

Rapid Ecommerce Growth Supported by Efficient Auto-Packing

“ The CVP Impack machines have delivered significant cost and environmental benefits too, with reduced material use and volume savings on transport. ”

- IAN MURFIN, CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGER AT THE BOOTS COMPANY

REQUIREMENTS

- Cost effectively scale packing operations to meet online order increases
- Improve operational efficiency to reduce strains on manual packing labour during peak
- Total packing agility to scale with growth and business disruptions
- Exceed customer expectations with fast, reliable and accurate shipping

CHALLENGES

Boots is the UK's largest pharmacy-led health and beauty retailer with over 2,500 stores in the UK, ranging from community pharmacies to large destination health and beauty stores. Over its 171-year history, the business has experienced phenomenal growth and supports a vast customer base across its omni-channel operations.

Faced with the dual challenge of recruiting more and more people every autumn for peak season and a shrinking pool of available labour, in 2019 the business decided to look at the potential to boost productivity by increasing the level of automation used in the packing operation. A simple mechanise packaging system was in use for the majority of off-peak orders, but the system did not offer the flexibility or capacity needed for Black Friday and peak season. In addition, a large number of manual packing benches were necessary to fulfil the volume of orders received during the peak season – a major financial and administrative commitment.

“As consumers are spending more time online, we are seeing tremendous year-on-year growth on Boots.com, and to meet the growth of online sales and customer expectations, we had to innovate the way that our supply chain works, and the answer was automation,” said Tracey Clements, COO for Boots in UK and Ireland.

SOLUTION

Boots choose to invest in two CVP Impacks, a high-speed automated packing machine that constructs bespoke individual cardboard boxes to the exact size of an order at a rate of up to 500 boxes per hour. The Impack measures, constructs, tapes, weighs and labels each single- or multi-item order of hard or soft goods in one seamless process.

“We have the safety of our colleagues, efficiency, and sustainability at the core of what we do. Every year we pick, pack and ship over 43 million products to our customers,” says Adam Coventry, head of warehousing for Boots.com. “The CVP



30% reduction in cardboard usage

43 million products auto-boxed per year

100% recycled Boots branded corrugate

Impack has genuinely revolutionised the packaging process for Boots.com, reducing the need for extra packing stations and increasing the items packed to up to 500 items an hour per machine, helping us to meet the high demand for online orders.” He adds, “We are able to use 100% recycled Boots branded cardboard and no longer need to use any additional filler material.”

Following the installation of the two CVP Impack machines, Boots has also been able to reduce the transport journey, resulting in a significant cost saving and environmental benefit. The business is expecting to buy around 30% less cardboard for the same volume of packages produced prior to the installation of the two CVPs.

There are important customer benefits as well. By creating custom sized packaging for each order, the customer receives a compact, right-sized box that eliminates ‘consumer distress’ over wasteful packaging and delivers a positive environmental message. The fit-to-size cardboard packaging is a snug fit to the product which prevents items from moving around, providing better protection without the need for

bubble-wrap or void-fill. Perhaps the most unforeseen benefit of the investment in the two CVO Impacks has been Boots’ ability to respond efficiently to the sudden business disruptions and boom in online orders following the Coronavirus lockdown.

“The core driver for this investment was increased operational efficiency – and we certainly achieved our goal,” says Murfin.

BOOTS BENEFITS

When Boots added two CVP Impack Automated Packaging Solutions to their fulfillment process, they saw:

- A 30% reduction in cardboard usage
- Ability to reliably auto-box 43 million products per year
- 100% recycled Boots branded cardboard
- Scale efficiently during peak and other business disruptions