



School Trends stays ahead of the competition with SyscomERP

case study

Syscom really understand our business and work hard to help us grow and ensure we get the best out of our business software , IT network & hardware systems in order to achieve our objectives quickly.

We have an outstanding relationship with Syscom. They have always responded well to our needs over the ten years of our business partnership.

The investment is worth every penny . Without Syscom we could not have grown and developed our business the way we have.

**Steve Fells—IT Manager
School Trends**

Born in 1988 out of a friendship between ex-teacher Richard Jones and former pupil Peter Beeby, School Trends has come a long way from its humble origins as a two-man “start-up” trading out of a dining room. Today this well established, Sheffield based company is the leading supplier of personalised school uniform in the UK, achieving in excess of £9m turnover, employing over 120 staff and supplying around 6000 schools across the UK.

The Company

As a wholly employee-owned company, School Trends is structured in a manner that promotes individual growth and progression. Indeed School Trends has been a Sunday Times ‘Top 100 best companies to work for’ award winner in the SME category for a number of years. The outcome of School Trends’ commitment to its people is, in turn, a commitment by them to the customers they serve. This focus on building strong customer relationships through excellent customer service has been key to School Trends’ on-going growth and success.

The Challenge

To maintain this quality of service, School Trends needed to ensure that its IT systems were able to support its growth and provide customers with a range of flexible service options. Having felt restricted by the incumbent software supplier’s limited understanding of the company’s future needs, School Trends decided to review the software solutions market for a software provider that they could work with in partnership to drive the business forward.

Syscom PLC was recommended to School Trends as a Progress Application Partner with a business management solution developed specifically to meet the needs of the clothing industry. “We were looking for software with functionality that would provide a close match for our anticipated requirements as well as the flexibility to evolve in line with our company,” says Steve Fells, IT Manager. “We also wanted a software supplier that would understand our business and work with us as an extension of our team. We found this in Syscom.”

The Solution

Developed specifically for companies operating in the corporate wear, school wear, personal protective equipment and technical textiles sectors, SyscomERP is a fully web-enabled enterprise resource planning solution. Designed to be intuitive and easy to use, SyscomERP uses a comprehensive platform that gives SyscomERP the flexibility to be quickly tailored in line with School Trends’ changing needs whilst retaining the rapid implementation potential of a package solution.



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School Trends selected SyscomERP in November 2002, and went live in May 2003 with the SyscomERP accounting modules. Purchase ordering and manufacturing modules followed in October 2003, since then they have experienced rapid growth.

The Benefits

Reporting

Advanced analysis tools within SyscomERP allow School Trends to run customisable ad-hoc reports as and when required, making real-time information readily accessible. "Reporting tools in SyscomERP are very excellent. At any point we can take a snapshot of what has been ordered, what is in the warehouse, what is in embroidery, and so on. To support our growth we must be able to access key information instantly"

"We manufacture our branded garments to our unique specifications in the Far East and Portugal, which means our lead times are typically around three months. The flexible reporting within SyscomERP helps us to create an accurate stock environment.

This is vital in the planning and ordering of stock and the monitoring of cash flow, and is therefore particularly crucial for companies with seasonal demand like us that need to order stock in advance but will not receive payment until September."

Collaboration

"As well as touching every area of our business, SyscomERP has facilitated more streamlined interaction with our suppliers and carriers, which has proved to be very cost effective."

"For example, outsourcing embroidery can now be managed through the software system effectively by recoding it as part of a garment's production route. This makes it easy to track items and to ensure that specific embroiders are always given orders for particular schools, as they will already be set up to embroider the relevant logos. With embroidery outsourcing being managed so effectively we no longer need to have as

BENEFITS OVERVIEW



Integration across all areas of the organisation ● Automated processes
Increase efficiency and productivity ● Streamlined collaboration with suppliers and partners ● Significant improvement in Customer Service (order processing time cut by over 25%) ● Automatic processing of promotional offers and discounts ● Personalised ordering options for customers via the web ● Easy to maintain and develop ● Logo management ● Improved reporting providing real-time information ● Accurate stock environment ● Greater cash flow management ● Enables product substitution and up selling ● Maintaining excellent customer relationships with CRM ● Facilitates "Parent-Pay" product ● Integrates into school web portals

many machines ourselves."

Carrier system functionality written by Syscom has helped School Trends simplify the despatch process by automatically integrating carrier information, such as service codes, levels and areas, into the SyscomERP infrastructure. "Customers are assigned suitable carriers and the service codes are validated against postcodes as part of the sales order process to ensure the desired service level, such as next day delivery, is available in that area. All relevant data for that consignment is automatically transferred for invoicing and label printing. This has really sped things up for us as we previously had to re-type the information manually."

As well as consignment numbers and associated manifest data, customer emails can be automatically generated. "Each email contains a unique URL web address that the school can use to track orders for added peace of mind."

Competitive Edge

SyscomERP's rapid development environment has enabled School Trends to continually expand its range of customer services options, giving schools the flexibility to order uniforms in a way that suits them.

"We are committed to providing each of our customers with a service that meets their needs. Although many supermarkets have tried to break into the school wear market,

we find that they are not really in direct competition with us. Schools and parents value the personalised service we provide and the fact that we'll take care of as much or as little of the uniform supply process as they want. Allowing schools to order and distribute uniforms in the way that best meets their needs and cutting down on administrative procedures is key to maintaining a successful relationship, and our ability to offer this sets us apart."

"We have special focus teams who spend a lot of time visiting schools to carry out market research surveys so that we know what schools want, and we are continually developing SyscomERP to ensure we can provide service options to match our findings."

The Future

School Trends continues to work with Syscom on a number of projects to ensure they are one step ahead of their competitors and meeting their customers changing needs.

"We're continually investing in SyscomERP and feel we get an excellent return on investment through the specialist functionality that the software provides. A company like us needs to be flexible and adapt to what customers want. Syscom understands our needs and helps us to do this"