

“MetaPack has completely altered our despatch operation from a long winded manual one to a slick, one scan automated process. All labels come from one system to a common label format and all at the scan of a barcode. What could be simpler! I firmly believe that we would not be able to handle the amount of orders that we have now without the MetaPack system in place and I have full confidence going forward that as we expand, the system is reliable and is able to grow with us. I cannot recommend MetaPack highly enough, they have provided us a first class operation and service.”

Ian Dade, Business
Development Director

Meads Fulfilment and Distribution was established in 1982 and are a business process outsourcing company with a proven track record in providing a range of services that help clients meet their customer's demands. Initially, Meads were a storage and distribution centre for the Department of Work and Pensions, storing over 10,000 lines of literature, posters and leaflets used by Job Centres nationwide.

The decision to move to product fulfilment came in 2005, when it became apparent that the ordering of paper literature would decline rapidly with the growth of the internet and the ability to send documents online. With the boom in online shopping, product based fulfilment seemed the ideal route forward.

Just 4 years on and Meads have an established list of clients all operating ecommerce sites with Meads providing the order processing function. The range of products processed daily include cosmetics, DVD's, books, T-Shirts, herbal products and even washing lines. 2010 already looks healthy with two major new clients signed up for operations to commence in January as well as an upgrade of MeadsConnect.

The Challenge

Working with various carriers to ensure a level of flexibility when despatching is imperative, but it can come at a price. Although elements of the previous process were automated, the majority remained manual; data entry, completing despatch books and hand writing labels.

As with any degree of manual intervention, the down side is the impact on time, resources and the possibility for human error. Each carrier provided their own despatch system, paperwork and labels, creating a very incohesive environment. Meads were also restricted by how quickly the operators could produce the labels, with label production taking longer than the picking of the orders in some instances.

In addition to this, Meads were unable to offer their customers any level of visibility on their goods in transit. Customer services would take calls from customers and have to go on a paper chase exercise in order to find out the status and advise the customer, providing that the information had been recorded properly in the first instance.

The Solution

Meads were in the process of finalising MeadsConnect, their in-house stock and order management system and wanted to expand its capabilities and reduce the number of human interaction points during the process. MetaPack provided a fully integrated solution and become the final piece in their jigsaw, moving MeadsConnect to a complete stock, order, despatch, tracking system.

When bringing on new customers, Meads discuss the delivery options available to them. All are given the choice of implementing their own carrier contracts, but in most instances customers choose from the large range of carriers and services offered by Meads which are all operated through MetaPack.

Using an API (Application Programme Interface) information is seamlessly transmitted between the two systems. Meads still select the carrier, but there is a level of automatic allocation as goods are allocated based on stock criteria. They have been able to reduce the number of carrier systems to just two desktop computers where they are able to despatch regardless of which carrier is chosen.

Once the goods are despatched, MetaPack sends MeadsConnect the tracking numbers. With this information available in MeadsConnect, it becomes a customer management tool where their clients are provided with their own logins and they can view all their order information, reducing the number of calls to the customer service team.

