



Retailer gains one view of stock and one view of the customer

JUSTIN HAMPSHIRE,
FINANCE DIRECTOR,
CREW CLOTHING CO.

“We needed a highly credible technical solution to support our exciting growth ambitions, from a partner who brought omni-channel retail experience, a track record of successful customer projects, a deep understanding of the solution, and world-class support.”

CHALLENGES

- ✓ Ambitious growth plans constrained by inadequate systems
- ✓ Channels not joined up resulting in inconsistent customer experience
- ✓ Multiple legacy systems causing insufficient stock management
- ✓ Unreliable management information

SOLUTION

- ✓ HSO Retail solution, based on Microsoft Dynamics AX for Retail

BENEFITS

- ✓ Modern system to support growth and innovation
- ✓ Unrivalled customer service experience that is seamless across all channels
- ✓ Richer understanding of customers to enable the nurturing of deeper relationships
- ✓ Accurate and insightful management reporting
- ✓ One view of stock to enable more efficient management

Crew recently invested in Microsoft Dynamics AX for Retail from HSO to support the exciting strategic growth ambitions of the business, as well as to enable an innovative customer experience and to optimise stock and operational efficiencies.

Crew Clothing Co. is a UK-based clothing retailer that specialises in luxury British casual wear for men, women and children. The company was launched in 1993 by Alastair Parker-Swift and was born out of Alastair’s passion for clothing and sport.

The brand began life in a small part-time shop on Salcombe High Street in 1993. In time for Cowes Week that year, trial premises were found on the Isle of Wight. Following overwhelming demand for the clothing style and brand, Crew Clothing Co. was born.

In 1995, the first London store was opened on the New King’s Road, and the first hand drawn catalogue was mailed to just 2,000 customers. Today, 17 years on, there are 76 stores across the UK; over 3.2 million catalogues mailed every year and more than 400 staff working for Crew.

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

Crew took stock of where they were; the business was growing quickly, and the brand was gaining increased visibility both on the high street and online. The management team realised that to take the business to the next level, an investment in IT was needed.

“We needed a solution capable of coping with omni-channel management from store operations and stock through to order fulfilment, management information and more.”



Justin Hampshire, Finance Director at Crew explains, "Our first priority was to find a partner focussed on the retail market. Whoever we worked with needed to have omni-channel retail experience, a track record of successful customer projects, and a highly credible technology solution."

Hampshire continues, "The business had grown quickly and scalability was a key issue."

Crew hired a dedicated Project Manager to ensure the evaluation was as comprehensive as possible, reviewing 20-30 potential suppliers over a period of six-months. After a number of pitches, presentations and detailed analysis, a shortlist of three partners was agreed upon. The shortlist included Microsoft Dynamics AX for Retail, SAP, and a purpose built solution.

To work for Crew, the ERP solution had to cover three key areas:

- **Stock Management:** The current system gave the business multiple views on their total stock levels based on the call centre, online or in-store systems. A single unified and accurate view was needed.
- **Customer Satisfaction:** As web sales continued to grow so did the associated challenges, i.e. customer returns, exchanges and refunds, which varied between in-store and online. A single system capable of handling all customer queries, regardless of the method the customer used, was needed.
- **Management Information:** Better and faster management information was required. Retail is a fast paced industry. Having the right product in the right location at the right price was crucial to Crew's success.

"We had outgrown our current systems and were struggling to deal with the quality of data and the functionality we needed to run a successful omni-channel retail business."

THE SOLUTION

All three potential solutions were presented to the board.

"We narrowed our final three solutions down to two. The decision we faced was whether to go with a slightly lower cost option, or invest a little more in a solution that could scale as we grew."

Crew chose HSO and Microsoft Dynamics AX for Retail because of the combined functional fit, retail industry know-how and HSO's deep understanding of the solution.

"The right long term choice for the business was obvious and Microsoft Dynamics AX was chosen."

