

SnapFulfil driving accelerated growth at family firm

BACKGROUND

Founded in 1926, Charles Trent Ltd is one of Dorset's best-known and longest-established family firms, now run by the fourth generation of the Trent family. They are among the UK's top three automotive salvage and recycling companies, with a thriving online parts business.

Charles Trent recycles over 50,000 vehicles per annum and the company's specialist vehicle dismantling and de-polluting equipment (housed at a separate plant in Rugby, Warwickshire, as well as Poole, Dorset) allows it to recycle over 95 per cent of every vehicle, which are used domestically and shipped to more than 60 countries worldwide.

The firm's £4million and 30,000 sq.ft distribution centre at nearby Holton Heath, which opened early January 2021, was the first stage of an ambitious five-year growth plan - predicted to boost turnover to £250million. An even bigger DC facility for Poole followed in August 2022.

In order to drive growth, Charles Trent recognized the need to switch from a labour intensive and unreliable paper picking process to a digital warehouse management system (WMS).

THE SOLUTION

Returns on wrong products and parts going missing were a particular problem at the old Poole HQ warehouse (18,000 sq.ft over three levels). This was compounded by human error in what was an onerous manual process and there was no validation of picking.

Charles Trent's Distribution & Operations Manager, Matt Groves, said: "Almost immediately, SnapFulfil was able to drive highly accurate storage, putaway, picking and packing via the RF scanners and massively improve visibility for all parties across what are some pretty unique and diverse product ranges."

Subsequently, the storage and distribution transition from the old warehouse and processes to the digitally-driven Holten Heath DC (which is 14 levels high and has a top picking height of 13 metres and state-of-the-art racking) was seamless.

The recent Poole DC followed this successful model – but with more warehousing space of 45,000 sq.ft - and with fulfilment, production and quality control all under one roof, it's an even more impressive facility totalling 100,000 sq.ft.

The company now has capacity for over 130,000 'green' recycled products, ranging from used components, such as engines and gearboxes, to small parts and interiors.

INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The global pandemic meant a great deal of this had to be done remotely, but SnapFulfil excels in creative, digital onboarding, while producing exactly the same positive results in adoption and use as traditional on-site engagement, but with associated economies of scale.

Tailored virtual support and video conferencing meant most of the planning, training, status meetings and system testing could be done online.

Matt explained: "Nothing was too much trouble for SnapFulfil and having the team's knowledge, professionalism and expertise readily to hand at a very hectic time was welcome and reassuring."

THE BENEFITS

Charles Trent is now processing over 3,000 green parts a week across both warehouses and has doubled its stock holding and orders going out since introducing SnapFulfil. This has been achieved without increasing head count, which means operations are much more streamlined, efficient, productive and profitable.

Plans are now in place for Holton Heath and Poole to increase operations from 18 hours daily across two shifts to 24/5, which will massively increase the company's order processing capacity, demonstrating the flexibility and effectiveness of SnapFulfil.

Matt added: "We used to have about 2-3 orders per day going astray within the old system, but we achieve very close to 100 per cent accuracy with SnapFulfil. Full traceability like this is a huge advantage in a variable business such as ours.

"It's about tempo and efficiency, because in receiving goods staff can scan, process and have them on the shelf in next-to-no-time – and handle 30 at a time without being label reliant."

THE FUTURE

Charles Trent is looking to open another four new recycling and distribution centre sites by 2026, in major population centres across the UK – and SnapFulfil's kitting functionality especially can support rapid scaling of fulfilment processes, as well as quick succession of multiple site facility rollouts, as they have already benefitted from with the bigger Poole DC onboarding.

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>
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