



Smith & Brooks - systems to succeed

A bespoke system is what really fits

Advanced first gained its own software creation capability when it became apparent that the simple choice was: write a bespoke program to suit our way of working; or, change our way of working to suit an off-the-shelf program.

The gaining of expertise hasn't always been easy, but the benefits can now be shared by our customers.

"The one thing I feel I must say about Advanced is that they bend over backwards to help - but then I suppose that's their job, it just has to be done. In fashion, you have to get your winning lines to market or you are losing a big chunk of that season's profits."

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Breaking new markets? You need an Advanced solution



The Customer

Smith and Brooks Ltd are one of the UK's leading branded childrenswear companies. The firm currently sells more than six million garments each year and its brands include: Barbie; Scooby Doo; Looney Tunes; Marvel Heroes; My Little Pony; and The Simpsons.

The Problem

Smith and Brooks decided to target the European independent sector as in 2002, but this posed challenges for a company with business systems designed to handle large volumes for a relatively small number of customers. The company's first trading season with 400 new retailers threw up a series of problems and Advanced, as a trusted partner, came to the table and proposed a solution.

The Solution

The answer was to devise and build a bespoke picking system that allowed S&B to state the desired order styles and quantities by despatch location, with Advanced then creating the pick list depending on actual current stock levels. A specification was drawn up by Advanced's IT team and approved by S&B and work on the program, called Flagship, got underway. The deadline was tight - stage one providing core functionality had to be ready before the next trading season, a lead-time of just three months.

The Specification

S&B wanted a system with three key requirements and an off-the-shelf

program just could not provide the following levels of functionality.

1. It must work with S&B's legacy systems and interact to allow automatic updating of data.
2. The creation of packing lists should be controlled by the user, not the program, in order to reduce the amount of 'fresh air' being transported.
3. Invoices should be created directly from the packing list and sent out to S&B's customers by Advanced.

The Outcome

Flagship has proved to be a great success, greatly simplifying what used to be a very complicated process. "Without the IT put in place by Advanced it would have been chaos for us," said S&B logistics manager Gary Howes.

"We did one season without an IT system and we had no stock visibility - with Advanced's IT system we have visibility one day after it has been despatched and the new system will provide visibility prior to despatch."

The Benefits of Expertise

Advanced's expertise in IT allows both ourselves and our customers to work with software designed for our specific needs. The case of S&B shows that another big plus is the ability to move quickly to deliver a solution in time for the next trading season. Gary commented: "Having a partner like Advanced has made the transition into a new market much easier that it would otherwise have been."