

EXPORT DISTRIBUTION SOLUTION FOR BHS

Leading high street retailer BHS has selected Empirica warehouse management software from Chess Logistics Technology to manage deliveries to overseas franchisees from its Atherstone distribution centre. The Empirica warehouse management software will be integrated by Chess with new handheld RF terminals and applications including export documentation and invoicing to provide BHS with an advanced real-time solution designed to meet its supply chain requirements.

“Chess offered a cost effective one-stop-shop solution tailored to our needs,” says Mike Dodds, Business Solutions Manager at BHS. “They demonstrated a keenness to understand our business and improve our processes with a pragmatic approach to delivering solutions.”

Since 1928 BHS has grown from a single store in South London to a multinational retail company with a major presence both in the UK and overseas. The company was bought by Philip Green in 2000 and is now a private retailer. It is committed to delivering a great shopping experience to customers through stylish fashion ranges and homewares at prices that represent outstanding value.

The Atherstone Distribution Centre receives and distributes stock delivered to BHS UK stores and franchisees, overseas stores operated under license in eleven countries throughout the Middle East and Europe. A sortation system tracks the movement of every item that makes up a purchase order (PO) by scanning them upon receipt. Items in a PO destined for delivery to franchisees are routed to a discrete 'franchise area' for preparation before shipping. There are two key differences between UK and franchisee deliveries. First, items for franchisees are delivered in export cartons rather than roll cages and rails. Second, all loads must be accompanied by the correct type of export documentation and invoices. The export operation makes shipments of approximately five million units a year. Each shipment requires six different sets of documentation. A team of 25 people is dedicated to the operation.

BHS specified a solution that could manage the different processes involved with distribution to its franchisee stores. The solution had to integrate with existing warehouse equipment while BHS specified a requirement for handheld RF terminals to support accurate real time stock control and order assembly. The solution also had to integrate with a new export documentation and invoicing application from Exportmaster Systems Limited that BHS is introducing as part of the same project.

“Chess came out as leader after a rigorous tender process based on an objective and independent scoring process led by our IT team in conjunction with other parts of the business,” says Mike Dodds.

Empirica is designed for logistics operations working in the 'Internet age'. Its wide range of warehouse management functions and powerful standard and web-based interface capabilities offer the optimum solution for supply chain integration by providing customers and partners access to real-time inventory

and stock information. Empirica covers all key elements of warehouse management with ease of use and rapid implementation for in-house, third party and contract based operations.

One of the key requirements for the BHS solution is integration of Empirica with new export documentation and invoicing systems and developers from Chess have worked with supplier Exportmaster Systems Limited to ensure the applications work together. The process is simplified because Empirica has special tools to help simplify and reduce the amount of redevelopment required to integrate its advanced capabilities with other corporate applications. This helps provide complete control over the interface process, reduce operating costs and enable shorter development cycles for faster system implementation.

“Chess worked with us to tailor solutions that meet our needs,” says Mike Dodds. “They also worked well with a third party supplier to integrate the export documentation solution we need for managing distribution to overseas franchisees.”

The implementation is proceeding on schedule and is expected to go live in the second quarter of 2004.

“Chess has been very professional throughout,” says Mike Dodds. “The quality of documentation and thoroughness of analysis have been excellent.”

Chess Logistics Technology Limited has provided software for logistics and distribution applications for almost twenty years and is recognised as a specialist in its field. The company has an extensive client list of national and international companies.