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Stephen Rothwell



Stephen Rothwell is co-founder and director of Eagle Eye Solutions, which works with retailers such as Comet, Blockbuster and The Aurora Group to distribute and redeem mobile coupons via credit card terminal and EPoS technology. In June the company secured £1.5 million in a Series A round of funding. Sir Terry Leahy, the former chief executive of Tesco, and top-ranked City retail analysts, Bill Currie and Iain McDonald, were among the backers. Eagle Eye Solutions' other services include retail gift cards, mobile payments and mobile based loyalty programmes.

Retail Systems: How did you get into retail?
Stephen Rothwell: My fascination with "building stuff" for consumers began when I worked for a small mobile phone development company called Orbitel. The first day I saw a mobile phone in a shop that I had a small part in developing was the most exciting thing to happen to me (work-wise!) and I realised this was what I wanted to do – produce things that consumers wanted and see them displayed in the High Street.

RS: Who has been the biggest influence in your career?
SR: I have been lucky enough to have had many influences. Probably the one that stands out the most is Dave Birch (Consult Hyperion). I worked at Consult for three years early in my career and Dave's entrepreneurial spirit and ability to think "outside of the box" really inspired me.

RS: Who in retail inspires you and why?
SR: Charles Dunstone stands out for me. He wasn't appointedas CEO of an existing big company and did well; he created the whole company from his bedroom.

RS: Which IT professional do you most admire?
SR: Everyone working in IT "stands on the shoulders of giants" to use the phrase that Newton popularised. But one of the giants for me is Charles Babbage, who designed, but never built, the first programmable computer and printer – in the 19th century. More than 200 years later, his "difference engine" was actually built and found to work exactly as he anticipated.In a profession dominated by men, I also like the idea that one of the few contemporaries who understood Babbage's work was Ada Lovelace, who has a very good claim to be the world's first programmer. Surely, she should provide more inspiration for women to enter our profession?

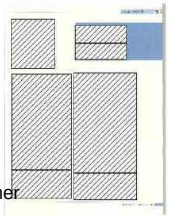
RS: What do you like most about the retail sector?
SR: You can positively affect peoples' lives on a day-to-day basis.

RS: Is there anything that you dislike or that frustrates you about the retail business?
SR: It can be a traditional, conservative industry and there is often a tendency not to embrace change until others have led the way. For retail to survive the challenges thrown down by the digital revolution, we need to embrace technology and move faster with innovation.

RS: What technology can't you live without?
SR: My mobile phone. And clothes are pretty handy, if you think about it.

RS: How do you relax?
SR: Three ways: Good food shared with friends and family; favourite film or TV show on the sofa; Inventing stuff and experimenting with software.

RS: What was your last purchase both online and in the High Street and were they positive experiences?
SR: Online: Dyson bladeless fan. Crazily expensive but the engi-



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neering side of me needs to take it apart. Amazon is always a good experience as far as shopping is concerned, but the delivery is a little bit hit-and-miss sometimes.

InStore: Toys R Us: present for my niece - there are some things we need to prod and poke to get a real feel for how much noise they make. How can I go wrong with a massive warehouse full of toys? I loved it.

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