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A LEADING FOOTWEAR DISTRIBUTOR
ACCELERATED ITS OPERATION
With Single Solution Integration and Automation

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Trend Marketing, one of Canada's largest footwear distributors, has deepened connectivity with retailers and enhanced fulfillment efficiency with RLM Apparel Software's enterprise solution.



For more than 20 years, Trend Marketing has been a trusted partner to Canada's retailers, working behind

the scenes to make sure Canadian consumers have a great experience with their favorite footwear brands.

As a fast-growing distributor, Trend Marketing is responsible for keeping many leading footwear labels in stock in retail customers' stores across Canada. These labels include Cole Haan, Vince Camuto, Life Stride, Jessica Simpson and Sam Edelman, to name just a few of the 50 brands distributed by Trend Marketing. The company has a strong track record of serving large retailers such as Hudson's Bay Co., Amazon and Nordstrom, as well as numerous specialty retailers across Canada.

Today all of those retailers and an expanding roster of footwear brands partner with Trend Marketing to help them meet omnichannel demand. For example, retailers need real-time visibility into Trend Marketing's inventory to populate product availability on their e-commerce sites. Often drop shipping directly to the end consumer, Trend Marketing's distribution center (DC) serves as a seamless extension of the retailer's own supply chain.

"Omnichannel retailing certainly has added complexities for our business to navigate," says Michael Weinberger, director of operations, Trend Marketing. "It used to be you would receive an order and ship the goods out to a brick-and-mortar store, and that was the end of it."

In the era of endless aisles, Trend Marketing faced the need for much greater automation and connectivity if it was to continue supporting growth without proportionately increasing headcount.

Having outgrown its 9-year-old ERP system, Trend Marketing searched for a new solution and decided on RLM Apparel Software's cloud-based suite, encompassing all business processes from financial management to warehousing and fulfillment. The company went live with RLM in January 2016. Then in the fall of 2017, Trend Marketing began a rollout of RLM's Enhanced WMS to bring an even greater level of automation to its 60,000-square foot DC, located in the greater Toronto area.

Saving Time with a Single Solution

Before rolling out RLM, Trend Marketing was using multiple tools to perform mission-critical EDI transactions with its retail customers.

Also, the company often had to log into retailers' systems to perform key processes, only to turn around and do the same processes again on its ERP. Trend Marketing team members were no strangers to working overtime and on weekends to keep up with order volume.

"We were working in multiple systems, doing double the work," Weinberger says. "Now we work strictly in RLM, and the information is fully integrated and automatically shared. The work just gets done once. Plus, there's a higher level of automation overall, so we don't have to do all the steps we had to do in the past."

For example, prior to implementing RLM, Trend Marketing shipping associates would access a retail customer's system to issue an invoice for an order, a required precursor to shipping that order. Then the associates had to remember to go into Trend Marketing's ERP system to issue the invoice internally.

During busy times, they might forget to take that step, which caused confusing discrepancies between accounts receivable and inventory numbers. To make matters more complicated, Trend Marketing also had to manually add any shipping costs to the invoices generated in its system.

Today all of those transactions and cost applications occur automatically thanks to much tighter EDI integration between Trend Marketing, its retail customers and their preferred parcel shippers.

Leading up to its system changeover, the company also was burdened by manual processes on the receiving end. Before its distribution center was upgraded to RLM's Warehouse Management System (WMS), DC employees had to record incoming orders on paper and take those notes to a separate office, where other team members would calculate and add the landed costs for each style and then receive the order into the ERP system.

Now the RLM software calculates those costs automatically, and goods are received immediately into inventory at the DC.

"We have a much faster receiving time now," Weinberger says.



The new system also offers robust reporting capabilities and easy web-based access. For example, Trend Marketing's sales

and brand management teams have user-defined access, which allows them to enter orders from the home office or on the road. They can also run reports to check the status of orders, inventory or in-transit stock.