The solution is proven to provide a rapid return on investment by equipping the retailer with the functionality needed to drive retail accessibility across multiple channels, locally or globally. It has technology features that connect, empower, and offer the vital insight for proactive customer engagement.



Hampshire continues, "The other solutions we analysed were good, but none offered the technical functionality or the management information and insight Microsoft Dynamics AX for Retail did. We also liked what we called the 'functional fit'. The software fitted well into our day-to-day needs. This functionality combined with the proven retail experience of HSO presented us with a win-win-win."

THE RESULTS

The Microsoft Dynamics AX for Retail solution went live in earnest, less than 10 months after Crew selected HSO. The overall project was split into three phases as Hampshire explains.

"Phase one of the implementation focussed on managing the customer experience and centralising stock management through one scalable system. Phase two is to deploy the solution throughout our 76 stores and phase three will focus on the online experience."

Managing the customer experience has greatly improved how Crew's customers interact with the brand through the call centre, online and in-store. Ensuring the customer has the widest choice of clothing and accessories to choose from, regardless of the method they use to shop, and still being able to capture individual data to build up a single profile of each customer is now a reality.

Hampshire explains, "We can now tailor unique offers to customers and ensure we are providing relevant and appropriate information to them. This builds customer loyalty and allows us to exceed our customers' expectations."

"Having a single view of each customer, what they have purchased, from where and when, is critical to our business. "

Centralised stock management has also helped Crew take a significant step forward by providing greater business insight. The management team have a faster and more accurate understanding of what is selling where, and the drivers behind the purchase.

The Microsoft Dynamics AX for Retail solution is propelling business agility throughout the company to help drive smarter, faster decisions.

Phase three of the project will focus primarily around the e-commerce platform. Customer loyalty is a large part of Crew's success story and online sales make up a large part of this.

The brand is linked with sporting events such as The Whitbread Round the World Race, the England Polo Team, and Masters Tennis at the Albert Hall. Having also been the official clothing supplier to the England Polo team for over five years, capitalising on these events by informing customers, driving awareness, tailoring offers and maximising online sales is an important part of the Crew sales strategy.

Hampshire concludes, "Working with HSO has been an exciting journey. The business has made significant gains in the short time we have worked with HSO. The management team have been pleased with a number of early wins, such as the implementation of PoS with integrated Chip and Pin capabilities.

We have greater business insight, operate with increased agility and are exceeding consumer expectations and delivering unrivalled customer service, which drives improved loyalty. The internal team and management team are delighted with the Dynamics AX solution and HSO to date."



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Founded in 1987, Microsofts Partner of the Year 2014 HSO, is an award winning provider of ERP software solutions designed specifically for the Retail and Consumer Goods industries.

HSO Retail also has more than 25 years' experience as a trusted partner and provider of retail ERP software. For the last 10 years we have focused solely on Microsoft Dynamics AX for Retail and have delivered more than 300 Dynamics AX projects, including the world's largest implementation for one of Europe's biggest omni-channel retailers.

As a trusted Microsoft partner, HSO Retail is an exclusive member of Microsoft's inner circle, (represents the top 1% of partners) which is recognition of our capabilities and expertise in the delivery of ERP solutions. HSO are also recognised by Microsoft as the number one

for customer satisfaction across Europe in their independent studies of Dynamics AX customers.

Powered by the Microsoft Dynamics AX platform, HSO Retail combines both industry-specific knowledge and enterprise grade technology to enable retailers to run their businesses profitably on a leading industry-standard technology platform.

HSO Retail's innovative ERP solution offers retailers a customer driven suite of tools that helps them plan, operate, and power cross-channel retail performance.

HSO's global capability means we can comfortably manage large multi-site implementations while providing the local expertise you need, wherever you are.

Trident Court, One Oakcroft Road,
Chessington, Surrey, KT9 1BD

T: +44 (0) 20 3128 7767
F: +44 (0) 20 3044 2727

www.hso-retail.com
info@hso.com