

Armitages uses TaskCentre® to extend the capabilities of its EPOS and stock control system.

“Getting critical information from our EPOS and Accounts software without employee intervention is key to our business. Rules-based, intelligent automation is now fundamental to the way we operate our business.”

David Whitwam, IT Support Manager for Armitages.

CSY EPOS System

TaskCentre®

The UK's leading Business Process Management Solution

Business Requirements

- ⇒ Required a Business Process Management Solution that would automate critical stock monitoring and management procedures
- ⇒ Needed a solution that would extend the capabilities of their CSY EPOS and Sage systems

Solution Deployment

- ⇒ Extraction, formatting and delivery of business-critical information from both their CSY and Montana EPOS Systems in addition to their Sage accounting solution

Business Benefits Delivered

- ⇒ Less management time required for monitoring and reporting on critical data
- ⇒ Enhanced customer service
- ⇒ Increase in cash flow due to credit control improvements
- ⇒ Monitoring and real-time reporting on product RRP's across all three garden centres
- ⇒ Reduction in administrative time and activities
- ⇒ Leveraged further functional capabilities from their CSY EPOS and Sage systems

► Company

Armitages

► Industry

Garden Retail Centres

► Geographies

United Kingdom

Case Study: Armitages

AUTOMATING BUSINESS PROCESSES

TaskCentre

Orbis Software (UK)

Based in West Yorkshire, Armitages garden centres is a well established and respected provider of quality indoor style, outdoor living, pets and aquatics, machinery and planting products to consumers.

The company has 2 large centres based in Huddersfield, employs approximately 150 members of staff and has an annual turnover of £6.6 million.

Armitages and its initial interest in TaskCentre®

Operating in a seasonal and fast moving sector, such as the garden centre industry, requires a great deal of experience, skills and investment to succeed in the fashion that Armitages has consistently shown.

To achieve this, Armitages is continuously evaluating its approaches to work and how these can be enhanced or modified for greater efficiency. Indeed, it was during an evaluation of its IT business processes that it first became aware of the need for sophisticated business process management technology as David Whitwam, IT Support Manager stated, "As a company, we have an EPOS system by CSY and an accounts package by Sage which enables us to conduct our business activities. However, with the growth of our business and the increasing speed in which activities take place, members of staff were finding it increasingly difficult to monitor and report on all the company's data. This is when we started to investigate the intelligent automation capabilities of TaskCentre®."

Stock control, Recommended Retail Price (RRP) and outstanding invoices.

The effective management of stock within a rapidly commercial environment, such as the garden centre sector, is a critical competence that company decision-makers must possess. Of course, with the plethora of products on offer at Armitages this was an extremely complex and time consuming activity so it identified a pressing need for TaskCentre®.

When David was asked to comment on the impact of TaskCentre® on their stock control procedures he said, "The management of stock is a critical success factor within our business arena and as a result we would routinely invest a great deal of time monitoring and reporting on the status of product lines. Yet, through the capabilities of TaskCentre® we've now completely automated the monitoring of, and exception reporting on, products that have been sold below target margins for example."

The intelligent monitoring and reporting capabilities of TaskCentre® has also delivered Armitages with complete stock level accuracy, which has facilitated reduction in product waste and ensured that product availability is at the optimal level for the business.

Another important area for all B2C orientated companies is the real-time management of stock item price changes and this was something that David was eager to highlight, "I think the intelligent monitoring and reporting on our stock item price changes perfectly illustrates the

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impact TaskCentre® has had.” David went on to explain, “EPOS systems are unquestionably powerful applications and we simply could not operate without them. However, adding a layer of intelligent, rules-based business process management functionality through the deployment of TaskCentre® has certainly enabled us to leverage further benefits from our EPOS systems.”

The addition of this functional capability to their EPOS systems is something that David illustrated when he said, “It is now the case that price information is intelligently brought to us when we need it.” said David, “In short, my colleagues and I don't have to waste time seeking critical information and therefore we can spend more time on developing the business.”

Armitages has also used TaskCentre® to monitor and enforce company procedures and protocols so that time consuming problems cannot manifest. For example, TaskCentre® identifies and informs key employees of items that are not assigned to a supplier, harbour the wrong VAT codes and items between the two centres where the RRP is different. This was highlighted by David when he said, “Having the ability to monitor and report on RRP's across the two centres is very important for obvious reasons but the fact that we can achieve this without human intervention and to our business rules is very powerful.”

Outstanding invoices are something that the majority of businesses suffer from and as a result a great deal of investment is made in accounts

software. Yet, once again, the reliance on company employees to manually identify outstanding invoices is a significant waste of company resources. This is why Armitages uses TaskCentre® to automate this important but resource intensive procedure as David stated, “Without doubt, the automated highlighting of aged debtors to our credit control staff has had a significant impact on the department.” He added, “In the medium-to-long term, we also have plans to further extend our use of TaskCentre® by automating our entire credit control procedures.”

Armitages and its future for TaskCentre®

The gains Armitages has attained from the intelligent automation capabilities of TaskCentre® go much further than those documented and the company has many other plans for the future use of TaskCentre®. This was highlighted by David, “At present, we are only using 3 of the Business Process Management Tools available within the TaskCentre® product but there are many other Tools we could use. For example, the send SMS, FTP or send Fax Tools would enable us to automate many more administrative activities in areas such as customer services or marketing.”

When David was asked to summarise TaskCentre®'s impact on Armitages he said, “Getting critical information from our EPOS and Accounts software without employee intervention is key to our business. Rules-based, intelligent automation is now fundamental to the way we operate.”