

INTERSPORT France Leverages Centric PLM Technology for Competitive Edge

CASE STUDY

Executive Summary

INTERSPORT France is a member of INTERSPORT International Corporation, with retail turnover of EUR 8.54 billion and more than 5000 associated retailers in 35 countries. INTERSPORT has the worldwide leading position in the sporting goods retail market. This case study highlights the use of Centric PLM technology to gain significant efficiencies in managing the private label apparel lines for INTERSPORT France.

Leveraging Opportunities for Private Label Products

Like many industries operating in today's global marketplace, the apparel business faces ever-increasing consumer demand for high-quality products that are price-competitive and offer excellent value. Private-label strategies are becoming more and more critical to meet that demand and to help improve gross margins and profitability in the face of flat sales.

One of the industry's major players, INTERSPORT France, a member of INTERSPORT International Corporation, is leveraging product lifecycle management (PLM) technology and processes to speed sourcing and sample development of its Exclusive Brands business in an increasingly competitive environment. With more than 500 stores and annual turnover of more than €1 billion, INTERSPORT is undertaking a major initiative with its private-label business: doubling its exclusive brands turnover in the next four years.

The Challenge

Nicolas Thibault, exclusive brands business unit manager at INTERSPORT France, assessed the challenges that lay in the path of achieving that goal. At the top of the list: Each product team in the INTERSPORT France exclusive brands organization had its own methods, making work with suppliers inconsistent, and making it virtually impossible to achieve bargaining power with suppliers.

Technical files lacked specificity, which led to a long, unreliable, redundant – and therefore costly and delay-ridden – sample development process. “To get our collections into stores on schedule, we must have definitive samples, or the entire season's delivery schedule can be affected,” says Thibault. “Yet valuable time was being lost as we went back and forth with the suppliers, answering questions or requesting changes, because we provided inconsistent information in our technical design files.”

“I needed to find a true product lifecycle management solution,” Thibault explains. The system would need to adapt well to his group's business needs and be “extremely simple to learn and use by every product manager.” It also had to offer the comprehensive functionality and benefits of true enterprise PLM, while offering rapid implementation so that his group could begin achieving results quickly.

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Nicolas Thibault
Exclusive Brands Business
Unit Manager
INTERSPORT France

The Solution

Centric Software’s Centric 8 PLM system for apparel customers has not disappointed, says Thibault, citing its ease of use and intuitiveness. “Centric requires relatively little training,” he affirms, “and has improved the reliability of information to our suppliers, thus speeding and improving the quality of the sample development process – and in turn, the delivery of our Exclusive Brand collections to stores.”

Thibault credits Centric for working as his partner, not just a system provider. “For PLM, it is absolutely critical to work with a company that will take the journey with you and ease your way. Centric listened, understood our business and made themselves available at every step.”

The Results

“An on-time, on-scope PLM implementation is possible, and we did it with Centric,” says Thibault. Since implementing Centric’s apparel suite PLM system, the issue of unreliable technical files has disappeared, he states. Today, in those areas where INTERSPORT France has completely implemented the system, 100 percent of the samples the company receives meet the requirements defined in the corresponding technical files.

As a result, the affected product managers have realized a 20 percent improvement in the efficiency of their sample development process. Because it now works with a centralized information source, the company has improved visibility into product status throughout the lifecycle. Instead of trying to share information via countless e-mail messages, spreadsheets and overnight packages, the company now works as one unified team in the sourcing and product development areas.

“Even early in the implementation process,” says Thibault, “we are achieving important results. The Centric 8 implementation has helped us unify our processes and improve our product development efforts. Now, we are looking forward to implementing additional modules of Centric to bring richer capabilities to our group as we work toward the goals for our Exclusive Brands business.”