

## Why StoreForce WFM+ is the perfect fit for growing Specialty Retailer Soft Surroundings.



Founded in 1999 as a catalog retailer, Soft Surroundings opened its first brick and mortar location in 2005. The St. Louis-based company offers upscale women's apparel, home décor, and beauty products online, through catalogs and at its stores. The stores are laid out to make women feel like they've jumped into the catalog - a reflection of the demand from their customers who enjoy the experience of seeing the merchandise. Understanding their customer base has led this dynamic specialty retailer to flourish instead of fail. They've expanded into their hottest markets with 60 brick and mortar locations and plans to open another 15 by the end of 2018. Brick and mortar are now essential to their brand delivery and business expansion.

Marc Galloway is the Director of Store Operations for Soft Surroundings. Marc searches for technology that will support and enable growth. He looks for management tools that will satisfy immediate and future demands. Initially, Marc came to StoreForce looking for a scheduling platform. They were working in Excel and Marc needed an automated scheduling tool to consistently optimize operations. He was impressed with StoreForce WFM+. He realized that WFM+ would be flexible enough to adapt to his business, and he recognized that it was the plus that was really going to drive the value. With StoreForce WFM+ Marc found the perfect fit and then some.

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### The Plus in WFM+ Makes All the Difference

Marc explains, “People tend to think of WFM applications as a timekeeper and scheduler. What’s unique about StoreForce WFM+ is that it’s a complete suite of products including task management and reporting. This functionality has helped us bridge a gap in our operation as we bring together disparate systems. StoreForce WFM+ has allowed us to create a more holistic image of our retail operation and that is really what has been great about its implementation.”

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StoreForce WFM+ is a Sales Performance System underpinned by a Specialty Retail WFM. Marc saw it as the ideal system. “I was like a kid in a candy store when they did their demo.” He says with a laugh, “I knew there were going to be metrics like traffic and sales that helped the algorithm behind the scenes to help make

decisions about how our payroll is allocated. I just hadn’t realized that StoreForce had invested so much in R&D. I asked myself, ‘How can we benefit as an organization by giving Store Managers and Associates access to all of that data in a way that is easy and actionable?’”

StoreForce was the only vendor they spoke with that truly understood retail without just saying they did. Marc saw that immediately, in speaking with the StoreForce people, and in particular, Chris Matichuk, StoreForce GM. “My experience with a lot of tech vendors is everyone always says they are an organization of retailers,” says Marc, “but when you sit down at a table with Chris, you realize that she’s the real deal. She’s completing your sentences and she wouldn’t be able to do that had she not worked in a retail environment.”

## StoreForce WFM+ Partnership Is Not a One Size Fits All Approach



**Mark Galloway**  
Director of Store Operations

Soft Surroundings has unique business demands. Just like there are different ways to coach associates and different revenue streams, there are different KPIs in a catalog and brick-and-mortar business. “With some of the other software systems that we have investigated, demoed, and even implemented ... the expectations of the provider (are) that we (the customer) conform to their definition of retail. We have to then just be willing to say, ‘Okay, this is how they measure an ADS and their system is going to output that way.’”

With StoreForce WFM+, Soft Surroundings was able to customize how the different systems that are part of their environment could work with WFM+. For example, a custom KPI that was 100% unique to Soft Surroundings needed to be addressed. By working in partnership, StoreForce and Soft Surroundings were able to ensure that the company didn’t have to compromise because of the system. WFM+ was able to take the data in a way that Soft Surroundings could then perform a calculation that aligned with their preferred definition of what each KPI actually was.

StoreForce's practical retail experience provided the background to understand how to make the application work for Soft Surroundings and the two companies continue to work together as a team to ensure the system remains adaptable so that it can continue to support their growth. When it comes to partnering with StoreForce WFM+ to build an IT structure for brick and mortar growth, Soft Surroundings is a very happy customer.