Helping good do better

Sue Ryder and K3 Retail

Case Study

k3 retail
the new possible

An overview

Sue Ryder treat more conditions than any other UK charity in their hospices, neurological care centres and out in the community with over 450 retail stores contributing more than half of the charity's income.

The challenge for Sue Ryder

- Bringing Sue Ryder into the data-rich world
- Major systems overhaul
- Taking a cloud-based route
- EPOS and WMS working in tandem
- Single view of the truth

Platforms and modules used

- Microsoft Dynamics NAV
- EPOS
- Buying & Merchandising
- Warehouse Management
- Cloud

Partners

- K3 Starcom
- LS Retail
- BMc Azurri

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Bringing Sue Ryder into the data-rich world

Charity Sue Ryder is in the midst of a major overhaul of its technology infrastructure that will have a transformative effect on its multi-channel retail proposition and with the cloud-based approach it is taking it will also be set up for future IT implementations.

Like many large established not-for-profit organisations Adam Fisher, Head of IS & IT at Sue Ryder, says Sue Ryder has only made limited investments into its IT capabilities over recent years in contrast to most private sector retailers.

Major systems overhaul

But radical change has been set in motion by Fisher whose remit has been to bring the company's technology up to modern day standards, which will enable it to more effectively and efficiently run its retail division that will in turn help it to generate greater revenues for the Sue Ryder charity.

"Three years ago when I joined the company it had no full EPoS system. It had a solution dependent on paper and mechanical tills and there was only limited access to a central database. It was tedious for the stores people and not relevant for the 21st century," he says.

The company had outsourced very little of its IT, except its network and call centre, which meant most of its technology was heavily customised and sourced from a hefty 100 suppliers. This meant a heavy workload for the IT team of only nine people who had a large retail organisation relying on them, which straddled 450 stores, about 50 other locations, 3,300 employees and 12,000 volunteers.

Taking the cloud-based route

Fisher has built the IT team up to 23 people and has an objective of capping the department at 30, which he says will only be viable with the adoption of a very different strategy to the one that has historically been in place. "We are going down the cloud-based, managed service route as well as making a big reduction in the number of technology suppliers," he explains.

The largest step in this direction so far, says Fisher, is the EPoS project that has involved the selection of K3 to deliver a complete new EPoS solution based on Microsoft Dynamics NAV: "We picked K3 because our strategy was about moving everything to the cloud and buying Software-as-a-Service. This is on offer from K3 and enables us to still have only a small IT team. Wherever possible we will be able to buy high quality cloud-based applications with best-practice processes and avoid customisation."

Fisher says there is a growing belief within charities in general that there would be great benefits to be had from standardisation whereby they are effectively sharing the development cost of the technology suppliers: "The industry is just beginning to recognise this and software vendors are becoming more interested in the not-for-profit sector. It's large and not very well equipped."

The new EPoS solution is being rolled out over a nine-month period across the 455 Sue Ryder stores throughout the UK that plugs into the new communications infrastructure that Fisher has been working on to prepare the stores for the new till equipment. The initial roll out will be on a pilot basis ahead of a more accelerated installation schedule.

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EPoS and WMS working in tandem

Along with the EPoS project Fisher says work has also been taking place on a new Warehouse management System (WMS) solution – also from K3, which will tie-in closely with the EPoS as well as the finance systems in terms of the exchange of data. Just as with the EPoS it will have a dramatic effect on the business because to date it has had extremely limited visibility of stock.

The WMS will be particularly focused on the range of new goods that Sue Ryder sells in its high street stores as well as through its online site and dedicated eBay and Amazon channels. These new goods account for around 10% of total retail sales.

The new WMS solution will also make it easier for the company to pursue its objective of selling used donated goods online – for example the bikes it refurbishes and various beds through the deal it has with Harveys. It has not been able to do this to date because of the limited stock management capability across the business.

Driving a myriad of benefits

Being able to access data and insight across the business will have a dramatic effect. In terms of the EPoS, Fisher says there is a strong business case including a reduction in overheads as it will remove the one-hour reconciliation that takes place each evening before each store is able to close. There is also the opportunity for generating more revenue because it should help Sue Ryder sell more new goods and give individual stores the figures on what exactly has been selling well.

"Store managers will now have this insight. At the moment all the information that gets passed from stores to head office is late and is all on paper. The people in the shops therefore have very little access to information. They will also be able to access email. It will be a massive transformation, bringing people into the fold. It will make their lives so much easier as there will be a lot less paperwork. We will also have the ability to see across our whole store estate and learn from the stores that are selling more," he explains.

