



PUSHING CUSTOMER SERVICE TO NEW LEVELS OF EXCELLENCE

Following its implementation of IFS Applications business management software, Bristan has streamlined its dispatch operations to meet growing volumes of EDI transactions.

Bristan prides itself as being the best supplier by far in this industry and has led the way on sales order performance. If a customer places an order between 8.00am and 6.00pm, the company will dispatch it the same day. The warehouse stays open until 10.00pm. Management of stock and having it in the right place is vital to this operation. So is speed of transaction—recording the order and getting it through to the warehouse.

With lead times for new stock of up to two months and delivery commitments to customers of an hour or so, then stock control and purchasing are critical processes.

INCREASING VOLUME OF TRANSACTIONS

“Putting this commitment into action is hugely challenging,” says Bristan’s financial director Roger Williams. “As the business has grown, facilities and systems that have previously operated reliably start to reach a point where sheer volume of transactions and operational complexity outstrip their capacity.”

Taking advantage of more powerful processors and database technology, new generation systems are easier to use and can provide more scope with Internet connectivity. As well as more convenience they offer better efficiency at all levels of the business.

Says Roger Williams, “Key criteria in the selection process for Bristan are longevity and total cost of ownership. It’s a long-term relationship, so picking the right partner was very important to us.”

Bristan had used a text-based order processing system which had supported the company successfully over ten years, during which time sales turnover increased from £3 million to £70

million. The system was used in conjunction with a dedicated accounts package and a variety of bespoke solutions based on Lotus Notes databases. “Whilst this met our needs, operating three different systems meant we had lots of interfaces which were becoming hard to manage.”

“Management information was limited and, to be fair, we were processing a far higher volume than the system was ever designed to handle. After reviewing our future requirements we decided to replace our IT with a single unified system, to make it easier to manage.”

After an exhaustive tender procedure, IFS was selected as the preferred supplier.

ABOUT BRISTAN

The Bristan Group is one of Britain’s premier league suppliers of taps and accessories for kitchens, bathrooms and showers. Products are designed, developed and distributed from the company’s headquarters in Tamworth, U.K. Sales to end-user customers are normally through builders’ merchants, hardware chains and independent specialist retail outlets. Production is outsourced to contract manufacturers in Europe and the Far East.

“IFS was able to deliver the right expertise and response which we tested to the extreme.”

Roger Williams, Bristan

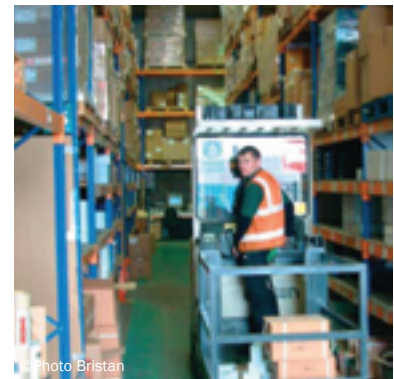


Photo Bristan

THE IMPLEMENTATION

Whilst most of the Bristan procedures were able to drop into the generic IFS modules, some modifications were required to suit areas which were specific to the business. The main one was the collections and returns function.

Control of returns is very important to Bristan: "If you haven't got it right, it can be very costly. So that was a fairly big issue. We didn't have this facility on our previous system," explains Roger Williams.

Another important area was the use of barcode scanning for verifying customer orders on dispatch. This facility had been developed under the previous system, and Bristan wanted to carry this over to the new system with some further improvements.

EASIER TO EXPAND AND GROW

The first phase of the system went live during July 2004. One of the most immediate changes was the move to a paperless system in the head office building. Everything is now on screen, and users are able to check status and track the progress of orders from any terminal in the network. Orders can be verified at final dispatch, and a packing note is printed to accompany each consignment.

"Although some means of measuring payback was considered, it was never really a high priority. For Bristan the main objective was to ensure continuity of its operations and high standards of customer service."

"Essentially it was something the company needed to do to keep expanding and achieve our targets," says Roger Williams. "A key characteristic of our business is a high level of transactions for relatively small values. We dispatch about two thousand orders a day, so speed is vital," explains Roger Williams.

Although Bristan has been dealing with several major customers previously through EDI (electronic data interchange), the previous IT system could only run once a day. This facility is now running continuously providing a major competitive advantage in enabling Bristan to offer same day dispatch. Bristan is building on this by encouraging customers to use EDI ordering.

"Paperless order processing is fundamental to improving convenience and efficiency. The payback is in eliminating errors and speeding up the process, which is important to us," says Roger Williams.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Having consolidated the first phase implementation Bristan is now looking at ways in which the implementation can be extended into other areas of functionality. A project has been started for CRM customer relations management. Other areas under consideration include improved information services for suppliers such as web-based delivery schedules.

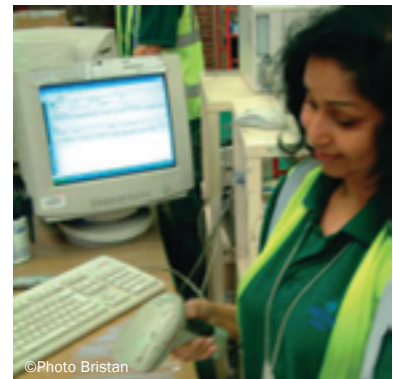
Roger Williams concludes, "Effectively this investment has provided infrastructure to support our future growth. We are also more than satisfied with the support provided by the IFS team. It was a challenging implementation, but as a software vendor IFS was able to deliver the right expertise and response, which we tested to the extreme."

BENEFITS

- Single, integrated suite of industry-Faster, more efficient and more accurate order processing
- Same-day dispatch capabilities
- IT infrastructure that enables growth
- More efficient control of returns
- Improved customer order verification via barcode scanning

SOFTWARE

IFS Manufacturing™
 IFS Sales & Service™
 IFS Financials™
 IFS Human Resources™
 IFS Document Management™
 IFS Quality Management™
 IFS Distribution™
 IFS eLearning™
 IFS eBusiness™



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