

OKA furnished for success with Sanderson multi-channel retail software

At a glance

- Quintessentially British luxury furniture and accessories
- £23 million turnover
- 180 employees
- 14 stores
- Established mail order catalogue business
- Inspired ecommerce website



“It’s amazing, the difference in our operation now that we are supported by a truly integrated multi-channel retail solution. Not only is the information available at our fingertips, but we can be confident that the data is reliable.”

Fuelled by ambitious growth plans and a determination to increase turnover three-fold, supplier of home and interior design products OKA, is furnished for success with Elucid multi-channel retail software from Sanderson.

Launched in 1999 as a mail order interiors business with a 12-page catalogue, OKA has gone from strength to strength. The company offers quintessentially British luxury furniture and accessories for the home – from sofas, dining furniture and beds, to linen, rugs, lighting and much more.

Challenges

- Replace manual paper system and accounts
- Implement a software solution to support growth across all channels
- Increase visibility of customer and stock information throughout the business
- Improve data accuracy to support decision making
- Integrated order management across all channels

Sanderson Solution

- Elucid multi-channel retail system

Benefits

- Clearer view of business operations
- Accurate customer, sales and stock data
- Improved customer service levels and profitability
- Complete visibility of stock and locations
- Faster and informed decision making

“Better visibility means we stock more of the right products. Now, the merchandisers can carry out a full analysis so that if a particular product isn't selling well, we can promote it elsewhere.”



The furniture range in particular has set OKA on the path to retail success. In the early days, the range comprised small items made of rattan, but its range has since extended to include everything from a small rattan side table up to a large solid wood armoire.

From mail order to multi-channel

Today, OKA's turnover is over £23 million and it employs over 180 people. The business is run from two main sites, in London and Oxford, with the warehouse and call centre located at the Oxford facility. The organisation boasts 14 stores across the UK, alongside its mail order and ecommerce operation.

“The store concept came from the mail order business,” explains Andy Hickin, OKA's Finance Director. “As we started to expand our offer to include items such as bedroom furniture and dining tables, we realised that customers often want to see and touch the product.”

OKA's customers can take advantage of the whole 'look': “Our design capability is really the hidden service,” says Hickin. “We show our entire range in inspirational room sets which help our customers to visualise a style that they can achieve in their own home. If a customer looks at a picture in our catalogue, on the website or at a layout in the store, they can buy every item shown to enable them to replicate that look - from the main furniture items, down to the napkins, the curtains, the lamps, the cutlery, and so on.”

The digital backbone of the connected retailer
connecting every part of your business to your customers



We can see every customer's history throughout the organisation, whether they bought via the web, store or by mail order – it's all there.



The introduction of stores, ecommerce website and interior design service, combined with the inspired product range, has led to OKA's significant growth. Today, OKA is a slick operation, well positioned to exploit the burgeoning interest in home furnishings and interior design.

System evaluation

At the start, however, things were rather different. The business was growing fast, but its internal systems were not keeping pace. "We were using an off-the-shelf accounts package and spreadsheets," recalls Hickin. "It was very tough trying to do something as simple as monitor our stock position. Every process involved manual intervention. We knew we had to fix this: we couldn't move forward running a business on spreadsheets."

Hickin began the search for a solution. "I looked at several systems, and at the time, true multi-channel capability was hard to find. There were systems that were strong on retail, others that were strong on mail order, but few offered the whole package." After evaluation, he narrowed it down to two options. The Sanderson multi-channel retail system, Elucid, came out on top, offering the best all round fit for their requirements.

The implementation was a much smoother process than Hickin anticipated. "There were very few technical glitches and the Elucid team really guided us throughout the process, they were totally supportive."

Company-wide visibility

OKA's overriding objectives for moving to Elucid were to bring consistency and visibility to the organisation. "We wanted everyone to have the same view of stock. If I stood in a London store, I wanted to see what stock was being held in every other store and in the warehouse. And I wanted to be able to place an order instore, in the same way an order is placed at the call centre. The same customer history had to be visible, whether in the call centre or in the stores." For OKA, one set of data and one view of that data was essential. "We didn't want to look in four or five places to find out a key piece of information," he adds.

