Case Study: simplehuman

SNAPFULFIL
Warehouse Management Systems



simplehuman

Customer: **simplehuman**
Industry: **Home and beauty tools**
Location: **Thrapston, Northants - UK**
Warehouse size: **103,000 ft²**
Operation: **Order fulfilment**
No. of users: **24**
Length of implementation: **6 month**
Integration requirements: **Sage 200 ERP**

Background

simplehuman is a multi-award-winning designer and manufacturer of 'tools for efficient living' including sensor activated bins, soap dispensers and beauty mirrors.

Functionality and quality is paramount and customers buy their products very much as a lifestyle choice.

Established in the US in 2000, the company set up shop in the UK in 2004 from where it currently fulfils all European B2B and B2C orders and is now a £23 million turnover business.

The UK operation supplies a number of the major retailers whilst providing many direct and drop ship vendor ecommerce solutions.

simplehuman has a catalogue of approximately 300 SKUs, plus many more spare parts and components that are provided as replacement items if customers require them.



The challenge

simplehuman had previously outsourced its UK-based warehousing and fulfilment operations to a third party provider, however found the growth of the business necessitated a move away from third parties to meet their requirements for control, speed and flexibility.

Consequently, they decided to invest in a new, purpose-built distribution centre and manage the operation themselves.

To support the insourcing of the operation, simplehuman required a best-of-breed warehouse management system (WMS) which could be interfaced with its SAGE 200 ERP, implemented quickly, without a large capital investment and able to drive productivity improvements.

"We straight away needed to create effective channels that provide a very diverse service level to our customers as well as ensuring maximum efficiency. Looking ahead, we also required a WMS that had the capacity to expand and develop with us, as well as ensuring that we can take full advantage of the ever-changing factors in the logistics industry such as further globalisation, speed of technology, cut price distribution, and retailer and wholesaler challenges."

Nigel Parker, Distribution Manager EMEA

The solution

Having evaluated several systems, SnapFulfil gave the company both the growth potential, and speed and simplicity of implementation essential to meet its customers ever changing requirements.

Configurability was also a key deciding factor because since go-live in October 2016 simplehuman's solution has evolved through ever-changing customer complexity to arrive at the current successful model and this WMS flexibility and capacity to adapt is very much in keeping with the company's own business philosophy of innovation and change.

Implementation

Changing from a third party bespoke system to in house obviously presents teething issues, but by working and growing into the new operation together simplehuman and SnapFulfil had them ironed out in 2-3 weeks and were soon achieving good consistent performance.

So much so that they were quickly able to do some major pick reconfiguring - which required some creative SnapFulfil development around a dynamic pick faces initiative – that has helped improve productivity dramatically.



"What I especially like about working with the SnapFulfil team is their willingness to listen and take on board our needs.

This means we arrive at workable solutions together – and this mutually beneficial relationship means we improve the system to suit and assist both parties going forward. The SnapFulfil system is also extremely reliable with good customer support."

Nigel Parker, Distribution Manager EMEA

The benefits

Moving from a third party system to SnapFulfil cloud-based WMS has helped simplehuman tangibly develop its processing - for example ecommerce orders that might have taken two to three days to process are now actioned within hours of receipt, giving customers a 24 hour order- to-pick service in most cases.

They also have better visibility (i.e. real time) of inventory, are able to capture performance in several key areas, plus take advantage of easy exporting to Excel, as well as activity and session monitoring – while regular configurability tweaks aren't prohibitively expensive.

James Dowdeswell, simplehuman's Director of Finance and Operations EMEA, adds: "We've found SnapFulfil to be both attentive and flexible – unlike many vendors, they understand that every business is unique and don't try to pigeon-hole us. Allied to this, SnapFulfil's approach to configuration allows our instance of the system to be closely tailored to our specific operational and reporting requirements. The user interface is also very intuitive which has led to good user acceptance, because it's easy for new systems to be rejected first hand and we haven't had that with SnapFulfil."

The future

With simplehuman priding themselves on value added services and aiming to become the leader in providing complex distribution solutions to demanding customer requirements, SnapFulful's all-round flexibility allows them to score highly with the likes of customer documentation and labelling, integration with EDI and customer portals, load planning and monitoring, plus markedly improved service levels to different drop ship vendor ecommerce customers.

A new purpose-built ticketing and labelling function for B2B retailers and their multiple various requirements and specifications is almost complete. This will improve the quality and efficiency of their value-added services too – and is seen as a real benefit to customers.

Nigel Parker concludes: "We operate in an industry that is constantly and rapidly evolving, so we need a WMS that can easily be re-configured to whatever is aimed at us. Customer requirements and the flexible service we provide are key in our business and it helps differentiate us from other providers. Being able to provide a large customer with a specification that is different to industry standards is a challenge, but one that we are readily overcoming in partnership with SnapFulfil."

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