

The Gro Company speeds order fulfilment with Balloon one integrated warehouse

The Gro Company is a respected product innovator in the nursery market. Its popular Grobags are specially designed and manufactured sleeping bags for babies that keep them safe and secure, enabling restful sleep for the entire family. It also manufactures and supplies nursery accessories, including a portable blackout blind, room temperature monitor and clock. The company has two routes to market: direct sales to consumers from its website, The Gro Store (www.gro-store.co.uk), and through UK high-street retailers, such as Mothercare, John Lewis, Babies R Us and online with Amazon and Kiddicare.

Managing a diverse range of orders, from single Grobags to 40-ft trailer loads of product, each day requires maximum warehouse and despatch productivity and efficiency.

In 2007, the Gro Company undertook a major upgrade to its warehouse management system (WMS) so that it could advance its customer service through better turnaround of orders. The company selected Balloon One as its WMS supplier having learnt that it would be able to integrate an advanced wireless solution with its SAP Business One enterprise resource planning (ERP) to give full visibility of orders and their status throughout the business. The new WMS replaced its slow Euromax paper-based system that was restricting picking to only two waves a day.

With the introduction of the integrated Balloon One WMS, the Gro Company' revolutionised its approach to order fulfilment, enabling orders to be picked, packed and made ready for despatch within seven minutes of receipt!

"Balloon One was recommended to us by a former SAP supplier. The company's WMS is well regarded as an excellent fit for SAP. Indeed, the investment in the system has more than paid for itself as we can respond quickly and accurately to all orders – mispicks are a thing of the past and we can easily interrogate the system if we need to follow up on any problems. The changes we have been able



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James Green reports that the combination of the ERP system and Balloon One's WMS underpins a slick warehousing operation. The ERP system processes the orders and sends the information to the WMS. There is no need for duplicating data and data entry effort as information is entered once only and then it flows freely between the two systems. Pick lists appear automatically on the warehouse operators wireless hand helds, complete with instructions and stock locations. It is then simply a matter for them to follow the information and scanning the appropriate bar codes to update the system in real time.

"Regardless of the type of order – whether from our website or from a retailer's EDI message – the system takes the information directly from our SAP ERP and instantly creates a pick list on a wireless hand held device. This guides the picker to the correct stock items without the need of any paper. Picking, packing and despatching actions are confirmed by scanning bar codes – it is very simple and user friendly. The added advantage, of course, is the availability of real-time information direct from the warehouse enabling us to see the status of each and every order," he says.

"This is an intuitive system so we can easily increase the number of pickers when necessary. The training time window is minimal as the pickers quickly learn how to use it. The efficiencies we have seen will undoubtedly saved us money in the warehouse as our staff are more productive and we have reduced misinformation. It has also enabled us to limit the paper trail to identify and resolve issues quickly."

The WMS is also used for goods-in. It enables rapid booking-in of new stock, quickly allocates stock locations, and enables easy stock rotations.

"We can quickly see what we have received and where the stock is located; we don't have blackholes in the warehouse as everything is



where it should be! The system allows us to rotate stock and their locations and automatically updates itself as bar codes are scanned. It works very well," says James Green.

About Balloon One

Balloon One is an IT provider specialising in the distribution, implementation and support of business software and supply chain applications. The company has strong product knowledge and business know-how, which enables Balloon One to deliver real value to its customers. Balloon One's goal is to make large scale enterprise applications accessible to small and midsize companies. The company focuses on applications that are affordable and easy to implement that deliver a rapid return on investment.

With 20 years experience in the business application market the company has worked with hundreds of businesses. The company

has customers in a wide range of markets, including: packaging, toy / gift, hobby, clothing, wholesale, retail, timber, DIY, furniture, education, leisure, IT, electronics, healthcare, medical distribution, water treatment, and chemicals and lubricants.

In 2002, Balloon One was appointed as the first business partner for SAP Business One and today it is widely respected as a worldwide Business One centre of expertise. In 2004, the company added the Accellos One Warehouse solution to its product portfolio. In 2007, Balloon One was awarded Partner of the Year by Accellos for its outstanding sales and implementation success.