



Order Management Case Study

Promotional products supplier saves costs and improves accuracy through Affinity Express order management services

“The Affinity Express team is doing a great job and has been very consistent with meeting their daily productivity goals. Plus, they have been very receptive to taking on new challenges!”

Director of Customer Services at leading promotional products supplier

The client is a leading supplier of custom imprinted promotional products, which it sells across the U.S. and Europe through a chain of distributors. The client’s mission is to make top-quality, affordable products available, while continuously developing innovative new product lines. The company has a solid reputation of exemplary service and reliable delivery established over more than 50 years in the industry.

The client receives orders from its dealers through various channels such as the website, email, telephone and fax; which are submitted to their centralized system.

Challenges

In 2006, the client was incurring high costs in hiring and training for its in-house order management operation. Finding the right employees and retaining them was also problematic. Sales in the promotional products industry are seasonal, adding to the difficulty in staffing.

The client has a diverse range of products all with different specifications that need to be understood by the order-taking personnel. This requires close attention to details and understanding of dealer requirements. New products introductions necessitate regular training in the products, specifications and features.

Challenges

- High costs of the order management function, including hiring and training
- Difficulty in staffing for peak seasons and sudden spikes in volume
- Managing orders effectively through a centralized system
- Enabling visibility across the supply chain
- Improving accuracy of order entry

Why Affinity Express

- Trained, experienced personnel
- Coverage for holidays, weekends and peak volumes
- Transaction-based pricing
- Structured processes
- State-of-the-art technology with no capital outlay

Managing Error Rates

- Each order is tracked and verified
- Queries and errors are tracked for each order
- Continuous feedback and training is provided to personnel

Results

- 1600 orders processed daily
- Accuracy levels of 99.7%
- Capacity during volume spikes
- Lower operating costs
- Increased efficiency in the order processing cycle

“I want to thank our Affinity Express team for the extra hours they worked on Saturday. What a wonderful job was accomplished and it was comforting this morning to see that we were caught up. Again thank you for the support and teamwork. We appreciate the quick reaction on such short notice.”

Director of Customer Services at leading promotional products supplier

Another major challenge was receiving a large number of orders through various sources and being able to manage orders through a centralized application, which addressed functions related to inventory, credit checks, shipping and invoicing.

Due to the crucial role of the application in enabling visibility across the supply chain, even small errors in order entry had severe effects on the overall operations. Moreover, confidentiality of data was of utmost importance. As a result, the client wanted to restrict integration of their system by external providers and would only allow very limited access.

The Affinity Express Solution

The client partnered with Affinity Express to transform their order management process. The goals were to reduce the cost of operations and concentrate their internal personnel on the company's core competencies.

The Affinity Express team started with a thorough study of the client's processes and procedures. An effective solution was developed to address the challenges and help the client successfully outsource the back-end order entry function to the Affinity Express offshore facility in India and improve the operational efficiency of the order management process.

The Affinity Express IT Team also performed a comprehensive analysis of the client systems and its protocols to design the infrastructure needed to access it in a secure environment, while allowing the order entry team access to meet the requirements for speed and efficiency.

The order entry team started working on a small project and successfully proved its ability to take over the function. Affinity Express worked with the client as an extension of the internal team and trained in new products through online video conferencing and VOIP solutions.

Some of the key advantages provided by Affinity Express include:

- Efficient order management
- Additional capacity to handle the volumes during peak seasons
- Extra coverage to work on weekends in case of high volumes
- IT support around the clock to ensure smooth functioning

Value Delivered

Affinity Express built a partnership that demonstrates the efficacy of the virtual business model. The relationship has grown over the last five years from a single product type with 100 orders per day to several product lines with more than 1600 orders a day.

Affinity Express has enabled the client to free up internal resources to focus on the core business, reduce operating costs and increase efficiency.

Based on our success with the client, we now also provide support to a sister company.



About Affinity Express

Affinity Express is the leading onshore and offshore provider that is 100% dedicated to high-volume advertising and marketing production services.

For more information, contact Affinity Express at (847) 930-3205 or visit www.affinityexpress.com.