

HobbyCraft reduce stock by 20% without impacting service levels

HobbyCraft, with head offices in Bournemouth, are the UK's leading retailer of craft products. In any one of their craft superstores, customers can find an industry leading range of 35,000 different products. With strong growth anticipated, Nic Tasker, Supply Chain Manager at HobbyCraft says: "We are facing an ever greater challenge to meet and exceed customer expectations for availability. With more and more lines being sourced from the Far East, the challenge for the team was to maintain availability, whilst keeping overall stock value in line with company expectations."

A man with short dark hair and a slight smile is shown from the chest up. He is wearing a dark shirt. Behind him is a HobbyCraft logo, which consists of a stylized 'h' and 'b' in white on a dark background. To the left of the man is a large, bright pink balloon.

"Slim4 helped reduce stock by 20%."

Nic Tasker,
Supply Chain Manager, HobbyCraft

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How to approach the challenge of keeping over 50 stores, with 35,000 SKUs each, sufficiently stocked to meet customer demand and not hold too much stock at the same time, is a question Nic Tasker asks himself every day. From HobbyCraft's head offices in Bournemouth, Supply Chain Manager Nic Tasker and his team of four planners ensure that this tricky task is carried out as efficiently as possible. "Although this was not always the case", states Nic: "We used to order about 8,000 SKUs into our NDC, but keeping on top of that with our old systems was proving to be so time consuming that we seemed to be constantly fire-fighting. On top of that, the business was moving towards more centralised purchasing, further compounding the problems." It was at this time that HobbyCraft decided to implement Slimstock's forecasting and inventory management solution, Slim4. "We were impressed with both the system and the people. They knew the business and throughout the whole process our requirements were matched and exceeded."

Better ordering, less stock

HobbyCraft went live with Slim4 at their national distribution centre. The first results were already visible within a few months. "We found we had more time. The exception reporting in Slim4 focused our attention on those SKUs we needed to invest time in, rather than looking at everything. We used that time to increase control over our ordering, so instead of ordering a little too much, to keep the

availability high, we gradually reduced our orders and stock. Slim4 gave us the confidence to do this, because we knew it would ensure we attained our availability goals." The impact has been a near 20% reduction in stock, giving HobbyCraft the ability to further increase the amount of SKUs in their NDC, without the need for additional space.

Microsoft integration

The growth of HobbyCraft is evident and by the end of 2012 there will be more than 75 stores open with more SKUs than ever being purchased centrally. To facilitate growth, HobbyCraft have recently implemented a new ERP – Microsoft Navision. "Not only was the implementation of Slim4 to Microsoft Navision pain free, but thanks to Slimstock and Slim4 we were confident that our stock has been in great shape throughout the ERP implementation. We are now confident that we have the best of breed systems and processes in place to continue to exceed customers' availability expectations whilst maintaining optimum stock levels."