Automating Order Fulfilment

When it comes to omnichannel fulfillment, every second matters. If a retail customer can't get an instant answer about product availability, it often has to move on to the next supplier. Trend Marketing has focused on streamlining processes across the spectrum for faster, more accurate fulfillment with best-in-class efficiency and customer service.

This includes full integration with small parcel shippers, including Purolator, Canada Post and UPS. Previously, the Trend Marketing shipping staff might have to log into a retailer's system to print out the proper packing slip. Or they would have to remember or look up which carriers and shipping methods were preferred by different retailers. Sometimes, they also had to manually enter the retailer's carrier account number order to generate the packing slip.

Now the RLM system automatically recognizes the correct carrier and shipping method to use and applies the retailer's account number as needed.

"It saves a lot of time on the packing and shipping side and increases the accuracy," Weinberger says.

Since going live with RLM, Trend Marketing has established strong shipping accuracy rates. The company scans all outgoing orders to ensure the right product and right quantity are packed and shipped. And at every step of the way, the system generates automatic emails to customers to alert them of key milestones, assuring them their orders have been received, entered, invoiced and shipped.

Now Trend Marketing is taking it to the next level. The firm is rolling out RLM's Enhanced WMS with automated stock locator functionality. With this solution, warehouse associates will scan all items upon receipt, which automatically closes out purchase orders in the ERP. They will use hand-held mobile devices to scan items and capture location information during receiving, putting away into inventory, picking, packing and shipping.

"The picker is guided by the hand-held device regarding where to go to pick. They scan the location, they scan the goods, and the goods come out of that location. We will know the goods are no longer in that location but in the picking location. We will have more real-time visibility about where in the warehouse our goods actually are," says Weinberger. "Are they in the receiving area? Are they in a specific bin in the warehouse? Are they in a pick location? Or have they been packed?"

In addition to making it faster and easier to locate goods, the Enhanced WMS solution also is expected to give Trend Marketing greater flexibility in how to prioritize its order picking and fulfillment. For instance, the firm can opt to pick one order at a time or to do wave picking. With the latter, the system "rolls up" certain types of orders to be picked. The company might choose to process all orders for a particular retailer or to prioritize picking of all drop-ship orders.

Looking to the future, Trend Marketing is confident its current technology platform enables flexibility to quickly scale up with third-party logistics providers (3PL), if needed. The RLM system has built-in integrations with 3PL partners Trend Marketing has worked with in the past. "If we do grow beyond our current warehouse, we can easily start using a 3PL again," Weinberger says.

Also, because the RLM system is cloud-based, there is less demand on Trend

Marketing's IT department to manage server security and software updates. Freedom from these and other software maintenance issues also supports the company's ability to scale up the solution as its brand portfolio grows. "From an IT perspective, there's a little less pressure on our side," he says.

Reflecting on Trend Marketing's latest systems implementations, Weinberger likens the experience to finding the right pair of shoes. "You don't pick a pair of shoes and then try to squeeze your foot into them," he says. "The same applies to ERP. You're not necessarily trying to make the ERP system fit your business but rather to understand how the ERP system works and get it to work at its optimal level for your business."

For Trend Marketing Group, that optimal use of ERP has meant seamless integration with retail customers, stronger shipping accuracy and increased speed in almost every aspect of its operations, from picking to invoicing to reporting.

To learn more about how RLM Apparel Software helped Trend Marketing achieve its goals and how RLM can propel your success, please visit RLMApparelSoftware.com or call (201) 531-5959.



**Trend Marketing
at a Glance**

Headquarters:
Mississauga, Ontario

Founded: 1996

Business Focus: Footwear sales and distribution.

Brands: Canadian distributor for 20 leading brands, including Cole Haan, Life Stride, Jessica Simpson, Vince Camuto, Naturalizer and Sam Edelman.

Ownership: Privately held by Larry Gladstone, Jim McGuigan and Shai Burstein.