

## VAR's Sales Soar On Mobile POS, Payments

By Matt Pillar, senior executive editor, Innovative Retail Technologies

*Building mobile into 100 percent of its installations drives 50 percent growth for VAR Price Professional Solutions.*



**David Price, CEO, Price Professional Solutions, and customer Karen Terry, bookkeeper, American Water**

**Photo By Jack Puryear**

Like many students pursuing their Master of Business Administration, MBA candidate David Price was tasked with a senior project that involved building a fictitious business plan, complete with extensive validation that the business would be financially solvent. His chosen venture was an IT services company designed to serve the network and computing needs of merchants. The

### Price Professional Solutions

**Founded:**

1999

**2014 Revenue Growth Rate:**

45%

**2015 Projected Revenue Growth Rate:**

50%

**Employees:**

10

**PH:**

(512) 537-0791

**Website:**

[www.1-PPS.com](http://www.1-PPS.com)

**Verticals:**

convenience stores, grocery stores, restaurants, retail, salons, service companies

**Vendor partners:**

Clover, DinerWare, Electronic Payments, Lavu, pcAmerica, ProCharge, Revel Systems, ShopKeep POS

**Distributor partners:**

BlueStar, JR's Depot, MetSales, TASQ

**Seek Creativity, Support From Your Payment Processor**

For the past seven years, Austin-based VAR Price Professional Solutions has been offering the

longer he toiled through the project, the clearer it became that his idea had merit, and after putting so much work into a business plan, he thought, why not give it a go in the real world?

That was 16 years ago. While Price was confident in the plan he created when he launched Price Professional Solutions back in 1999, he admits that the extent of his company's success catches even him by surprise. "I knew it was a sound plan," he says. "But I didn't realize then that it would turn out to be such a great idea."

The hospitality market in Price's hometown of Austin, TX, was — and still is — booming. Merchant services and POS systems were — and still are — in high demand. And today, the company is reaping the rewards of the early groundwork it laid in its mobile POS and payments offerings, as the high-tech Austin market embraces mobility at a fast clip.

### ***Austin: A Hotbed Of Mobility***

Nationally, mobile POS and payment adoption forecasts have been more talk than action for a decade now. That's far from the case in Austin, where a young demographic educated by a large base of postgraduate institutions — and, of course, the presence of Dell — results in tech-hungry businesses and tech-savvy consumers. Dozens of mobile payment software developers are headquartered there, including a brand-new Visa software development center, and leaders in the space consistently choose the city as a mobile payments test market. For Price Professional Solutions, the city chosen by outsiders as a test market for all things mobile is anything but an experiment. It's the company's bread and butter, and it's a harbinger of the next big thing in mobility. "Mobile POS and payments are growing at a rapid pace," says Price, who sells several mobile solutions, including smartphone-based ProCharge and tablet POS solution Clover Mobile from Electronic Payments, Inc. to merchants who wish to accept payments on-the-go, refund customers, and reconcile sales from a smartphone or tablet. While mobile POS and payments are an occasional add-on sale for many resellers, they're the de facto standard for Price Professional Solutions. "All of our current customers have deployed at least one mobile terminal. Typically, they buy two or three POS units and at least one mobile device for line busting or mobile sales, depending on their business."

This growing appetite for mobility lines up with new research from Innovative Retail Technologies (IRT) magazine. In its recent 2016 tech spending report, IRT reveals that mobile hardware is retailers' top store-level hardware spending priority for 2016 and has been the case for the past four years running.

full suite of payment processing solutions from Electronic Payments, Inc. (EPI). That includes the merchant processor's Clover POS and ProCharge payment devices, as well as support for gift cards, pay at the pump, merchant cash advances, and merchant credit card processing. Price Professional Solutions founder and CEO David Price says EPI has consistently proven its willingness to put skin in the game on behalf of its ISOs and sales agents. "We recently offered a POS system to a merchant, but EPI hadn't developed integration for the retailer's gift card program," explains Price. "It was a sticking point in the completion of the sale, so I worked with the software development team at EPI, and within a month we were able to offer a working solution." Price says the extra effort on the part of his payment services provider not only saved that particular sale, but also helped Price Professional Solutions sell the same POS solution to five other merchants.

Price says development support dovetails with sales and postsale product support. "I'm always just a phone call, email, or text away from someone who can help me to ensure our customers are getting the support they need," he says.

