

Green Baby

Jonathan Barker explains the importance of control when outsourcing operations

Customer Case Study

Industry:

Clothing + Accessories

Mail Order, CRM, Distribution, Call Centre, Fulfilment, Catalogue, Financials, Shops, eCommerce



Established in 1999 by Canadian Jill Barker, Green Baby source and distribute ethically produced and organic baby products via branded retail outlets, mail order catalogue and webstore. The business objective is to be a pre-eminent brand in the baby and nursery industry, based on a unique product offering and customer experience.

Green Baby initially managed all operations in-house, but soon realised that the business could only develop if people were freed to concentrate resource in the areas of product sourcing, marketing and development strategy. Consequently a decision was made to outsource contact centre and fulfilment operations to a specialist provider. Based on initial experience and research, Green Baby learned that this approach was not without its pitfalls.

Director Jonathan Barker comments: "High quality customer service is not purely dictated by the telephone manner of the customer service agent or presentation of the delivered parcel it is the sum of all the business elements, from initial product design, though purchasing, last-mile delivery and after-sale service. Therefore a 'them and us' approach was detrimental. We could not directly influence the efforts of the 3rd party service provider and vice versa."

In 2004, Green Baby decided to seek an outsourcing partnership to help the business meet ambitious growth plans. Jonathan continues: "Quite simply, we wanted a transparent partnership with a service provider that could project our brand and share resource, with no compromises."

Having considered a number of approaches, Green Baby selected Exact Abacus as their outsourcing partner on the basis of technology, culture and scale. The fundamental principle of the partnership is resource-sharing. Exact's 3EX system is used to manage all business activity and is accessed by operators from both organisations across multiple sites. The main benefit of the shared system is the control and visibility of information afforded Green Baby, enabling them to make real-time business decisions.

Exact Abacus provide a contact centre service from 08.00 till 20.00 7 days a week, staffed by highly trained agents who have excellent product knowledge and benefit from a rolling programme of Green Baby training. The fulfilment service is managed from Exact's integrated 15,000 sq ft high bay warehouse facility.

Our future success is dependent on the provision of quality products, efficient routes to market and happy customers All stock management and order fulfilment tasks utilise Exact's Pocket 3 EX wireless warehouse application, which increases the rate of throughput whilst error-checking each process. Jonathan comments: "Exact Abacus's



use of wireless technologies enables significant time and motion benefits and ensures that pick/pack accuracy runs at a minimum of 99%."

The webstore is fully integrated with the back-office 3EX system and allows Green Baby staff to manage transactional content such as products, prices, offers etc from within 3EX. This minimises administrative overheads and ensures consistency of information across all sales channels. Customer self-service functions such as order tracking and account management have reduced the number of contact centre queries by over 20%. Green Baby operate four retail outlets, which run Exact Abacus's Webtill.net application for point-of-sale activity and integration with the core 3EX database. The warehouse-to-retail replenishment instructions are created by Green Baby on the 3EX system and then picked and shipped by the Exact warehouse. In the event of telecommunications failure, the webtill.net application switches to off-line mode allowing continuation of service until the link to the main system is restored.

Jonathan concludes: "Our future success is dependent on the provision of quality products, efficient routes to market and happy customers! Our partnership with Exact means that we can take advantage of the very latest technology, without capital expenditure. 'Coal-face' operations are run by people who value quality customer service and guard the best interests of both Green Baby and Exact Abacus."

Green Baby was set-up in Autumn 1999 by Jill Barker. Jill had the idea of setting up Green Baby when on maternity leave with her first son Thomas. Jill had been really surprised that, compared with Canada, finding natural baby products in the UK was comparatively hard. In particular, she was surprised at how few parents opted for washable nappies. While on the increase it still accounts for only around 15% of babies in Britain. And so she set up Green Baby. Response has been phenomenal, now in addition to three stores in Islington, London N1, Notting Hill, London W11, and 102Richmond, Surrey, TW9 there is also a thriving mail order and wholesale business. Another new store was opened in November 2005 in Greenwich, SE10 and more are planned for 2006.

