

Ann summers

Business



Company: XcelleNetCustomer: Ann SummersSubmitted by: MCC

InternationalDate: June 2000High street competition for the shopper's attention is more intense than ever. Any fast growing retailer must be able to make fast, proactive decisions on all fronts, from special offers and stock control to store planning, staff management and location. And they need to base those decisions on efficiently gathered, reliable data. Two years ago Ann Summers, the UK's leading lingerie, personal products and novelty gifts chain, embarked on a major expansion programme. Best known for its strongly branded, party-based approach to selling, the company made a strategic decision to raise its profile in the high street. In 1997, it had just five retail outlets in the London area.

Today, it has 26 stores nationwide, from Plymouth to Glasgow, and one in Dublin. Ann Summers is embarking on an exciting programme with plans for 75 stores opening within the next three years. This dynamic growth would have been impossible without a comprehensive, reliable communications strategy which allows the company to automate a large proportion of store-based tasks, freeing sales staff to focus on their customers, and provides a centralised mechanism for data collection to facilitate swift, key planning decisions at head office. This communications strategy was based on a recommendation made by the company's West London-based reseller, Eurostop, who introduced it to XcelleNet's RemoteWare systems management software. This blends well with Eurostop's own EPoS and head office systems supplied installed and maintain by Eurostop Ltd for Ann Summers.

Many of the administrative and accounting tasks which were previously done manually by each individual store manager are now fully automated. And the company has instant access to important data, facts and figures which help it to profile its customers, produce accurate revenue forecasts and identify premium locations for new stores.” Previously, we had no effective eye in the sky to watch over our stores,” says Ann Summers EPoS Co-ordinator Ketan Patel. “ With our rapid expansion programme, it was essential for us to find a way of gathering the information we needed and a means of gaining more secure control over sales processes in our stores.” Nightly polling is central to RemoteWare’s role in Ann Summers’ communications strategy, allowing the company to gather till and stock data automatically and reconcile accounts as quickly as possible.

Patel estimates that the system helps to save two man days every time there is a query.” Previously, an accounting problem could take as long as three days to resolve,” he says. “ Till files can now be interrogated centrally, allowing us to resolve any discrepancies much quicker. RemoteWare has brought us two days forward in terms of reconciliation alone. It’s made life much easier for staff in our stores. They just need to count the money and bank it, leaving us to do the rest.

“ According to Patel, RemoteWare provides a successful polling service. This has been instrumental in helping Ann Summers to capitalise on the success of existing stores and plan the opening of new ones. It takes just one day to bring a new store on-line, with system training usually provided on-site by an experienced manager from an established store.” RemoteWare has allowed us to develop a coherent, standardised information gathering and analysis <https://assignbuster.com/ann-summers/>

policy,” he explains. “ By centralising data collection, the whole process is quicker and more efficient and we no longer have to leave it to individual stores.” The benefits are by no means limited to more efficient accountancy procedures.

The collection of staff time and attendance records has also been automated, as has stock replenishment.” Stock replenishment was previously handled manually and involved a store manager sitting down and writing it out,” says Patel. “ Orders are now produced centrally, allowing us to react to data-based evidence of how products are selling rather than the personal view of every individual store manager. This way, we can also centrally manage product mark downs and evaluate sales of specific items in specific areas.”” Automating these aspects of administration has probably freed up as much as one day per store, per week.

It’s made life so much easier all round. Deliveries go out on time and we’ve achieved much greater levels of efficiency.” As far as strategic planning is concerned, however, the major benefit of introducing remote systems management has been the instant availability of customer data. Patel explains that customer analysis is a central element of Ann Summers’ ongoing plans for growth. Knowing how much individuals spend on average, where they spend it, where they are from, their post codes and their gender helps the company to focus its marketing efforts more effectively. Mail shots can be used to target areas which have a low apparent awareness of Ann Summers stores.

And analysing the numbers of customers a store attracts per square foot of premises helps the company to produce revenue forecasts for possible new stores in similar locations.” Quite simply, with RemoteWare, we can find out more about our stores,” says Patel. “ We can tell how effectively our staff are selling particular products. We can ascertain what our best sellers are. We are in a much better position to analyse the performance of each store and generate new ideas for the future.”” Management decisions can be made in real time and based on reliable information rather than on the basis of sticking a finger in the air.

And any report can be generated at the drop of a hat rather than taking several days to compile. The interaction between our stores and our central warehouses is much more efficient and we are better able to maintain the appropriate levels of product.”” Eurostop correctly identified that the product profile was very well suited to the way we run our business,” continues Patel. “ RemoteWare has obviously been designed and optimised for true remote systems management. Other solutions were not viable for our needs – they did not suit our low-speed, typically disconnected systems.

“ Like any successful retailer, Ann Summers has to adapt to rapid changes in market forces and buying trends which may be highly localised while providing its customers with the highest possible standards of service and product availability. “ We never do the same thing twice,” concludes Patel. As a result, there are always new projects in the pipeline, additions to product ranges and more data to analyse. A resilient systems management infrastructure for the delivery of rapidly increasing volumes of data makes all the difference between competitive edge and average performance. With <https://assignbuster.com/ann-summers/>

RemoteWare, Ann Summers is confident in its ability to sustain a remarkable period of growth into the new millennium and beyond. And in the highly competitive retail sector, confidence is everything.