

Situation

The legacy Order Management System (OMS) at One Step Ahead could no longer provide the functionality the company required.

Solution

The company selected CWSerenade™ Java Order Management from MICROS-Retail.

Results

CWSerenade integrated well with the company's eCommerce platform, Fry OCP, also from MICROS-Retail. With CWSerenade in place One Step Ahead and its sister site, Leaps and Bounds, have streamlined fulfillment and improved customer satisfaction.

Strategic Benefits

- Enhanced information available to contact center reps
- Improved customer service
- Increased visibility into the fulfillment process including customization

Operational Benefits

- Streamlined fulfillment process
- Reduced wait-time on the call center line
- Improved access to order information for the support center
- Real-time inventory availability information helps set customer expectations
- Can host and maintain the site themselves and handle many integrations independently

Why MICROS-Retail?

- Compatible with Fry OCP™ also from MICROS-Retail
- Eliminated pain points in day-to-day operations
- Strong customer support system
- Broad customer base

Snapshot of One Step Ahead

- Owned by parent company Chelsea & Scott
- One Step Ahead is an online and catalog retailer of merchandise for infants and toddlers up to three years old
- Sister company Leaps and Bounds sells toys, clothes, and education tools for young children over age three
- A "Parents Panel" independently reviews the merchandise on the site to ensure quality and appeal

Supporting Customer Satisfaction At One Step Ahead

For over 20 years, One Step Ahead has provided high quality, parent and professionally -reviewed merchandise for infants and toddlers through age three. Whether shoppers are looking for sun-safe apparel or winter-cozy mittens, they find what they need at onestepahead.com or in the company's catalog. A sister site and catalog, Leaps and Bounds, serves up apparel and toys to fit the active lives of young children.

One Step Ahead had grown comfortable with the Fry OCP eCommerce platform produced by a division of MICROS-Retail. With strong capabilities on the front end, the merchant wanted to improve operations behind the scenes.

"We offered customers the benefit of Web 2.0 functionality including multiple item views, customer reviews, and suggestive selling. Our shopping cart is easy to use. After the shopping cart, though, we had some weaknesses in support that were due in large part to the age of the system," says Matt Alberts, Director of Information Tech-

nology at One Step Ahead. "We decided to start looking at new solutions and eventually chose CWSerenade Java Order Management from MICROS-Retail. We selected MICROS-Retail CWSerenade because it provides us the ability to streamline our business process and eliminate pain points in day-to-day operations. Since it uses Java and SQL Server, it integrates easily with other solutions."

"We desired a strong partner relationship—a company that would be accessible, engaged in our process, and capable of facilitating business discussions about our sites and catalogs," he continues. "MICROS-Retail took the time to really understand our business before we even signed the contract. The team offered useful, workable changes to our processes which we have implemented along with the software. Even today, a year after rollout, I can call my project manager and talk about a business challenge. He doesn't act like every call is a sales opportunity. We review the situation

and he makes suggestions or finds out more information for me. I value his insight and availability."

Accurate Inventory Information

A key benefit of CWSerenade is that it provides real-time inventory information to all the interfaced systems. The call center, warehouse, and web site all have access to



the same, accurate counts. How much of that information is provided directly to the customer is up to the merchant. One Step Ahead chooses to keep the countdown to stockout confidential, but to immediately provide backorder and fulfillment date information.

Under the legacy system, inventory allocation was not real-time, giving customers a chance to over-order. The customer could complete an order and believe the process was complete, only to receive a stockout notice hours later. This might be followed by a series of notices about projected ship dates. Customers were sometimes disappointed. The call center's information was not much better, preventing the department from offering the level of support customers desired. With CWSerenade in place, customers are aware of a backorder situation before the order is completed online. They are also given an accurate fulfillment date. The contact center has the correct information at its fingertips as well, allowing inquiries to be answered quickly. This keeps call times and queues as brief as possible.

Operational Improvements

"One of the first improvements we experienced was in training time," says Alberts. "After rollout we were handling calls at our normal volume by day two. It used to take two weeks to get someone new on the floor for customer service, now it takes just four



days. CWSerenade is straightforward and easy for the trainee to understand. The system also automates many functions that used to require manual lookups—now there's simply less to do and to learn. There is also less opportunity for error."

The warehouse has seen productivity gains. Overall it takes fewer people to fulfill an order. Workers can be less specialized and perform a variety of tasks, making it easier for managers to allocate them as needed to keep orders flowing smoothly. There are also fewer manual processes, meaning that there is less to be checked by the managers.

CWSerenade also makes it easier to track an order that is being customized, such as a holiday blanket with the child's name embroidered on it. CWSerenade keeps the necessary forms contained within the system, making them easy to locate. It also provides a detailed tracking system that keeps such projects on schedule and allows all involved parties to check its status at any time.

Multi-channel Stored Value Card

For years One Step Ahead has offered gift certificates; however, they recently made the decision to switch to CWValueCard™ gift card solution from MICROS-Retail.

"Gift cards are the modern option," says Alberts. "Customers think of gift certificates as old-fashioned. Certificates are less flexible than stored value cards, too. Now we

have more options. For instance, we now use the gift card to issue merchandise credits for returns after a specific time. We have a lifetime guarantee on our products which is important to our customers. Some of those returns are made quite a while after the initial purchase—a time when we can't necessarily replace one item with another like it. Issuing a merchandise credit on a gift card allows us to satisfy the customer and fulfill our guarantee all while keeping all the details within the system. Using gift cards instead of certificates also provides us more marketing options. For instance, if we want to make gift cards available through an in-store kiosk at another retailer—like the ones at many of the grocery and drug store chains—we can do it."



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