Both the EPoS and WMS solutions bring Sue Ryder the great benefit of operating with real-time data, which Fisher says will "make a huge difference" and signal the end of the company building "patchy databases here and there, which are not joined up"

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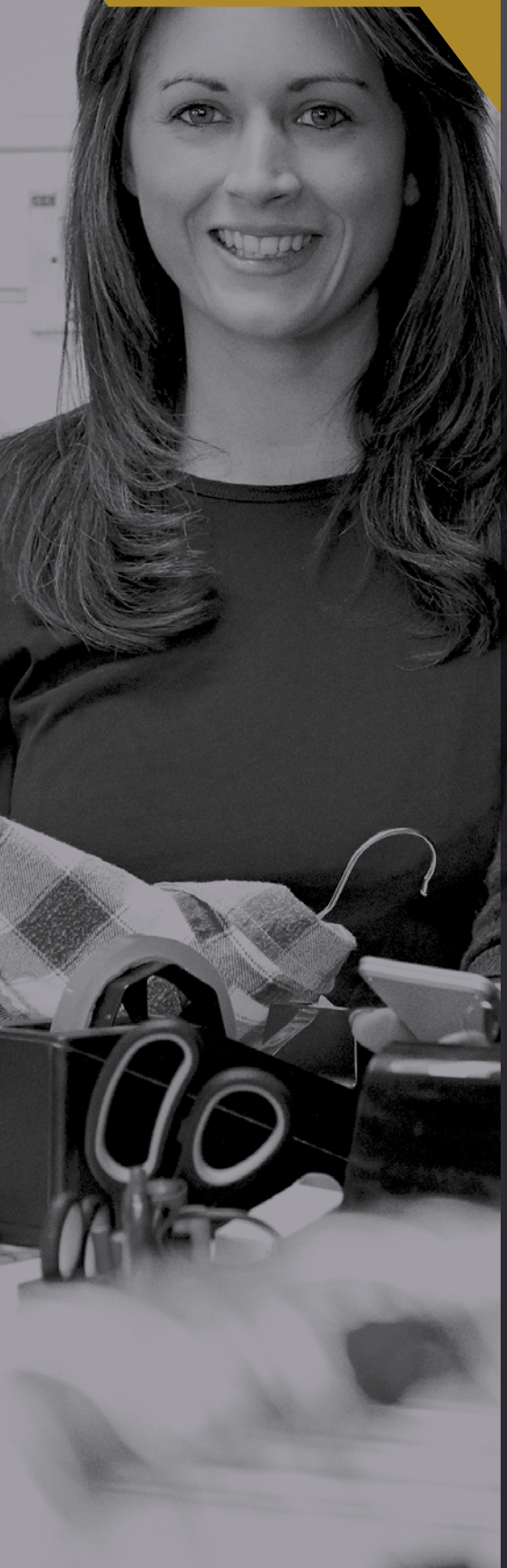

Single view of the truth

"Having these various versions of the truth is not helpful. Having one version of the truth is a step-change for us," he says, adding that there is also plenty of work going on to create the same single version of the truth within the fundraising division of the Sue Ryder business.

This involves rationalising the data, improving its quality, and increasing its timeliness and ease of access. "We're creating a data architecture at the moment. This will enable a single view of donors with their demographic details and information of all the interactions they have had with Sue Ryder, which could be as a donor, patient, volunteer and employee at different times," explains Fisher.

The cleansing process has involved the digitisation of one million signed Gift Aid slips of paper that had sat in filing cabinets. "They are now digitised and can be fully accessed online and verified when necessary," he says.

K3 Retail's partner company BMC Azurri is helping Sue Ryder use this digitisation to drive a greater number of people to Gift Aid their donations as the process makes it much easier for the store employees to sign people up.

Potential CRM opportunity

It is the fundraising element of the business that will be the driving force behind the potential adoption of a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system. "Within the not-for-profits sector the part of the business that benefits the most from a CRM solution is fundraising. The view on CRM is that we're not yet ready to deploy. We need to work on the data first, to keep it clean, consolidated, and homogenise its use on our system," admits Fisher.

To date the work with K3 has gone fully to plan and on schedule, according to Fisher, who says the strong project manager at Sue Ryder has worked effectively with the equivalent at K3, with the combination proving to be a good mix. This has been an important part of the projects because as Fisher points out IT implementations today are frequently more about personnel than technology issues.

"Managing change - when it comes to IT systems or the way people work - is always challenging, but we believe we have a solid plan in place to make the whole process successful across the board," he says.

K3 Retail partners with businesses to provide connected technologies, which ensure retailers can reach their goals now and in the future.
We intelligently apply our technology to make retailers' lives easier and businesses more successful with tools designed to forever meet consumer demands.

We support more than 800 national and international retail brands.
Labels from English Hertiage and Oxfam to Heals, Ryman and Ted Baker are able to pursue their business goals backed by the expertise of K3 Retail.
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