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iForce service is music to the ears of Digital Village

May 02, 2010

EMAIL ARTICLE PRINT ARTICLE

iForce, the UK outsourced multichannel specialist logistics operator, has gone live with a multichannel fulfilment service for Digital Village, the UK's largest music equipment retailer.

From its Milton Park fulfilment centre, near Oxford, iForce has commenced a five year contract to replenish Digital Village's eight stores located around the country, provide fulfilment for orders taken from the retailer's online site - DV247.com - and to fulfil orders placed by schools and educational authorities for their musical instruments.



For over 30 years Digital Village has been supplying everything needed to make and record music - including musical instruments and recording studio equipment. With year-on-year growth, its business is expanding rapidly - particularly through online sales. "We are a true multi-channel business," said Paul Dennis, CEO of Digital Village. "We trade through our Digital Village stores, through our DV247.com web site and, through our Music Village trading name, we are also the largest educational musical equipment supplier in the country."

Digital Village considered keeping its distribution in-house, looking at various options to expand its warehousing to accommodate its growth. "As we came to talk more to iForce, its professional approach led us to believe that outsourcing to a 3PL was the only option for us," said Paul. "It meant that we could continue to expand and there would be no limit on that expansion."

With operations now underway, iForce is now fulfilling substantial order volumes for Digital Village and its ability to scale its service is an important factor in facilitating further growth, not just to the UK but also into mainland Europe where Digital Village is already strong and is looking to expand even further.

Customer satisfaction is paramount to Digital Village and this was another crucial factor in choosing iForce as a partner, as Paul explained: "You can't fail to be impressed by iForce's client list. We were very encouraged that it is working with retailers like Boots, Sainsbury's and John Lewis - companies that pride themselves on delivering on their promise. That's our philosophy: we want to deliver on our promise."

Digital Village's business presents a number of fulfilment challenges. First comes the huge diversity in the retailer's product range: anything from a plectrum to a limited edition Gibson Les Paul electric guitar, a violin to a piano, a microphone to a mixing desk. Many of these products are custom-made and high value.

They all have to be put away, picked and packed by iForce in a manner that assures safe and secure delivery. The educational business in particular will see a large number and a varied mix of items in each order.

Deploying its expertise to pick and pack such a diverse range of products, iForce then uses its in-house IRST carrier management system to manage the routing of the deliveries through the most appropriate carrier - whether the order is for a school, somebody's home or to the retail store.

Another key aspect is an ability to deal with the dual peaks in the education sector: one in February and March when Education Authority budgets are spent prior to the new financial year; and the second when schools return from summer holidays in September. iForce offers Digital Village the flexibility to meet these peaks with its ability to scale its operations and staff accordingly.

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Paul Dennis concluded: "The staff at iForce are so professional, friendly and caring that we are able to work easily together. I'm not staying awake at night wondering if it's all going to work: it is working very well."



Mark Hewitt, CEO of iForce, commented: "I'm pleased to say that our five year contract with Digital Village represents the beginning of a long term partnership and an investment in scaling its fulfilment to accommodate the continued growth this exciting and successful retailer expects. With iForce taking care of fulfilment, Digital Village is free to concentrate on developing new markets to further fuel its growth; our specialism, expertise and professionalism has given Digital Village the confidence that we can deliver. We look forward to growing our two businesses in the coming years."

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