caliq

case study:

Hill Interiors
— est. 1975 —

42 years experience

sourcing **2500** products from over **100** countries

servicing in excess of **4500** trade accounts

40 employees

Caliq client since **2011**

200,000 sq ft warehouse and HQ

the **power** behind your **wholesale distribution** business

Hill Interiors first started trading 42 years ago, selling antiques and reproduction items in a small retail outlet in the market town of Thirsk in North Yorkshire. Whilst still in the area, due to continued diversification and growth, the company now operates from a 200k+ sqft warehouse, servicing in excess of 4500 trade accounts and sourcing 2500 products from over 100 countries.

These include furniture, accessories, lighting and gifts for the home and garden. The products can be found being sold by interiors and furniture shops, garden centres, hardware stores, online traders and even some castles!

Managing Director, Julian Potter describes the company as "a 'one stop shop' for products for every room in the house". The formula has obviously worked as now two or three container loads of goods arrive every day.

The company relied heavily on Sage 50 software throughout its growth, but by 2011 it became obvious that this was just not performing in terms of speed of processing and the information it provided to aid important business decisions. Hill Interiors decided they needed to look for a system that was more specialised and geared to both their current ways of working and their ambitious growth plans.

Julian explained how important this was.

"Sage simply wasn't coping and possibly due to the volumes of data it was being asked to process, it would occasionally crash altogether. Rectifying this involved driving tapes to Newcastle and complete recovery of the situation could take us out for a week!"

Through some fortunately well-timed marketing, Hill Interiors found out about Caliq and investigations began with them looking at Sage 200, SAP and MS Dynamics Nav as well as Caliq.

"With the other systems, our overriding worry was there was far more 'buzz words' than actual functionality. It was quickly obvious how well Caliq would fit and bring significant improvements. They were well ahead on stock management and a high priority was the integration needed to monitor and control the stock in our retail units as well as the analysis of what was selling through that channel, all of which Caliq did.

Once we realised this was the system we wanted to pursue, Caliq staff came in and spent time with everybody in our business and listened to their requirements or frustrations. Caliq already had solutions for most of the issues raised but if not, they would give it thought and come back with ideas. The approach was consultative and in some cases, they definitely knew more than we did! Back then and since, Caliq have suggested different processes and in some cases, the time saved has been incredible".

The business also gained huge benefits from Caliq's ability to integrate with other specialist software packages. For example, one called Shipping Lines exchanges data with Caliq. The system knows which purchase order lines are on each boat. If for any reason a boat is delayed en route, Caliq knows this and automatically refreshes the stock forecasting and allocation data.

Another example is Courier Integration, whereby as soon as despatch from the warehouse is confirmed in Caliq, the courier's acceptance and a tracking number are automatically e-mailed to the customer.

Compared to Sage, Caliq has far more data fields available to store information against customers and products. Julian describes the 'double edged sword' this represents, whilst confirming that he wouldn't have it any other way.

"As there are so many fields available, whenever we set up a new customer or product it takes longer than it used to. However, the knock-on benefits are huge in terms of accuracy and time savings. We used to have examples of invoices being sent to the wrong contact within a customer account, or our product catalogues going to the booking-in clerk instead of the buyer! Mistakes like these and the time taken to resolve them are eradicated by having all the right data available and the system using it correctly and automatically. It's fair to say that once the data is in, the system almost runs itself allowing us to step back and watch the money grow!"

End to end!

In terms of logistics, Caliq can handle your business from initial purchasing of products, right through to them arriving with your customers. Buyers attending international trade fairs can enter product details in a spreadsheet which are then imported into Caliq's range planner. This is a module that allows entry of cost information and 'what ifs' to make sure the product is viable. If it is, the product is automatically uploaded to your trade website, instantly ready for sale.

The website is kept right up to date with stock availability and when customers place an order, their credit status is checked. Customers can enter a requested delivery date, if not just ASAP, and the day prior to that Caliq will send the order to the warehouse and following pick, pack and despatch the customer will receive a confirmation e-mail, despatch notes, courier tracking reference, an invoice and a current statement -

"All by just pressing three buttons!" comments Julian. "This level of service is so important to us as one third of our business comes through our website.

Within Caliq, the warehouse is also organised into logical areas and all customer orders are sorted by the system into the most efficient possible pick route which saves so much time for us, and ensures the customer gets their goods when they are expecting them".

Caliq is also constantly doing checks for issues that may arise. For example, when stock is getting low and needs to be either replenished, re-ordered or both. This is another aspect that Julian is delighted by.

"The system effectively does a rolling stock check without the staff even knowing. Previously a stock take would involve 20 people for 4 days twice a year. That is now a thing of the past".

The Implementation?

"Before and during the implementation, the Caliq team chatted to everybody about their roles, and left no stone unturned to ensure the system would fit perfectly. There was a massive hunt for all the data the system needed, e.g. cartons, weights, cbms, commodity codes etc. but that work has paid us back in spades".

It was a challenge to learn the system as it is a much 'bigger animal', but in-depth training was supplied and Caliq staff know the business inside out and constantly offer help and advice.

The diligence applied in the build up to 'go live' meant that we swapped from Sage to Caliq in one day!"

find out what we can do for
your business...

Summing up Caliq?

"Caliq fits our line of business. With the information it contains, there is nothing you can't see. The system effectively runs itself leaving staff to be efficient, sell, provide service and not get involved in unnecessary tasks. What's more, Caliq listen and adapt the software as we grow and change processes and updates are provided to us all inclusive in the support package.

If one thing really stands out, it's the 'high tech' stock allocation, the benefits of which we feel probably paid for the system within the first six months."

Carla Petty is Sales Manager at Hill Interiors and when asked to sum up Caliq for her role, she said the following:

"It's a treasure chest of information at your fingertips, a comprehensive and easy to use system that makes every working day a whole lot easier. Sounds cheesy, but it's true!"

...Caliq is now the software solution of choice for multi-channel wholesale distributors operating in the Home, Gift, Garden and allied sectors.

Our focus is on you…

Our aims are to provide clarity over all aspects of your business, deliver efficient and effective processes through your supply chain, implement controls where you need them, margin monitoring and performance analysis at all pressure points and the tools for your team to deliver outstanding customer service. A Business Intelligence module helps you monitor and manage every aspect of your operation.

With all that in place, the ultimate aim is to aid your bottom line and provide you with a business solution that empowers you to grow your business knowing that you and your team have the right tools in place to support your Company wherever you take it.

If the Caliq community sounds appealing for your Company, we would be delighted to talk face to face. We'll bring some chocolate!

visit www.caliq.com
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