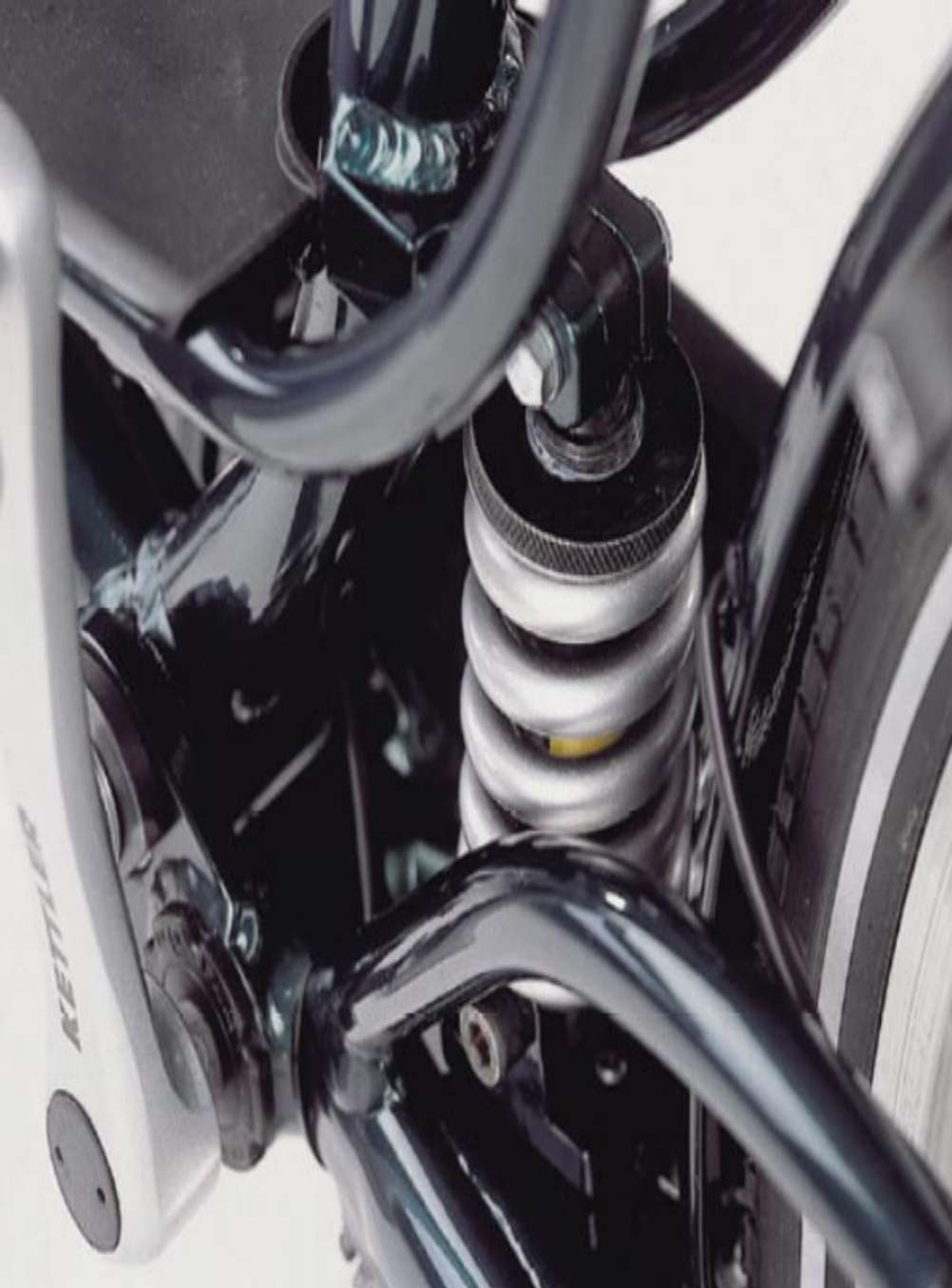




**FREIZEIT MARKE KETTLER**



**a CASE STUDY  
by EXACT ABACUS**





## Kettler - fit for business

**Whilst lifestyle products are very much in vogue, Kettler's perspective is more about lifetime products for the very young, right through to adults.**

It's a journey that starts with Kettcars, the much-loved children's pedal cars that the company based its early success on and first introduced to the UK over 20 years ago.

