

Justoffbase

www.justoffbase.co.uk



At A Glance:

- **Company:** Justoffbase
- **Location:** Suffolk, UK
- **Industry:** E-commerce; Wholesale/distribution
- **Challenges:**
 - Drop-ship operation required real-time communication with suppliers
 - Outsourced customer support service needed access to customer data
 - Non-integrated sales and financial systems meant manually duplicating data entry
- **Software switched from:**
 - Custom-built systems
- **Other software considered:**
 - Sage, Salesforce.com, SAP
- **Results with NetSuite:**
 - Increased order handling capability
 - Increased revenue without the need to significantly increase operating costs
 - Automated process integration with third-party customer support service providers and product manufacturers
 - Virtual drop-shop operation enabled with minimal staff
 - Real-time visibility of customer order status
 - Foundation for broader e-commerce-based business opportunities

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— *Tim James-Parker, Managing Director, Justoffbase*

Results

When Justoffbase first began using NetSuite in 2003 the company experienced an immediate 30% increase in revenue and has been growing steadily ever since. Despite increasing competition and a challenging economic environment, today the company has some 70,000 customers, with a growing overseas business. What's impressive is that all this has been achieved with a skeleton staff, thanks to the help of outsourced customer services and an innovative drop-ship business model.

Justoffbase's Managing Director, Tim James-Parker, also attributes much of this success to their NetSuite system, which provides the company with a single system that supports the entire business. This includes everything from customer sales and support, to order and payment processing, through to integration with its suppliers' systems. Thanks to the automation of standard processes the company has doubled the number of orders it can handle to approximately 80 per day without having to significantly increase its operating costs. As a result, the team can concentrate on more value-added activities such as ensuring the timely follow up of repeat orders and notifying customers of special promotions.

The ability to connect smoothly with customers and manufacturers is paramount, so the visibility of its operations enabled by the NetSuite system is critical to the company's success. “NetSuite gives us an end-to-end view of the business,” says Tim. For customers, having a single system that integrates tightly with the manufacturers' systems means that they can track the exact status of their orders at any time. “If we didn't have a single system and were having to replicate data it would be horrendous,” says Tim. “NetSuite allows us to record the status of orders at all points and it reports it to the relevant parties. But even better than that, it does it in real-time.”

Challenges

Justoffbase began life in 2000 as an online information service, running an advertisement portal and a directory of local services located around military airbases across the UK. In 2003 the company began selling products online, offering a variety of tools and hardware products for business and private customers. The company was able to keep costs down by running a drop-ship operation and avoiding the need to hold inventory themselves.

But despite running a cutting-edge e-commerce site, what happened behind the scenes was another story. Customers placed orders online, but from there, processes were largely manual: orders were transferred manually to the manufacturers' systems, and because

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Managing Director, Justoffbase*

there was no integration between the company’s sales and accounting systems, invoices and payments had to be processed and reconciled manually. This was time consuming and labour intensive for Justoffbase’s small staff.

Tim recognized that they quickly needed to find a better way of doing things. “It was a little ironic that as an e-commerce company, our customers were on the internet, but we weren’t,” he says. “Given our virtual business model, a hosted solution seemed the obvious way forward.” The decision to use NetSuite was similarly straightforward. “I didn’t see any other viable options — I knew NetSuite was the one the moment I saw it,” says Tim.

Solution

Today customers enter orders directly onto the NetSuite system, which links with the manufacturers’ systems in real-time to check product availability, pricing and delivery dates for out-of-stock items. Customer orders are routed automatically through NetSuite to the manufacturers who then ship products direct to customers. Although 90% of orders and payments are made online, customers can also place orders by telephone. While not obvious to customers, this service is enabled by an outsourced call centre service provided by Factotum (www.ukfactotum.com), an experienced UK-based e-sales support service which has full access to customer records via Justoffbase’s hosted NetSuite system. NetSuite allows Justoffbase to be highly flexible with customers: the company also accepts purchase orders via fax from organisations such as local authorities and hospitals, simply converting the fax into an electronic sales order and generating an invoice.

In addition to making it easy to integrate with the manufacturers’ systems, the fact that NetSuite is a hosted system means that Justoffbase doesn’t need to worry about system maintenance or downtime. They also don’t need to employ any IT staff: “We don’t need an IT department — just a few laptops!” says Tim.

The company doesn’t do any traditional marketing; the majority of Justoffbase’s customers find them through internet search engines. “We rely a lot on search engine optimisation to help people find us,” says Tim. “Fortunately NetSuite allows you to build an e-commerce site that is extremely ‘search engine-friendly’, so it’s easy for people to find us.”

Going forward Justoffbase has plans to expand by getting back to the roots of the original business, building on its heritage as a directory of local services and suppliers. The company already operates a business directory with many paying advertisers. Once live Justoffbase plans to bring its two websites together and extend its e-commerce expertise to its advertisers, earning commission from sales. “We want to be a more commercial version of Amazon and provide e-commerce services to local suppliers,” says Tim. “Can NetSuite help us do all this? Absolutely!”

The bottom line for Justoffbase is the quality and integrity of the service it provides to its customers. “The key to our business model is having partners and suppliers you can rely on 100% NetSuite is one of those,” says Tim.

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