Modern Retail Accounting

Global retail business is 24/7 and complex. Companies slow to modernize are at a competitive disadvantage.
Today’s fast paced environment is shaping a new breed of highly connected, savvy consumers. And, new technology is changing the core nature of retail operations. As the primary business of retail evolves to meet rising demands, accounting and finance often struggle to keep up.

In the global market place, transactions happen around the clock. Mobile apps, web properties, and brick-and-mortar stores are all driving revenue. Multichannel sales compound the volume of work already associated with retail accounting. High-growth companies’ see new problems daily. Yesterday’s solutions fail to meet the needs of tomorrow’s challenges. A perfect example of new problems born of success is the leading local commerce company Groupon.
Groupon went from a one-city operation to a company operating in 40 countries in a mere seven years. Aggressive expansion caused significant challenges around visibility and accountability in the financial close process. “Due to our rapid growth, our global processes began to decentralize, and different regions began using different tools,” said Joseph Albrecht, Financial Systems Manager, at Groupon. “In certain countries, the close process would fall behind schedule. Yet we didn’t have real visibility into who was behind.”

“Without BlackLine, we would never be able to get everything closed and reconciled within the fifth or sixth day of the month. It’s freed up our accounting team to work on more value-add projects like analysis.”

—JOSEPH ALBRECHT, FINANCIAL SYSTEMS MANAGER, Groupon

This happens because new problems get met with old solutions. Equipping staff with spreadsheets to manage vast amounts of data is time consuming and ineffective. Manually processing high volumes of transactions is error-prone and complex. Moreover, just closing the books leaves little time for analyzing results. Without time for analysis, retail organizations are unable to confront emerging challenges. In an evolving marketplace, companies without analysis will be left behind.
The complex nature of 24/7 global retail business means companies slow to modernize their accounting operations will be left behind.
Focus on Analysis, Not Transactions

Retailers need access to accurate, real-time financial data. Organizations must account for inventory, leases, fee allocation, and so much more than transactions. Such information is used to make strategic growth decisions. Yet, no time remains for in-depth analysis. How then can an organization understand the impacts of new programs on profit margins and the business?

The challenges facing retail accounting are immense. Transaction matching, workflow tasks, and reconciliations can no longer manually executed on spreadsheets.

The fastest way for accounting and finance teams to offer more value to the broader business is to automate process with technology. Instead of spending countless cycles reviewing zero-balance accounts, automate reconciliations. Focus on your critical accounts. Instead of ticking-and-tying transactions, automate matching. Focus on exceptions. Instead of searching through emails for outstanding approvals, automate escalation and workflows. Focus on executing tasks, not figuring out what to do next. New technology can automate portions of every step of the reconciliations and financial close process. Stop focusing on the transactional. Start focusing on the analytical.

Benefits of Financial Close & Accounting Automation Software

1. Automation
   Replace manual, spreadsheet-driven processes. Automate account reconciliations, journal entries, transaction matching, task management, and variance analysis.

2. Visibility
   Gain clear visibility into business data across multiple currencies. Accessing this data where and when it is needed—in real time.

3. Efficiency
   Spend less time on transactional tasks to provide value-added services. Stop just tallying up the figures. Make sense of financial data to improve business performance.

4. Trust
   Detect and correct errors to ensure financial statement accuracy. Reduce the risk of accounting irregularities. Manage store inventories and better account for gift card balances.

5. Reporting
   Validate that all reporting from ERP systems (SAP, NetSuite, Intacct, Oracle). Enhance Finance’s strategic contribution with accurate data and analysis.
BlackLine Offers a Modern Approach for Retail Accounting

BlackLine provides software that manages and automates complex, manual, and repetitive accounting processes. We enable both high-growth and established companies to move beyond outdated accounting practices. BlackLine enables Continuous Accounting by embedding automation, control, and period-end tasks within day-to-day activities. This adjusts the historically rigid accounting calendar to better mirror the broader business. Accounting and finance teams optimize business processes and costs with the BlackLine platform. Capture, confirm, and provide timely financial data necessary for reporting, all while improving efficiency.

Operational Benefits of BlackLine

BlackLine’s unified cloud platform empowers accounting and finance teams to automate period-end activities and to drive Continuous Accounting processes across their organization. Finally, technology is available that enables real-time reporting and analysis, and an efficient and accurate process. The BlackLine Enhanced Finance Controls and Automation platform:

- Reflects a modern way of operating - Instead of completing period-end accounting activities in a few days, work is performed in smaller batches. This means accurate information is always available and there's more time to review it. And more review means reduced risk of fraud or restatement.

