

Mailbrain fulfils online success

Fulfilment services company Entertainment UK Direct (E.UK Direct) has successfully replicated its traditional business model to provide services to online retailers. It now fulfils between 5,000 and 30,000 consumer orders daily for CDs, DVDs and videos, on behalf of online giants including Amazon.co.uk, Tesco.com, Woolworths, MVC, Argos and Tower.com. Furthermore, the company has recently extended its services to overseas retailers looking to source UK products.

E.UK Direct is part of the Woolworths Group. Its parent company, Entertainment UK, is the UK's leading wholesale distributor of home entertainment products, supplying major supermarkets and well-known high street chains. E.UK Direct was born in 1999, to address the effect of online selling on the company's traditional business and that of its retail customers.

According to Greg Smith, Head of IT Development for Entertainment UK:

"Although use of the Internet as an additional sales channel was becoming increasingly popular within the retail sector, the concept was still in its infancy when we set up Entertainment UK Direct. There were no suitable e-commerce fulfilment solutions available that had the capability to handle large volumes of online orders, which increase substantially at peak times such as Christmas. We looked to the mature distance selling market for a solution and found that Mailbrain from Sanderson was able to adapt to the challenge."

Mailbrain software integrates distance selling operations for both e-commerce and more traditional channels. For businesses and their customers, this means the process is well managed from order entry through to delivery and invoicing. Added to this, ready access to accurate, real-time information such as order status or stock availability further improves service and efficiency.

Online collaboration keeps customer services high

Consumers enter their orders directly onto one of the many retailer websites that use E.UK Direct for fulfilment. These websites, for example Tesco.com, are maintained by the retail owner and handle all the front-end processes for order placement such as product identification and electronic payment.

Once an order is entered, it is immediately despatched to E.UK Direct's systems via a dedicated interface, which allows Mailbrain to check if the item is in stock at the E.UK Direct warehouse. Mailbrain then returns an instant message to the retailer's website, confirming product allocation and an accurate delivery time. This real-time collaboration between the two websites ensures that retailers can maintain their traditional high levels of customer service within their online operation.

The process also enables E.UK Direct to control stock accurately at its warehouse, which holds around 150,000 active titles at any given time. Furthermore, real-time collaboration ensures that the retailer's websites are always showing accurate product lists.

Solution Summary

Customer Profile

- Online order fulfilment services company

Challenge

- To accurately manage the fulfilment of tens of thousands of online orders daily

Solution

- Automate stock control and despatch through real time collaboration with customer websites using Mailbrain

Benefits

- Retail customers can maintain high service levels as order availability and accurate delivery times are confirmed instantly
- Stock control is always up-to-date
- Despatch and related paperwork is kept to a minimum
- Complicated customer billing is simplified, fast and accurate
- Processes can easily be adapted to support opportunities for business expansion

Entertainment UK Direct was founded to meet the fulfilment needs of the growing e-commerce market



Mailbrain generates incremental stock files with updated product availability details every 30 minutes to three hours, depending on the retailer's preference.

On rare occasions when consumers request an out of stock item, Mailbrain will send notification to the clients, who then inform their customers, together with confirmation of an expected delivery date.

Simplified despatch and billing

Once the order has been accepted, Mailbrain produces a picking list for the E.UK Direct warehouse. For speed and accuracy of picking, the list provides details of the aisles in which products are located. Mailbrain is hooked up to the warehouse's automated packing machine, which generates messages back to Mailbrain every time an order is packaged. This message acts as a despatch note for the consumer and the retailer, keeping administration costs to a minimum and simplifying billing procedures for E.UK Direct.

Invoices for fulfilment services are often lengthy as many thousands of orders, typically for one or two items, could be handled for each retailer during the course of the day, especially at peak times. To simplify this process and improve accuracy, Mailbrain interfaces with E.UK Direct's finance ledgers to automatically transfer details of every order fulfilled, so that daily, weekly or monthly invoices can be generated for the retailers.

Telephone and overseas fulfilment

Mailbrain also accommodates telephone ordering facilities where required. By providing call centre access to online order processing, consumers can phone their orders into a retailer's telesales operation. Staff enter the details onto the website in the same way as if the consumer was placing the order directly online and the fulfilment process is replicated from there on.

Based on the success of its online service in Britain, E.UK Direct has recently targeted the international market to generate additional revenue streams. The company is now providing fulfilment services to entertainment retailers around the world who want to offer CDs, DVDs and videos from the UK. The use of Mailbrain for processing and billing these orders is the same as when handling orders from UK retailers, except that boxes of orders are fulfilled rather than one or two CDs, DVDs or videos at a time.

Entertainment UK's Greg Smith continues:

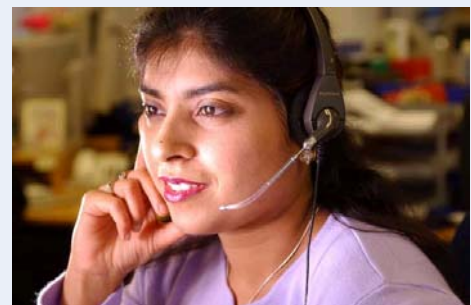
"Starting a fulfilment operation in an emerging sales channel was tricky. It was a grey area where limited experience existed. However, thanks to Mailbrain's capabilities in quickly and accurately handling large volume online order processing we were able to develop a suitable IT infrastructure to support the service. This infrastructure is now helping Entertainment UK Direct to move forward by successfully adapting processes to support new fulfilment opportunities that open up."



Mailbrain automatically generates picking lists for increased efficiency in the warehouse



Mailbrain is updated every time an order is packaged



Call centre staff have instant on-line access to Mailbrain

For further information please contact the marketing department on

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