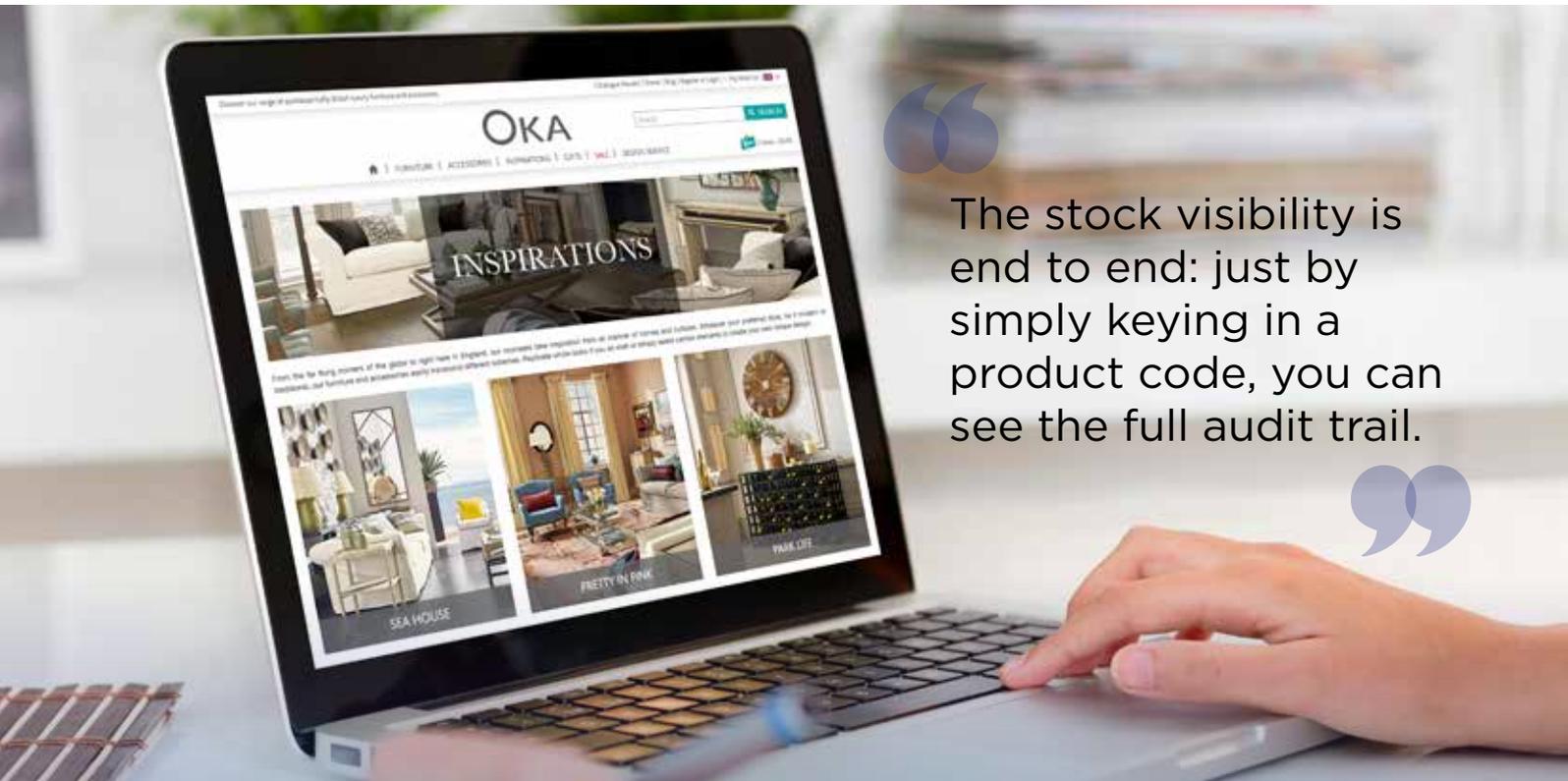
The benefits are clear. OKA has new-found visibility across the business, for stock management and for customer data. "We can see every customer's history throughout the organisation, whether they bought via the web, store or by mail order – it's all there. Equally, the stock visibility is end to end: just by simply keying in a product code, you can see the full audit trail, from the product's delivery and onwards throughout the organisation."

Company-wide visibility

This improved visibility means that OKA's senior management team has business-critical data available at the press of a button. "We have increased turnover substantially in recent years, but it's not only about selling more, it's about selling more of the right products," says Hickin. OKA needs to know which goods are moving slowly and which are flying off the shelves: "The only way we could do that before was by sight within the warehouse." That's not a simple exercise in a 95,000 sq ft warehouse, but with lead times up to five months on some furniture items, product analysis is a vital enabler. "Better visibility means we stock more of the right products. Now, the merchandisers can carry out a full analysis so that if a particular product isn't selling well, we can promote it elsewhere."

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Hickin is convinced that OKA's growth would not have been possible without the implementation of Elucid: "Certainly we wouldn't have been able to grow at the fast pace we have," he says. "At the time we chose Elucid, we'd reached a critical point: Unlike one or two of the other suppliers, we were wholly confident in the Elucid system from the outset." OKA's success looks set to continue apace. "We are looking to add a third more stores and double our turnover in the next few years," confirms Hickin. "And Elucid will continue to support our expansion for many years to come."



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Telephone: 0333 123 1400 • Email: info@sanderson.com
Sanderson House, Manor Rd, Coventry, West Midlands CV1 2GF

sanderson.com