- Enables faster analysis and real-time accuracy - Data gets analyzed continuously, based on the nature of the underlying business need. As needs change data analysis can happen hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, etc.

- Embeds operational efficiency - Consistent workload can be built-in to the process, reducing the peaks and valleys of accounting labor associated with the legacy record-to-report chaos.

- Leverages the power and connectivity of cloud technology - Unify the experience of dispersed teams, across multiple ERPs and entities. Consolidating manual processes in the cloud provides global, controlled, and continuous access for accounting.
After reviewing and testing several solutions, Groupon selected BlackLine’s Finance Controls and Automation platform. BlackLine is entirely cloud-based. Finance team members all over the world can access financial close data when needed. They no longer wait for someone to aggregate, sign off/on, scan, and email spreadsheets. Groupon rolled out BlackLine’s Account Reconciliation and Transaction Matching products to 80 business entities over seven months.

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Reduced time spent on daily cash reconciliations by 85%

Expecting high growth, embedded scalability into accounting

Streamlined auditing process with auditor self-service capabilities

Added visibility across 500 markets in 40 countries
Under Armour chose BlackLine's accounting solution because of its integration and partnership with SAP. Optimizing accounting processes is a journey. They solved their most pressing concerns with BlackLine Account Reconciliations. "While the solution has some great added functionalities we are taking advantage of now, an account reconciliations application was our most immediate need at the time — and BlackLine solved that for us."

READ MORE CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORIES @ BLACKLINE.COM/CUSTOMERS
5 Benefits with Retail Accounting
Close & Automation Software

Modern technology is changing the nature of the retail business. It is time for retail accounting departments to experience similar advances. BlackLine cloud software automates manual accounting operations, including transaction matching, journal entries, and daily and period-end account reconciliations. Retail companies realize significant efficiency gains and ensure accuracy by embedding control and visibility.

Automatically Match All Types of Transactions
Stop manually ticking and tying thousands of transaction every day. BlackLine Transaction Matching matches any and all transaction types – one million per minute. Unmatched transactions are used to create reconciling items and correcting journal entries. Streamline and automate detail-heavy activities. Save hundreds of hours on bank reconciliations, credit card matching, and invoice-to-PO matching.

Confirm Key Account Balances Every Day
Verify balances across different channels, store locations, currencies, and transaction types. BlackLine Daily Reconciliations enables continual validation of account balances and transactional details. Companies can ensure accuracy of critical accounts throughout an accounting period. Standardize routine processes with automation. Embed control and auditability. Refocus accountants on exception handling and discrepancy investigation, instead of manual and tedious activities.

Centralize & Automate End-to-End Journals Management
Journal entries for gift card transactions and credit card fee allocations often need manual processing. Spreadsheets are manually passed around for approval and review before eventual posting. BlackLine Journal Entry centralizes journal entry management. Retail companies can automate creation, approval, and review of journals using dynamic data. This can be done with data from many sources, including bank feeds and credit card statements.
Legacy account reconciliation processes are manual and error-prone. BlackLine Account Reconciliations automates and standardizes the entire reconciliation process. The platform helps ensure accuracy of bank accounts and inventories across dispersed locations. Compare general ledger, bank, and inventory data, in search of anomalies. Investigate discrepancies, attach supporting documentation, and take required actions. Standardize, control, and streamline bank, cash, credit card, and inventory reconciliations.

Save IT resources from addressing emerging challenges with ad hoc integrations, and reports. BlackLine’s cloud-based accounting software is built for connectivity. Our platform integrates with SAP, NetSuite, Oracle, and more than 40 other ERPs. It enables data imports from bank files, POS systems, credit card statements, and other systems. Ensure data integrity without risk of conversion and entry errors.
Solutions Designed to Modernize Retail Accounting & Finance

BlackLine builds solutions that modernize finance and accounting. We aim to enhance productivity and help detect accounting errors before they become problems. BlackLine products work in unison to remove manual spreadsheet-dependent processes prone to human error. From reconciliations and journals to intercompany settlement and the financial close, BlackLine’s cloud platform unifies accounting. More than 130,000 people accurately, securely, and efficiently execute critical accounting tasks in BlackLine.

