Customer Profile

Courtaulds improves delivery with Infor Supply Chain Execution

Facts at a glance

Product: Infor Supply Chain Execution
Industry: Fashion
Employees: 700
Country: UK

"Through our deployment of Infor SCE, we have achieved our objectives of greater visibility, accuracy and efficiency, which means ultimately, we are able to do more with less"

—Bill Jarman, CIO, Courtaulds UK Ltd.

About the company

Courtaulds UK Ltd. is one of the largest suppliers of apparel in the UK. Specializing in men's essentials, womenswear, lingerie, and hosiery, it owns brands that include Gossard, Berlei, Aristoc, Pretty Polly, and Elbeo The company also supplies private label apparel to many UK high street retailers. Courtaulds' main sources of supply are from China, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and its own hosiery manufacturing facility in the UK. The company employs 700 people in the UK. Courtaulds' distributes its brands and some of its private label stock to UK retailers and Internet customers from a warehouse at Loscoe in Derbyshire. The warehouse holds about 4,500 different SKUs, with a stockholding of approximately 3.5 million stock items at any given time. In 2012, almost 16 million stock items moved through the Loscoe distribution center.

Setting the strategy

Courtaulds' Loscoe site was running an old legacy warehousing system where there was very limited support available.
Its ability to respond to increasing business pressures, such as to adapt to new customer requirements, deliver higher volumes, manage costs, and reduce turnaround times, continued to be seriously hampered by the system's inflexibility.
Courtaulds' management teamdecided that they needed to implement a new warehousing application.

The new system had to facilitate greater flexibility in picking processes, improve space utilization and reduce the reliance on people expertise at the warehouse. In turn, these improvements would lead to more efficiency and greater stock visibility, which would help improve customer service and working practices and enhance stock accuracy.

Getting business specific

To support these objectives, the new system had to be able to bulk pick large orders of private label products for retailers in the most efficient way possible, while supporting picking of a wide range of order sizes for branded products delivered to stores, online retail outlets, and individuals purchasing on websites.

Courtaulds had used Infor™ BPCS for many years, as well as Infor's Warehouse Management solution, to support warehousing processes at a previous site. As a result, when it came to selecting a warehouse management solution for the Loscoe distribution center, the team had complete confidence that Infor Supply Chain Execution (SCE) was the right application to meet its needs. Having made its decision, Courtaulds applied lessons learned from the project at its previous site, and focused on getting processes right from the outset.
The implementation was undertaken by a team that consisted of both Infor and Courtaulds' consultants, all of whom had been involved in the previous implementation. Courtaulds undertook a phased approach to deploying the software, in order to ensure that any issues could be identified and rectified as the project went along. They also highlighted training as being central to the project.

"This level of planning and attention to detail meant that we would realize benefits more quickly, and risk would be reduced," comments Bill Jarman, CIO at Courtaulds. "Having taken a more aggressive approach in our previous

implementation, we knew that this time around we wanted to take a phased approach," Jarman comments. "We decided to deploy Infor Supply Chain Execution for one of our brands first, in order to test the software and iron out any glitches, before going live with the other brands and the larger private label business eight months later."

Seeing results

Courtaulds went fully live with Infor Supply Chain Execution in 2011 to support revised processes and a new warehouse layout, and fully integrated it with Infor BPCS. The company has realized improved delivery performance and reduced costs through lower headcount. It has gained greater visibility of stock and its annual stock take has been replaced with cycle counting through the year, removing the requirement to stop the business for a week.

"Crucially, bulk picking is now much more efficient and accurate to 99.7%," comments Jarman. "For other orders, the application allocates orders in a morning, then runs a simple report to tell us what stock quantities require transferring to a pick face. Next, we move the stock to a much smaller pick area and allocate the picking tasks to make picking processes as efficient as possible."

"Infor Supply Chain Execution also allows us to track orders from order to dispatch, generating superior visibility," he continues. "As a whole, the entire process for receiving, moving, and putting away stock has vastly improved and the application has given us greater flexibility in how operatives are deployed in the warehouse. The process is faster, and we can monitor and manage it much more closely than before. Finally, customer service has improved through improved stock accuracy and fulfilment. As soon as we receive an order, stock is picked and shipped efficiently and a confirmation sent to customer to inform them."

Doing business better

Jarman adds, "In addition to extensive knowledge and experience of the WMS solution, Infor understands our industry and crucially, Courtaulds' business, therefore could solve problems easily throughout the project.

"Through our deployment of Infor Supply Chain Execution, we have achieved our objectives of greater visibility, accuracy, and efficiency, which means ultimately, we are able to do more with less," Jarman concludes. "We're shipping more with less than we were two or three years ago, so we've also reduced distribution costs."

"The success of the Infor Supply Chain Execution implementation has led to us deploying the solution to operate as a third-party logistics provider for the Myla brand, which previously used a third-party warehouse. Not only has Infor Supply Chain Execution achieved all of our objectives, but it helps to ensure that our business is in the strongest position to thrive in a continuously challenging and changing retailing environment."

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