

## Distance seller meets the challenge of rapid sales growth

M&M Sports has quickly grown from selling stock through national press adverts to become the largest discount sport and leisure mail order catalogue business in the UK. Success is based on consistently high customer service and maintaining suppliers' brand values.

To achieve this M&M Sports relies on Sanderson's Mailbrain software solution to manage its business by facilitating intelligent catalogue mailouts and integrating the company's call centre, 30-plus multiple warehouses and website operations.

Founded in 1987, M&M Sports provides 1.5 million customers with top brands in sports, leisure, fashion and team wear and equipment. Customers can order via post, telephone or the Web, while limited quantity stock is sold through six retail outlets in the company's home region of Herefordshire. Today M&M Sport boasts an annual turnover of £30 million.

### Surviving success

To survive the success of its mail order business, the company needed to replace its paper-based management system with flexible technology that would competently handle rapidly expanding sales from a growing array of channels.

Tom Penn, Operations Director, M&M Sports, explains:

"Using Mailbrain we could manage our selling operation more cost effectively and productively, while continually improving service levels. We started with mail order, then took on board more Mailbrain modules as the business grew. Automation now extends to warehouse, telesales, Web and customer satisfaction processes. Because information is shared across the business there is collaboration between departments, which improves service levels and drives out inefficiencies."

Mailbrain integrates traditional and e-commerce channels, via an end-to-end software solution, to provide a single view of the customer throughout the entire distance selling process.

### Intuitive mailing

Five M&M catalogues are sent out each year. Customers also received specifically targeted one-off mailshots throughout the year. Address details are kept on Mailbrain's database and, because the system is Royal Mail accredited for Mailsort, each mailing is sorted for posting discounts prior to sending to the mailing house for distribution, reducing costs significantly.

All customer details are kept in the database so that orders can be automatically set against customer profiles that define individual purchasing histories, such as the total number of orders made, what items were ordered and when.

Using this information, M&M Sports can calculate the anticipated quantity and timing of mailout responses.

## Solution Summary

### Customer Profile

- The largest discount sport and leisure mail order business in the UK

### Challenge

- To handle rapidly expanding sales from a growing number of sales channels

### Solution

- Automated telesales, warehouse, web and customer satisfaction processes using Mailbrain

### Benefits

- Competent order fulfilment through intuitive mailing processes
- Departmental collaboration through shared information
- Improved customer service levels resulting in increased customer retention
- Elimination of sales and warehouse operational inefficiencies



*The website now accounts for a large proportion of M&M Sports' business*



Mailing dates for each can then be staggered to match the number of staff available to deal with incoming orders. This avoids call centre and warehouse resources getting swamped and ensures competent order fulfilment.

To improve customer service further, Mailbrain automatically marks up customers whose orders couldn't be fulfilled on the previous mailing and ensures they are the first to receive catalogues on the next. This attention to customer service has contributed to converting customers from one-off buyers to multiple purchasers, and encouraged their recommendation to other potential customers. This eliminates the need for huge investment in sourcing new contacts to keep sales up.

Customers can place orders via mail order or by telephoning the company's call centre, which operates 75 hours per week. Customer details can be displayed on the operator's screen instantly and because Mailbrain is linked to QAS (Quick Address System), new addresses are generated and verified rapidly when the customer's postcode is quoted.

Orders are then taken quickly by entering directly onto the system with guidance from screen prompts. Real-time stock data ensures that customers can be given up-to-date information and promised delivery dates are accurate. Details on order progress and account information are also available on screen to assist with any enquires to maintain high service levels.

Customers can also order via the M&M Sports website, which now accounts for a large proportion of the business. Online orders can be made 24-hours a day and are entered directly onto Mailbrain, saving time for staff and limiting errors as rekeying is not required. Online credit transactions are supported so that customers pay at the time of ordering. Mailbrain will automatically upload details onto the website concerning current stock availability and new product lines are also added as and when they come in.

### **Intelligent fulfilment and stock control**

When order entry is completed, Mailbrain generates a picking list for the warehouse. Picking is quick, as the items are sorted by Mailbrain into the order in which they are stored at the warehouse. This improves accuracy by minimising mistakes such as omitting items and saves time as retracing steps to retrieve missed items is avoided.

Once the items have been assembled for delivery, a bar-coded despatch note is produced, which also acts as the invoice and address label. Combining several pieces of paperwork into one further reduces the margin for error in the sales process. Using the bar coding M&M Sports can easily track delivery with third party couriers once the package has left its premises.

Because the company's bulk warehouse is offsite, stock at the delivery warehouse has to be replenished regularly and efficiently, adding complications to inventory and stock control. Mailbrain ensures this process runs smoothly by providing staff with real-time access to stock level and lead time details, giving them a tighter control of the operation as they know exactly what needs to be where and when.

M&M Sports' Penn concludes:

"Planning catalogue and mailshot mailings more intelligently means we can maintain customer service levels by ensuring there's always sufficient telesales, warehouse and web resources to handle incoming sales promptly and customers are never disappointed twice in a row.

"Mailbrain is a key factor in achieving the kind of service levels and customer retention on which our success is based."



*Real-time stock data ensures that call centre customers can be given accurate information*



*Online orders are entered directly onto Mailbrain, saving time and reducing errors*



*Mailbrain provides the data to plan mailings intelligently and ensure sufficient resources are available*

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