**Account Reconciliations**
Automate and standardize the entire reconciliation process. Drive accuracy in the financial close with embedded controls. Provide accountants with a streamlined method to verify the correctness and appropriateness of their balance sheets.

**Journal Entry**
Centralize journal entry management and enable the creation, review, and approval of journals. Electronically certify and store them with all supporting documentation. Post journals to any general or sub ledger systems with pre-posting validation eliminating rejections.

**Transaction Matching**
Reconcile millions of transactions in minutes. Match any type of data from many data sources and identify matched and unmatched transactions rapidly. Quickly and easily create reconciling items from unmatched transactions as part of a reconciliation.
Solutions Designed to Modernize Retail Accounting & Finance

**Task Management**
Centrally manage accounting tasks including unified integration with journals and reconciliations. Automatically certify tasks in a hierarchy when child tasks are complete. Control and track a variety of task types including close checklists, PBC lists, tax filings, and more.

**Daily Reconciliations**
Continually check and ensure accuracy throughout an accounting period and automate labor-intensive reconciliations. Ensure the validity of the balances of bank, credit card, lockbox, and other key accounts. Embed controls and remove risk from manual spreadsheet-based processes.

**Variance Analysis**
Automate the monitoring and analysis of account balance fluctuations using rules that are easily customizable for your business. Identify account balances that fall outside of configurable thresholds. Manage risks by quickly uncovering discrepancies and flagging them for further investigation.

**Consolidation Integrity Manager**
Automate the tedious system-to-system reconciliation process. Bring data from your systems into a centralized location. Provide an automated workflow to investigate discrepancies. Stop manually comparing multiple ledgers to a consolidation system.

**Intercompany Hub**
Centralize the entire intercompany process. Manage and control all the global complexity inherent to intercompany accounting including reconciliations, currency values, transaction amounts, tax implications, journal creation, and approval workflows.

**BlackLine Insights**
Modernizing the Way Retail Accounting & Finance Work

Accounting and finance leaders are expected to deliver accurate, compliant, and real-time analysis of their organization’s financial performance at all times. Yet many companies wrestle with outdated systems and processes that don’t meet the needs of today’s business. Leading organizations are transforming their finance operations to reduce compliance risks and gain greater efficiencies.

The BlackLine Vision

At BlackLine, we are working closely with our customers to automate and optimize a wide range of core accounting and financial processes to achieve “Modern Finance.” Modern Finance is a journey yielding continuous improvement in the quality, accuracy, and efficiency of accounting operations. By embedding process standardization, technical automation, and constant analysis, Modern Finance transforms the way accounting and finance are done.

The Path to the Point-in-Time Close

BlackLine’s technology platform delivers a fresh approach to Modern Finance through Continuous Accounting, which embeds automation, control, and tasks that are typically not performed until the period-end directly within day-to-day activities. As a result, the rigid accounting calendar more closely mirrors the dynamic nature of actual business cycles. Continuous Accounting is a modern approach that empowers real-time financial intelligence and allows finance and accounting teams to provide unprecedented value to the larger business.

The Modern Finance Advantage

The Modern Finance movement is quickly becoming a competitive differentiator by liberating accountants from the rote and repetitive labors inherent in their work. It also enables CFOs to execute the enterprise performance agenda with unprecedented visibility, control, and efficiency. The time has arrived to jumpstart the power of advanced cloud, automated analytics, risk mitigation, and deep reporting technologies.
“Now, we can complete our end-to-end reconciliations process several business days earlier than before. And we can easily and efficiently follow up on open or incomplete items.”

—MOLLY E. BOYLE, CPA, SENIOR MANAGER OF CORPORATE ACCOUNTING, UNDER ARMOUR
The Modern Finance Platform for Retail Companies

Designed entirely in the cloud from the ground up, BlackLine is the only unified technology solution built specifically for accounting and finance. Those embarking on the Modern Finance journey embed process optimization and technical automation to facilitate unprecedented accuracy and visibility, while unleashing accountants to add more value to the broader business.

130,000+
Finance & Accounting End-Users

1,300+
Global Clients

100+
Countries Reached

Powerful Cloud-Based Platform
The Future of Accounting & Finance

Modernize the way finance and accounting work and improve the efficiency, accuracy, and strategic impact of finance to better serve the broader organization. Beyond providing numbers, BlackLine automates processes, streamlines redundant tasks, and most importantly, delivers trust in accounting operations.