Now with over 3,500 employees and the Kettler range extending from fitness equipment and city bicycles, through to garden furniture, the German manufacturer has built a highly successful business.

To maximise the sales of such diverse products, each range needs a different channel to market, with the pedal cars going through toy shops and superstores, the Fitness Equipment through sports shops and chains, the garden furniture being sold predominantly through garden centres and city bikes marketed through mail order and the internet.

The management of this complex, multi-channel road to market could have presented serious IT challenges for Kettler's UK Managing Director Paul Bevington. *Yet Paul has achieved complete control of the operation, without having to employ an IT manager.* In spite of this, the company has moved forward with goals of paperless transactions and a sophisticated website, geared up to manage all the different markets, including letting the ultimate customer know where they can buy any of Kettler's products. *The website also acts as an intranet for the sales force and an extranet for Kettler's retail channels to manage their supply chain.*

*"We're pushing forward with route planning, load building aligned to wireless picking and customer dispatches," says Paul. These are the areas where we can realise major benefits both in terms of saving costs*

*and improving customer service."*

An integrated IT system encompassing accounts, sales, marketing, warehousing and distribution is the key to Kettler's business. However their approach to IT has been based on an innovative concept. Perhaps the biggest departure from the norm for Kettler was to become an 'early adopter' of managed IT services.

***"With Exact Abacus we had the option of a hosted service, where we used a telephone line to access our application – opposed to having a server on site. It was a nervous moment when we first moved over but considering the benefits we have enjoyed, it has been more than worth it."***

*"In-house IT means your business has an extra layer of costs to manage," explains Paul. "Buying, upgrading and maintaining services means capital expenditure and the staff needed to provide that service adds to overheads. Now we have fixed costs and an IT consultant on a contract basis, to act as the interface for our new projects."*

Paul found the heart of the solution to this challenge some ten years ago when, as Marketing Director, he was one of three Directors tasked with finding a new and smarter IT system, long before the concept of multi-channel retailing had even been thought of.

Of the six or so vendors who were short listed the board opted for Exact Abacus as their supplier. *"If knowing exactly what we wanted counts as demanding then we were very demanding," adds Paul. "It would have made no sense to invest in an IT solution that you then had to fit your*



business around, IT needs to support your business.”

From the business perspective that meant full and detailed information on all sales, visibility of stock irrespective of location and accounts. Realising the benefits of functionality helped the UK Management remain loyal to Exact Abacus’ core system – even when the parent company switched over to a far more costly Enterprise Resource Planning system to provide Millennium compliance.

Once the Millennium issue was addressed, Kettler GB has moved forward with Exact Abacus. Apart from the supply chain issues, which have improved customer service and distribution, the core 3EX system has been effective in driving electronic transactions forward through the supplier extranet.

Equally as a service provider Exact Abacus now manages all website content for Kettler, which makes sense since the site was created and

is hosted by Exact Abacus.

**Not only do Exact provide hosting, but their call centre also looks after the direct marketing operation for the city bicycles and provides out of hours and overspill call management for other parts of their business.**

Given the role that IT plays as a whole, the imperative is very much for business continuity. “In technical terms the infrastructure we run our business on is highly secure and sophisticated.”

**For further information or a demonstration of the 3EX System**

**“There is a huge resilience in the hardware far more than we could afford if the system was situated in-house”**





**“Despite considerable scepticism prior to making what was a leap of faith, outsourcing with Exact has been a remarkable success, which I would recommend all companies to at least consider. It is reassuring to know that any steps we take in IT are forwards.”**

**Paul Bevington** (Kettler UK Managing Director)

Kettler (GB) Limited is part of the German manufacturing group Heinz Kettler GmbH & Co.

The KETTLER group was established in Germany in 1949, and has been operating in the UK for almost twenty years. The group has around 3500 employees at its manufacturing sites throughout Germany, and its subsidiaries worldwide.

Kettler brands are universally recognised, symbolising quality, style and durability - with all products guaranteed for at least two years and backed by a full after sales service.

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