



"We've been with Ark-H for over a year. During that time they have worked with us to develop systems and processes for continuous improvement. Today, picking accuracy is running at over 99%."

**Daniel O'Neill, Managing Director,
The Professional Cookware Company**

The Professional Cookware Company designs, produces and sells cookware products through its 28 high street stores and direct to consumers via its website.

After 11 years of trading, in 2004 the company was faced with a dilemma – to develop its own distribution facility, with all the costs and growth issues that such a step entailed, or to outsource to a service provider capable of supporting their dynamic growth. After an extensive feasibility study the senior management chose Ark-H Handling as their logistics partner.

"The risks for us were very evident" says PCC's Operations Director James Allen. "We knew we wanted an organisation that was willing to invest in our future. We were aware that we were asking them to work with us to develop systems and procedures that are not widely available in the marketplace. And, of course, we knew that if we got it wrong we would damage the short, medium and long-term growth of our business."

When Ark-H were chosen to be PCC's logistics partner the company knew it faced a big challenge. "We had to work closely with the client, their suppliers and, most importantly their ePos software provider, to ensure that the services would form a seamless element in PCC's supply chain. We know that we are a vital part of their retail mission and that our speed, accuracy and responsiveness will have a direct impact on their business."

Today Ark-H pick and pack orders for shop replenishment delivered by a direct ePos link from the stores. Stores are 'polled' remotely and the sales are converted into daily picking lists, output at Ark-H. Carefully trained and qualified teams pick stock at high speed, to ensure that the retailers are kept supplied at all times. Time is of the essence, and all picking is done in a form of 'walksort order' for fast response with maximum accuracy. On average across the year Ark-H will pick and despatch over a million individual items to the 28 stores nation-wide and the pick accuracy level is over 99.5%.

Goods are received from a large number of suppliers and logged to the system within 24 hours. The maintenance of real time stock information is vital to the whole linked system. Ark-H manages the goods receiving process from preliminary notification right through to constant pick-face replenishment. Every element represents a key stage in the process.

In addition to the shop replenishment programme, Ark-H fulfils about 100 web orders per day direct to PCC customers'. PCC, who have recently receive considerable acclaim for their on-line shop, set high standards and all orders received by 15:00 must be picked, packed and despatched same day. All items are individually picked, and wrapped to ensure that they reach customers in pristine condition. Replacement for damage is immediate and unquestioning – all part of the company's total customer focus.

Raj Sudra, the Ark-H Director in charge of the project, and James Allen both agree that the partnership has been immensely valuable for both parties. "It has been an interesting and demanding first year. As we get ready for our second 'Christmas rush' the whole team feels like an integrated unit and everyone, from Account Manager right through to the pickers and packers, understands the central nature of the part they play. Perhaps that's why it works so well."

With Ark-H's new building coming on-stream in 2007 the company is confident that the space and the systems will all be ready to support the continuing growth plans of PCC.

For more information about The Professional Cookware Company please visit www.cookware.co.uk

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