



Betterware home shopping gives faster delivery and improves customer satisfaction with online order processing system from Unipower.

Homeware retailer Betterware prides itself on a personal service, taking and delivering orders for its well-known product range directly to the customer's door. Finding that its paper-based order fulfilment methods were time consuming, had varying delivery time and could introduce errors, the company reviewed its systems and decided to adopt a technology solution to streamline its operational processes.

It chose Unipower Solution's seldom connect, Transactional Catalogue CD to enable its nationwide network of 800 sales co-ordinators to submit customer orders electronically to head office for processing and fulfilment. The new online ordering system reduces delivery time and order errors, improves customer satisfaction and adds an extra week to the sales year.

Betterware is one of today's best established shopping brands, with customer sales in excess of £100 million and over 90% brand recognition. The company supplies a vast product range direct to the customer's door, from personal hygiene through to its popular kitchenware, household and garden goods.

The company's success has been built upon the traditional sales model of having distributor agents in the field who receive orders directly from customers. The orders are then collected from the agents by the sales co-ordinators who submit them to central headquarters for fulfilment. Until recently the co-ordinators collated and submitted the orders on large paper order forms to the head office for data entry, processing and despatch from the warehouse.

Why Change?

While the original system had been an effective method for processing orders since the company was first established, Betterware was finding that errors were made as the data was entered. Similarly the order forms were reliant on being delivered to head office either by post, the company's delivery vans or third part couriers which meant that the fulfilment timescales varied for different customer orders.

According to John Embrey at Betterware, "We believe selling is a very personal business and place an importance on having our sales agents taking orders and delivering goods in the field. It is a very traditional sales model that works well."

“However, it could sometimes take up to three weeks between a customer placing their order and receiving delivery.”

The use of variable methods for paper order submission could also result in peaks and troughs of work for the data entry clerks. If order arrived in the post or delivery vans at the same time, then this function potentially became a bottleneck since although the volume of work varied, the number of clerks to do the work was fixed.

To remain a market leader in the growing area of home shopping, the management at Betterware realised that it needed to review the processing and delivery times to ensure customers continued to be satisfied with the service.

“We had been successful in building the business through our personal service and delivering a wide range of goods directly to the door but we knew that our processes needed updating”, said John Embrey.

Implementation

Betterware initially implemented a trial using the software with a small group of agents based locally to the head office. A rollout programme followed. Within six months over 50% of the agents were up and running using the software.

“During the rollout we attended the regional sales meetings to demonstrate how the software worked and to provide hands-on training. It was well received as everyone could quickly see how it was a benefit to them and their end-customers, as well as to head office. Now 95% of our 800 agents capture and submit orders electronically”, said Embrey.

“Not only are our customers happier because they get their goods faster, we have reduced the costs and errors of data entry, improving the quality of our service”, he continued.

The Benefits

Processing the orders faster enabled Betterware to add an additional week of sales opportunity to its yearly calendar, as well as pay its co-ordinators commissions faster, since these are paid once the customer receives their order.

Betterware also has an external website that connects to the same back office systems and database enabling customers to order items online from the home catalogue.

According to Embrey: “Our success has been built on the traditional sales model and Unipower’s solution has enabled us to streamline our processes to improve our customer service dramatically. Enabling our customers to shop online from our home catalogue opens up another complementary sales channel with the added value of a personal delivery service”.