

mothercare

The Path to International Growth Eases with BluJay Solutions' Supply Chain Trading Platform

Quick Facts

- ▶ Headquartered: Hertfordshire, UK
- ▶ Founded 1961
- ▶ Global retailer for parents and young children
- ▶ 1,500 stores located across more than 60 countries

Business Challenge

- ▶ Planning for continued growth, integration between business units, logistics operations, and the support of multi-location complex planning processes.

Results

- ▶ Improved efficiency
- ▶ Trading managed electronically
- ▶ External FTP receiving capability
- ▶ Seamless access to supply chain data

Client Profile

The Mothercare group is comprised principally of two iconic international retail brands; Mothercare and Early Learning Centre. Synonymous with children and parenting, both brands have a reputation for specialism, quality, safety, and innovation in providing products and services for mothers, mothers-to-be, babies, and young children. The group's brands operate through three distinct channels to market; UK stores, Direct (being the in-home and in-store internet-based businesses and catalogue mail order), and International, under which the group franchises (or participates in joint venture) operations delivering the Mothercare and Early Learning Centre brand retail operations in overseas markets.

Challenge

Mothercare offers its customers a multi-channel shopping environment through its network of retail stores, catalogues and the internet. It operates through three main store formats in the UK – parenting centres located on out-of-town retail parks, traditional high street stores, and 'shops in shops,' where one retail outlet jointly hosts both brands.

The company has ambitious plans to grow its business internationally with over 600 overseas stores already, stretching from South Africa to Russia and Australia.

The company announced in September 2010 its plans to open 200 Mothercare stores in India. Much of this growth has been achieved by entering into joint ventures and franchise arrangements according to what best suits the local market, and this model is expected to continue indefinitely.

As you would expect of an international retailer, Mothercare sources its products internationally and additionally works in partnership with a dedicated network of manufacturers to custom develop products to its own specific requirements. Stocking items from booties for premature babies to outdoor play areas, Mothercare deals with suppliers ranging in size from sole traders and small boutiques who have sometimes not traded electronically before, up to large multinationals running sophisticated systems and technologies.

The result is a complex global supply chain that must adapt to deal with vastly differing regional requirements at all stages of the trading cycle.

Case Study

Solution

Mothercare first implemented BluJay's Commerce solution in 2001 as a replacement for its original pure EDI Windows-based system, with the new web-based system providing a low cost support for the UK supply chain with control provided through workflow functionality. An early adopter of fully electronic trading within the UK retail industry, Mothercare took the decision to invest to stay ahead of the game.

An established relationship was already in place with BluJay Solutions, who had supplied EDI-related services to Mothercare for over 20 years, so implementing BluJay's market-leading solution to manage trading electronically, was the obvious choice.

The system provides access to supply chain data including supplier inventory, purchase orders, ASNs, and invoices, and has pre-built data integration points that allow the exchange of multiple formats of data with Mothercare's other business systems, including merchandising and warehousing systems by JDA Software and Manhattan Associates. The BluJay MessageBroker module also exchanges EDI data onto the IBM VAN and EDI data to the UK government's department of revenue and customs, removing the requirement for additional or duplicate processes.

With BluJay's Commerce, Mothercare issues on average 5,000 purchase orders electronically per week and receives on average 1,900 invoices electronically per day from suppliers. A key and growing part of Mothercare's business enabled by the BluJay Solutions system is the drop shipping of orders made in store or online for larger items such as outdoor play equipment. These are fulfilled directly by the manufacturer and delivered to the customer, with full visibility of all order data available to Mothercare throughout the process.

BluJay's Commerce additionally provides Mothercare with an external FTP receiving capability, which predominantly supports its franchisees by facilitating sales order management, stock, and sales data exchanges into its core systems.

An Enterprise Architect at Mothercare comments, "BluJay Solutions effectively provides the glue and string behind our supply chain operation, a combination of vital components that work together to form a sound foundation to trading."

Around 20 users within Mothercare's UK head office supply chain team currently use BluJay's Commerce solution, along with 120 suppliers. Internationally there are hundreds more users within the franchise network.

**BLUJAY SOLUTIONS SUPPORTS MOTHERCARE'S
AGGRESSIVE TARGETS FOR FURTHER
INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION.**

Case Study

Value

Mothercare has benefited from greater all-round visibility of supply chain information through its deployment of BluJay's Commerce and in particular its integration with its own core systems, supporting enhancements to its supply chain reporting and planning processes. Because of this integration, Mothercare also benefits from a lack of any requirement to re-key data or duplicate processes, saving human and cost resources. The solution includes its own connectivity method within the MessageBroker module, meaning that Mothercare incurs no VAN connectivity costs.

However, Mothercare sees the key benefit from the implementation as being the ease of which third parties such as suppliers and franchisees can trade with it.

When initially scoping the project and during regular enhancements made since implementation, the concerns and issues faced by suppliers were foremost in Mothercare's requirements. The company realized early on that the depth, breadth, and diversity of its product range was key to its continuing customer appeal, and recognized the competitive strength and efficiencies that could be created by making its systems accessible to even the smallest supplier.

BluJay's Commerce solution boasts particularly user-friendly data input screens, which are simple enough for all to use and have proved simple to train users on and to support. As for Mothercare, the system incurs no VAN costs for suppliers. In fact, the only requirements for suppliers to be able to trade with Mothercare using the BluJay's Commerce is an internet connection and a laser jet printer, following the company's direction that all suppliers should be able to print barcode labels on a laser jet printer to minimise start up costs for them.

BluJay's Commerce GTN has the ability to integrate with virtually any other system, and so there is no limitation on where in the world it can be rolled out - which is just as well, as Mothercare has aggressive targets for further international expansion.

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“The BluJay solution supports the trading of our entire franchise network, yet none of the involvement of a third-party system. Suppliers find the system simple to use and the integration with Mothercare's own systems takes place seamlessly, behind the scenes, which is exactly the way it should be done. ”

Enterprise Architect
Mothercare

About BluJay Solutions

BluJay Solutions delivers supply chain software and services to the world's most progressive retailers, distributors, freight forwarders, manufacturers, and logistics service providers. Transforming supply chain logistics with the BluJay Global Trade Network, we enable customers to unlock the power of more than 40,000 universally connected partners. With BluJay, companies can achieve greater trade velocity, transform their supply chain economics for disruptive advantage, and see beyond the horizon to optimize their future in the global economy.

