3PL unlocks same-day fulfillment

ASL Distribution: Infios WMS enables same-day fulfillment and scales 3PL services to meet growing e-commerce demand.

Company profile

Merchandise manufacturer and marketer, Dorel Industries, Inc., was shutting down its warehousing operations and needed a new distribution mechanism. When Dorel contacted ASL Distribution Services, a third-party logistics (3PL) firm, about partnership opportunities, ASL was ready. The company was looking for a warehouse operator that could provide requisite 3PL capabilities, such as drop-shipping bulk orders to major retailers. But, Dorel also needed its 3PL to enable new dimensions of its business. Specifically, the 3PL should support:

- Blind 3PL
- Direct-to-Consumer
- Same-Day Shipping for the Dorel Juvenile product line

Quick facts

- **Company:** ASL Distribution Services
- **Headquarters:** Oakville, Ontario, Canada
- **Industry:** Third-party logistics (3PL)
- **Solution:** Infios Warehouse Management System (WMS) for 3PLs

E-commerce challenge

In the required process, consumer orders come from mass merchandisers' online sites, including Costco®, Walmart® and others. But, these retailers would not be required to stock the merchandise or to handle fulfillment. Instead, merchandise was centrally warehoused, with orders drop-shipped to customers on behalf of (and often under the identity of) the respective retailer.

To meet the customer needs, ASL created an efficient e-commerce process. Retailers accept online customer orders (e.g. Dorel infant car seats), then orders are automatically forwarded to Dorel. Next, Dorel sends the information to ASL via electronic data interchange (EDI) for fulfillment.

ASL operates multiple warehouses, but Dorel's activities are concentrated in one of its three suburban Toronto, Canada facilities. All of the ASL facilities use the Infios Warehouse Management System (WMS) built for 3PL providers and have done so for years.

Solution search

Initially, ASL considered a niche application to handle the new customer's shipping. But, the 3PL discovered that seasonal variations in volume — especially pre-Christmas orders — could overwhelm the software. Seeking an alternative, ASL personnel developed a solution in-house. This also didn't provide the necessary results.

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ASL Distribution Services

ASL leveraged the shipping tools and functionality within the Infios WMS to meet the performance, flexibility and efficiency required by Dorel. The shipping features built into the WMS offer real-time access to shipping information, allowing the production, capture and storage of a complete archive of shipping documentation. Further, it allows user companies to accommodate unique processes while fully maintaining shipment compliance.

The shipping features of the WMS include, among others:

- Carrier certification for FedEx®, UPS®, USPS®, U.S. regional carriers and Canadian parcel carriers

- Certification for FedEx Smart Post® and UPS Mail Innovations

- Rate shopping based on configurable business rules

- LTL rate shopping, custom labels and support for all shipping documents

- Complete support for international rates and manifests

- Export documentation management and automatic AES direct filing

- HAZMAT documentation for major carriers

"Since we ship on behalf of our customers we often need to customize forms," said James Tomajko, ASL warehouse manager. "For example, Costco and Walmart wanted their own labels so that shipments of the Dorel products would appear to originate from the respective retailers. Dorel itself preferred to use our ASL labels."

The same thinking applied to the documentation that accompanies the shipments, Tomajko added. "Setting up the individual vendor variations is not complicated because Infios is extremely flexible. Onboarding a new vendor identity normally involves filling out only four or five online forms."

Efficient process

Thanks to the built-in shipping management capabilities and the flexibility of the WMS, ASL achieved the functionality needed to perform drop-shipping for customers. The next step was to put the right processes and workflows in place.

ASL manages client merchandise with the Infios WMS. In Dorel's case, ASL receives orders from Dorel via EDI (as mentioned above). The data automatically logs in the WMS database for accurate inventory counts. Entry of the order number automatically generates a pick slip for when warehouse personnel pick and package the merchandise. Infios originates the proprietary and/or generic paperwork that will accompany the individual orders, automatically producing vendor-specific shipping labels and documentation.

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>
> **James Tomajko**
> Warehouse Manager
> ASL Distribution Services

With the picking process completed, the documentation is placed in the carton with the merchandise. The carton is sealed and scheduled for the preferred carrier. Finally, documentation confirming completion of the shipment is sent via EDI back to the retailer.

Performance and flexibility

For most of the year, volume hovers between 100 and 300 items per day. But, within a few years of their partnership, Dorel's seasonal shipment volume increased by 70 percent. A recent Black Friday recorded thousands of shipments alone. And on one pre-Christmas day, three trailer loads of individual shipments left the ASL facility. Infios easily accommodated these seasonal variations, Tomajko commented.

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ASL uses Infios for Dorel and many other customers. Tomajko added that the on-boarding process is so quick and easy that the system can even be used on an ad-hoc, one-time basis for simple requirements.

"From our experience, the Infios solution would fit in any situation where you face the challenges of parcel volume, fast order turnaround and variables such as types of orders and multiple shippers," Tomajko said. "That is particularly important as the volumes and types of direct-to-consumer business generated online continue to increase."

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