



Warehouse management system and real-time dashboard reporting gives DSV tools to deliver quality service



Whatever the consignment, the end-to-end stock tracking software from Advanced Business Solutions ensures that goods – and clients – are handled efficiently and with care

Leading European third-party logistics (3PL) company DSV Solutions is a thriving business which attributes its growth to an ability to move swiftly as new clients come on board, or as their requirements evolve. It prides itself on handling a diverse range of goods, from footwear and clothes, to fragile tableware and electrical appliances.

Satisfying the broad spectrum of needs associated with such a varied client portfolio means being able to monitor stock attentively as it moves through the warehouse; provide customers with regular, tailored status updates; and, as a business, retain plenty of room for manoeuvre.

Key to achieving all of this is the company's warehouse management system, OpenWMS from Advanced Business Solutions, and its real-time dashboard solution OpenDashboards which monitors key performance indicators (KPIs). DSV Solutions has been using OpenWMS since 2006, when it was still operating as ABX Logistics (DSV acquired the company in 2008), and OpenDashboards since 2014.

In 2006 ABX was expanding its Thrapston, Northamptonshire based warehouse facility, generating significant new client opportunities. But this also created a need for a formal warehouse management system (WMS).

"Up until that point we didn't have a warehouse management system, and were recording stock details manually, on paper and using spreadsheets," explains Josie Whorwell, logistics analyst at DSV Solutions, as the business is known today. "This created a lot of data re-entry work, and limited our visibility of stock and space availability. We didn't have any real traceability of products either, so if a pallet went missing due to human error it wasn't easy to establish what had happened to it. As we expanded, it was obvious we needed a more systematic way of handling things. With significant extra capacity we needed more location-based control."

One solution, many applications

As the broader business used OpenAccounts enterprise accounting software, the IT team sought a compatible warehouse management system that would feel familiar. From a shortlist of three possible solutions, it chose OpenWMS

Client >

DSV

Sector >

Wholesale

Project >

To have the flexibility to handle an eclectic mix of stock and give DSV the tools to deliver quality service

Delivering quality service

(formerly StockTrack PLUS from acquired ATMS plc) from Advanced Business Solutions.

OpenWMS is a comprehensive warehouse management system that has been designed to improve stock accuracy, stock control and stock rotation, increase operational efficiency, and provide detailed, two-way traceability and management information for logistics companies and their supply-chain customers.

Of DSV's reasons for selecting the system, Ms Whorwell says, "Our IT people liked the team they met, the structure they had and their understanding of the challenges facing third-party logistics companies."

More importantly, the software provided ample flexibility to meet the varying needs of DSV's broad client base. "As a 3PL we handle all sorts of different products so we need to be able to address a wide range of customer requirements," she explains. "But we didn't want to have to develop bespoke capabilities for each client; rather we needed a system we could reasonably adapt. OpenWMS offered us that. In addition we have found that the team will always come and talk to our clients, to determine exactly what they need, and that is something we really appreciate."

Customers' specific needs might range from how a product is stored, to the exact information that is recorded and reported back. "Some clients need full traceability back to product batch codes; others aren't bothered about this at all," Ms Whorwell notes.

"Even if we are given very little notice, the Advanced team has always been very responsive about meeting new customers' needs, or making required changes. In one case they only had 2-3 weeks to prepare something but they did it. They always deliver what's required. We meet at least twice a year too, to review where we are and explore new opportunities for further improvement."

One such requirement recently has been for DSV to be able to handle Internet-based orders, quickly and easily. "A slick and swift operation is critical when orders come through via the web. That means being able to combine picking notes with carrier details to minimise doublehandling of goods," Ms Whorwell says. The OpenWMS system is facilitating all of this.

Keeping customers in the loop

Further benefits of the warehouse management solution include its inherent agility, and the enhanced customer responsiveness that is enabled by the joined-up information generated by the end-to-end warehouse management system.