[www.electronicpayments.com](http://www.electronicpayments.com)

### ***Mobile Payment Acceptance Ushers In A Diverse Client Base***

Traditional retailers and restaurateurs comprise the bulk of Price Professional Solutions' mobile device sales portfolio — they use mobile devices for line busting and take advantage of integrated inventory management controls — but they're just two among many mobile payment-seeking businesses. Recently, mobile payment Subscribe to Business Solutions magazinesolutions have been driving the VAR's expansion into new markets. "Salons, companies that sell and service HVAC (heating, ventilation, & air conditioning) and water systems, electricians, pest control providers, and plumbers are all showing keen interest in SaaS and subscription-based mobile payment acceptance," says Price. His company is selling cloud-based SaaS at an opportune time; the previously referenced Retail Tech Spending report from IRT illustrates a warm acceptance of cloud applications by the merchant community.

"Mobile payment solutions on Apple and Android phones and tablets make it easy for them to take payments in the field, and because they're SaaS-based solutions, the front office can see the payments in real time from the payment gateways."

While Price Professional Solutions' roots are in POS and IT solution sales, mobile payment acceptance solutions are allowing the company to capitalize on an element common to any retail or service industry — the transaction — to drive sales. While some resellers would balk at expanding into verticals outside their comfort zones, Price says serving a diverse client base isn't all that challenging. "We're a service provider ourselves, and as long as the service we provide fits a business need and is offered on a personal level, we're happy to explore opportunities with new end users," he says. Those opportunities, he says, drove upwards of \$30,000 in new sales last year.

### ***Sell Mobile, Sell Networks***

To ensure their stores are prepared to offer mobile payment solutions to customers and associates without disruption, bulletproof wireless networking is in order. According to the aforementioned IRT tech spending report, that's not lost on merchants. Wireless networking and Wi-Fi are their top in-store software spending priorities for 2016, and Price's company is taking advantage.

Network infrastructure services, he says, are a natural fit for a bundled sale. "Our IT mobility services are focused on keeping customer networks up 99.9 percent of the time and making sure their devices are secure," says Price. As such, he says full POS sales typically include routers, Wi-Fi and firewall configuration, and an automated, cellular network-based failover solution in the event a client's Internet connection is lost. While the majority of his wireless network-related sales are bundled with new POS builds, he says it's not uncommon for merchants to purchase wireless network configuration packages to support existing third-party mobile POS hardware and applications.

Price says backup and recovery services are another add-on commonly included in bundled sales, particularly for its legacy POS system customers. He says some 60 percent of his legacy customers take advantage of the service. "That figure is growing, because the customers who don't purchase our backup and disaster recovery service often choose to after their first crash, or they choose to transition to a SaaS POS architecture that doesn't require it."

### ***Mobile Payments: Desired, But Misunderstood***

Price says mobile POS and payments sales are hot, but not without challenge. Educating customers on mobile infrastructure and security, he says, is the foremost of those challenges. "Most merchants are generally skeptical, if not scared, of wireless payment security," says Price. "They fear that if they use a mobile device to transact, the consumer's card number

can potentially be exposed and stolen through the air.” That’s why Price is adamant about the VAR’s responsibility as a security protocol educator. “Many merchants don’t understand things like encryption, EMV, and chip technology. Helping them to understand payment security is not only the right thing to do, it yields more payment-related sales,” he says.

Competition — especially in the mobile-minded Austin market — is another challenge Price faces on a daily basis. “Competition in the mobile payments business is fierce. There’s a new competitor virtually every day, from banks to startups and established merchant service providers,” he says. “We have to be in a constant state of awareness of the new technologies coming to market, and how they’ll impact our business.” The best defense against the competition, he says, is less about technology than it is about personal service. “We’re confident that we’ll retain existing customers and win new ones because of the high degree of personal attention we offer. Every one of our customers can call or text me any time of the day, and we have strong personal relationships with every one of them.”

The future of the thriving company that began as a class project is a decidedly mobile one. As it charts the turbid waters of the mobile payments industry, Price says mobile wallets will take center stage. “In general, more consumers are moving away from old-school plastic credit and gift cards,” he says. “In hospitality, we’re seeing more pay at the table using the mobile device. Card payments are moving to smartphone apps, which can do everything traditional cards can and more, in a very secure manner.” That’s the future of mobile payments, and Price Professional Solutions is committed to ensuring its customers are prepared for it.