



Automation drives growth at RIF Logistics

RIF Logistics, a rapidly expanding third party logistics (3PL) provider, has streamlined its operations and improved efficiencies after implementing a warehouse management system (WMS) from Advanced Business Solutions in March 2014



OpenWMS has enabled the company to automate order processing, which has reduced inaccuracies and time spent keying in data – saving them 30 hours a week in decreased administrative work. It has also enabled them to win new business without increasing their workforce.

RIF Logistics was established in 2008. As a 3PL provider it offers warehousing and distribution services to customers based in the UK and across the world, as well as transport management. In 2012 RIF Logistics consolidated its operations into one site – bringing three smaller, separate centres in Milton Keynes into one new distribution centre in Dunstable, Bedfordshire. This move was part of the company's growth strategy, and in 2013 business grew by 40 per cent.

Growth stunted by manual processes

As a company with ambitious growth plans, RIF Logistics wanted to win new business but was being held back by an out-dated manual Warehouse Management System. Previously customers had to email orders to the company, each of which would need printing out and a pick creating, before it could be fulfilled. Now, with OpenWMS, the process is completely automated from end-to-end.

Dominic Bacon, Managing Director of RIF Logistics, says: "In any 3PL environment there is a process to undertake with a number of steps involved from receiving an order, to stock selection and shipping. If each of those steps needs to be completed manually it makes the process very time consuming and vulnerable to inaccuracies.

"With an automated system, you can remove a lot of those steps and streamline the whole process. Now with OpenWMS, an order is emailed in, or uploaded via a file transfer site, and the data automatically imported into the system creating a task, removing the need to retype the information, and a pick created. This provides staff with a clear understanding of existing workloads and helps improve our labour productivity."

Increasing customers without increasing staff

Importantly for RIF Logistics, investing in an automated WMS enables them to attract new customers without the need to employ additional staff. This was key to the company's plans for sustained growth.

"The ability to secure new customers, and process more orders without increasing head count in the office was crucial to our decision

Client >

RIF Logistics

Sector >

Wholesale

Project >

To automate order processing, reduce administrative work and extend capacity without increasing workforce.

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to implement an automated system. With the manual system more orders would have meant more emails needing to be printed, more picks created – more pressure on our admin team. Now, we are able to take on more customers with confidence that we can manage the extra workload and staff can focus on more value-added tasks,” adds Bacon.

Full visibility and control of stock inventory

As well as giving the business more scalability to facilitate growth, OpenWMS is also benefitting RIF Logistics’ existing customers. The system offers full control of customers’ stock inventory, including batch control which is of particular importance for its customers who supply own-label branded products to supermarkets, as it gives them the ability to easily recall groups of products and is often a contractual obligation.

RIF Logistics also implemented Advanced’s 3PL customer web portal, OpenWMS Portal, which allows customers to access real-time information about stock levels. They are also able to access tailored report menus and run reports on stock history online, as well as access sales orders in electronic format.

Careful selection process for technology partner

Advanced was selected to provide the WMS system following a competitive tendering process involving ten software providers, which were then shortlisted to two.

Bacon says, “The implementation of this technology was a huge investment for the company, not in monetary terms but because it will be driving the business forward over the coming years. It was an important decision and we spent around a year looking at all the possibilities to ensure we selected the best system to support our growth strategy.

“We chose OpenWMS because we felt it would give us a solid platform to serve customers more efficiently and win new business. The reason we selected Advanced to support us on this automation project was because of the people as well as the product. This was such a big undertaking that we wanted to ensure we could work well with the people who would be partnering with us, and we felt confident that Advanced were the right people to work with due to their knowledge, expertise and professionalism.”

Administrative workload halved

Since implementing OpenWMS, the administrative workload at RIF Logistics has been halved, and staff are saving around four to five hours a day. The company is continuing to see sustained growth, and attract new business and has improved its e-commerce offering.

“We have seen more of our existing channels using our e-commerce service, as it is now less cumbersome and much slicker. We have also won several new customers and have seen renewed interest from companies we had previously been in contact with but who were reluctant to move forward due to the lack of an automated system. Now, customers can see that we have invested in state-of-the-art technology and are committed to offering them that higher level of service they feel confident to entrust us with handling and distributing their stock,” says Bacon.

In the future RIF Logistics expects to further capitalise on e-commerce growth by using the system and is also due to implement a billing module as part of the WMS. The company anticipates that this will save them even more time by reducing data recording, which will be managed automatically. It will also speed up the reporting process by automatically producing statistics for the billing spreadsheet, which is currently created by a member of staff manually tallying all orders on a daily basis.

Potential for future growth

As a relatively small 3PL company, employing 16 people, RIF Logistics believes this technology is helping them to remain competitive and stay ahead of the curve.

“Automating our processes through OpenWMS has had a considerable impact on the way we work. It has improved accuracy as we have eliminated the margin for human error, and it has also speeded up the time taken from receiving an order to it reaching the shop-floor,” adds Bacon.

“It has already improved the service we can offer to existing customers, but more exciting than that is the huge potential it has created for our business to continue growing and winning new business. This technology helps us to maintain our competitive edge in a tough market and supports us in providing customers with the service they demand and deserve.”

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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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