On an end-to-end basis, process automation and integration extends from handheld scanners and mobile devices on the warehouse floor right through to DSV's transport system, so that consignments can be tracked right through dispatch, whether handled by owner vehicles or a pallet company. Carrier labels are generated automatically during the stock allocation process, and end-of-day transactional information is fed right along the supply chain.

Levels of accuracy are at their highest now, reducing risk and cost in the business and heightening customer satisfaction. "We now have a fabulous transactional history which means we know where stock is and what has happened to it at every stage," says Ms Whorwell. "This increases efficiency and reduces the impact of human error."

As well as having a tighter handle on stock, DSV is able to provide clients with detailed information which they can use in their own planning and management reporting. On an ongoing basis, clients can have real-time feedback about receipts and dispatch of consignments, and stock availability. And at specified time intervals they can receive updates on outstanding picks, and performance against agreed targets.

Monitoring performance with access to real-time picking data

Alongside the increase in levels of accuracy, DSV has also seen an increase in staff performance since implementing OpenDashboards. Staff performance can be automatically tracked using information from the scanners, enabling staff and managers instant access to real-time data such as how many lines have been picked that day, or in the past hour, and how many lines are left to pick.

Not only do supervisors and managers have access to this information via their own PCs, allowing them to run reports, but the dashboard is also displayed on a TV in the warehouse acting as a motivator for those fulfilling the orders.

"We now have a fabulous transactional history which means we know where stock is and what has happened to it at every stage"

Josie Whorwell, logistics analyst at DSV Solutions

Delivering quality service

Ms Whorwell said: "Meeting targets is absolutely key to success in our industry, our service is judged by how quickly and accurately we can fulfil customers' orders. With this technology we are able to react quickly to potential issues and make any necessary operational changes. Since implementing the software we have already seen an increase in picking performance."

The technology is being trialled on one customer account, with plans to roll it out wider as the system beds into operations.

Supporting business growth while maintaining service levels

Investing in a dashboard reporting platform alongside OpenWMS has provided the perfect environment to support DSV to continue expanding and diversifying, without seeing a dip in the quality of its customer service levels. The company is able to keep a tighter handle on stock, while providing readily available tailored information to customers, easily integrate new customer accounts into the site and also closely monitor the performance of individual warehouse staff and teams.

"The OpenWMS system has been hugely beneficial for allowing us to grow the business. "Managing our operations without OpenWMS would be unthinkable now," Ms Whorwell concludes. "Not only is the system central to our efficiency and productivity, it is key to our ability to seize new business opportunities, exploit new channels and deliver first-class customer service."

"Using OpenDashboards shows our customers that we are performance driven and enables us to maintain high quality service. This system gives us the competitive edge by reassuring our customers that all necessary controls are in place to meet deadlines and giving us accurate, up-to-date information to track order completion."

About Advanced

Advanced Business Solutions (Advanced) provides leading integrated business applications and services that enable public, private and third sector organisations to retain control, improve visibility and gain efficiencies whilst continually improving corporate performance. Advanced prides itself on getting close to its customers by understanding their businesses and responding to their evolving needs.

Advanced's software systems comprise core accounting/financial management, procurement, supply chain management, human resource and payroll systems, integrated with a range of collaborative, document management and business intelligence solutions to extend the value and effectiveness of the finance, human resource and payroll departments. Management information systems for school and academies are also provided through Advanced's subsidiary, Advanced Learning. All solutions can be delivered as a managed or bureau service.

Customers are from both the public and private sectors and include Companies House, Newcastle City Council, NHSScotland, Norfolk Constabulary, Edge Hill University, WH Smith, Royal Bank of Scotland, Aer Lingus, National Express Group, DFS and RSPB.

Advanced Business Solutions is a division of Advanced Computer Software Group plc, a leading supplier of software and IT services to the health, care and business services sectors.

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Josie Whorwell, logistics analyst at DSV Solutions

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