

New Look

Retail

Case study



New Look partners with M-Netics and Zebra to deliver fashion faster

New Look, the third largest women's retailer by value in the UK, is synonymous with 'fast-track fashion'. The company is famous for the 'speed sourcing' of high-fashion garments that make their way from the designers' drawing boards to over 500 high street stores in as few as eight weeks. But, with consumer expectation higher than ever, to stay ahead of the game, New Look continues to evolve its supply chain with innovations that push the boundaries of achievable speed-to-market. With 84 million items of stock travelling over five million miles each year, New Look requires a slick supply chain with every element reliable, robust and accurate.

The Challenge

New Look's business has grown aggressively and as a result faced tough new supply chain challenges in 2005. With suppliers now shipping garments from 45 countries, many with different languages and labelling requirements, maintaining, let alone improving the product flow and speed of delivery was a daunting task.

To make a real impact on the business, New Look's management team knew that they would have to involve the entire supply chain in any new processes. Training them on Quality Control and integrating them fully into its labelling and tracking systems would be essential to its success.

New Look turned to cross-docking to minimise the amount of time garments spend in transit between manufacturers and stores. Key to the success of this process is having one label that holds all the information for the final delivery. Labelling its products at the point of manufacture with details of the destination store would allow the retailer to unload shipments from its supplier and repack them directly into another onward consignment without warehousing them, to save money and get products in to the stores quicker.

New Look adopted a system to design and print its product labels, that enabled fast and accurate sorting of shipments through hubs in the country of origin, regional hubs and distribution centres. However, to achieve the read reliability needed to make cross-docking practical, New Look had to print these labels in the UK and post them to suppliers around the world. New Look needed a solution that would enable its suppliers to produce labels on-demand and apply them at the point of manufacture. It also wanted to be able to split the consignment in the country of origin and send half to its distribution centre in the north of England and the rest to its southern site.

The Solution

New Look chose M-Netics as its solutions partner, a decision aligned to New Look's long-term business strategy, to help provide a system that would facilitate an easy-to-use, upstream plug-and-play label printing solution at each of the suppliers' sites, regardless of country of origin. The label printers needed to be rugged and suitable for a variety of environments from the cold temperatures of Romania to the heat and humidity of South Asia.



Solution Technology

Zebra 140XiIIIPlus

M-Netics, 5D custom software



M-Netics proposed a web-based label printing solution developed by its software company, 5D that incorporated Zebra 140XIIIPlus barcode label printers. Zebra's 140XIIIPlus printer is one of the most rugged on the market with a strong metal casing. This suited New Look perfectly, as it needed to keep the printers up and running, in remote locations with little or no local support. Additionally, with print speeds of up to 12 inches per second, the 140XIIIPlus was more than capable of keeping up with the 8 inch per second New Look demanded.

The solution integrates into the existing back-end system used to produce the labels in New Look's own warehouse. It uploads information about products that New Look has ordered onto the web server. There it can be downloaded in the correct format by each of the individual suppliers. Each label is consistent with every other and easily readable throughout the supply chain which avoids errors and increases efficiency.

“With suppliers now shipping garments from 45 countries, ...maintaining, let alone improving the product flow and speed of delivery was a daunting task.”

“As our suppliers are spread out across the globe, implementing a solution at each of their sites would have been too expensive.”

“M-Netics has provided a very high quality system that has been fully tested for both reliability and ease of use.”

