing up staff for customer service.

### Enhanced Labor Management

Using traffic patterns and occupancy metrics to optimize staffing levels across different areas of the store, ensuring adequate coverage during peak periods while controlling costs during slower times.

### Improved Forecasting Accuracy

Integrating true foot traffic data as a critical variable in AI and machine learning models, alongside historical revenue data and weather patterns, to enhance prediction accuracy.

### Customer Segmentation Insights

Understanding the delta between total visitors and gaming customers to better serve both dining-only and entertainment-focused guests, ultimately driving attachment and cross-selling opportunities.

### Multi-Location Performance Analysis

Creating transparency across all 177 stores to enable performance benchmarking, best practice sharing, and healthy competition between locations.



Having real-time access to our store data has been transformational for our general managers. They can now look at their phone and immediately understand occupancy levels, make informed staffing decisions, and even monitor the front entrance to ensure we're delivering the best possible welcome experience. This visibility has freed up our teams to focus on what matters most—creating amazing experiences for our guests.

**Ayotunde Gibbs,**

Vice President of Enterprise Systems and Data,  
Dave & Buster's



## THE SOLUTION:

### Game On For Smarter Insights

RetailNext provides comprehensive in-store analytics that capture real-time foot traffic patterns, occupancy levels, and customer flow throughout brick-and-mortar locations. For Dave & Buster's unique dual-purpose environment, the platform delivers integrated analytics that account for both dining and entertainment customer segments, while mobile accessibility ensures management teams can monitor store performance from anywhere.

RetailNext's advanced sensors capture granular visitor data across different store zones, enabling Dave & Buster's to understand not just how many people visit their locations, but how they navigate and engage with both experiences. The platform integrates seamlessly with existing BI tools, weather data, and historical metrics, creating a robust foundation for machine learning models that drive accurate forecasting and eliminate labor-intensive manual processes.



## IMPLEMENTATION

### STEP 1

#### Rollout & System Integration

Dave & Buster's implemented RetailNext's Traffic 3.0 solution across their entire network of 177 stores, with sensors strategically placed to capture traffic at all entry points, including direct store entrances and mall connections. The system integrated seamlessly with their BI performance tools and data lake architecture.

### STEP 2

#### Data Collection & Analysis

RetailNext's sensors began capturing comprehensive foot traffic data, including total visitors, occupancy levels, entry patterns, and customer flow distribution. This data was automatically processed and made available through both web dashboards and mobile applications, providing real-time visibility to management teams at all levels.

### STEP 3

#### Actionable Insights

The platform enabled immediate operational improvements, from eliminating manual click-counting to providing general managers with real-time occupancy data via mobile apps. Store leaders gained access to live video feeds of entrance areas, allowing them to monitor customer flow and direct staff accordingly.

### STEP 4

#### Continuous Optimization

Developed intuitive dashboards that combine foot traffic, revenue trends, and weather data, empowering operators to better anticipate demand. At the corporate level, these tools provide enterprise-wide and store-level visibility, enabling more accurate financial planning and strategic decision-making.



## How The Data Is Used To Score Big

### Real-Time Labor Optimization



#### OBJECTIVE

Replace manual click-counting and enable dynamic staffing decisions based on actual occupancy levels.



#### SOLUTION

Mobile app access to real-time occupancy data, allowing managers to see exactly how many people are in their location at any time.



#### RESULT

General managers can now make immediate staffing adjustments—calling in additional team members during unexpectedly busy periods or optimizing coverage during slower times, all without pulling staff away from customer service.

### Customer Segmentation & Revenue Optimization



#### OBJECTIVE

Understand the difference between total foot traffic and gaming customers to identify cross-selling opportunities.



#### SOLUTION

Compare total RetailNext visitor counts against unique power card usage to calculate the delta of dining-only customers.



#### RESULT

Clear visibility into customer segments enables targeted “attach” strategies, encouraging dining customers to try arcade games and gaming customers to extend their visits with food and beverages.

## Store Design & Investment Planning



### OBJECTIVE

Optimize store layouts and entrance investments during remodels, particularly for locations with multiple entry points.



### SOLUTION

Traffic analytics showing visitor distribution between direct store entrances and mall entrances.



### RESULT

Data-driven decisions about where to invest in entrance design and aesthetics, focusing resources on high-traffic entry points while avoiding unnecessary spending on underutilized entrances.

## Performance Benchmarking & Competition



### OBJECTIVE

Create transparency and healthy competition across the 158-store network.



### SOLUTION

System-wide access to traffic data, allowing managers to see performance rankings and compare with nearby locations.



### RESULT

Increased awareness and motivation as managers can see their store's ranking within the chain and compare performance with other locations in their market, driving operational improvements.

## Enhanced Forecasting & AI Models



### OBJECTIVE

Improve revenue forecasting accuracy by incorporating foot traffic as a key variable alongside historical data and weather patterns.



### SOLUTION

Integration of RetailNext traffic data into existing machine learning models that already used historical revenue and weather data.



### RESULT

More accurate daily forecasting enables better inventory management, staffing optimization, and operational planning across food service, arcade maintenance, and customer service functions.





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What I'm most excited about is how this data is becoming integral to everything we do. We're not just using it for labor management anymore—it's feeding our AI models, informing our remodel investments, helping us understand our customers better, and creating a culture where every decision is backed by real data. Our general managers have gone from relying on intuition to having concrete insights at their fingertips. That transformation is showing up in our customer experience and our bottom line.

**Ayotunde Gibbs,**

Vice President of Enterprise Systems and Data,  
Dave & Buster's



## CONCLUSION:

### Powered-Up Strategy

Dave & Buster's transformation from manual processes to data-driven operations shows how retail analytics can revolutionize business models. Replacing guesswork with real-time insights, they empower management to optimize staffing, investments, and foster transparency across stores.

Notably, integrating foot traffic, historical, and weather data into forecasting models has changed how they plan strategically, helping them better anticipate customer needs and deliver top entertainment and dining experiences.



## ABOUT RETAILNEXT

The first technology platform to bring e-commerce style shopper analytics to brick-and-mortar stores, brands, and malls, RetailNext is a pioneer in focusing entirely on optimizing the shopper experience. Through its centralized SaaS platform, RetailNext automatically collects and analyzes shopper behavior data, providing retailers with insight to improve the shopper experience in real time.

**560+**  
brands globally

**100+**  
countries

**2007**  
year founded

