



GROWTH UNLEASHED
OUTWARD HOUND SETS CENTRIC
PLM AS DIGITAL FOUNDATION
TO UNDERPIN EXPANSION

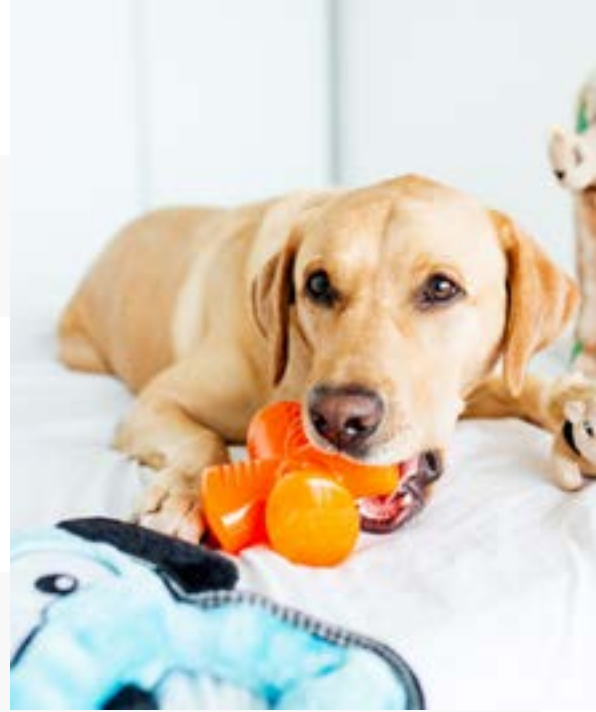


LEADER OF THE PACK

Outward Hound, a pet products company based in Denver, Colorado creates award winning and fun toys, games, treats and gear for cats and dogs. The company was founded in 1998 by Kyle Hansen, when he and his wife Jennifer realized that it was difficult to find good-quality toys and accessories for dogs in pet shops.

Outward Hound produces both soft goods, such as dog lifejackets and plush toys, hard goods, such as bowls, chew toys and games as well as treats. Feline friends are catered for too, with a range of cat toys and accessories.

Outward Hound has grown rapidly, and following a series of acquisitions, now encompasses 7 brands: Outward Hound, Petstages, Dublin Dog, Bionic, Nina Ottosson, Charming Pets and Wholesome Pride. With more acquisitions on the horizon in 2018 and a vision of being leader of the dog and cat supplies world, Outward Hound is in an exciting phase of growth and expansion.



GROWING UP FAST

In this critical time of rapid development, Outward Hound decided to build a digital foundation to face the challenges that come with adding more brands, more people and more products each year. In 2015 Outward Hound began looking for a PLM system to centralize data and create efficient, scalable processes to reduce time to market.

Lynn Rosen, Vice President of Product Development and Design at Outward Hound, explains that the company primarily looked for a PLM solution as a way to organize information.

“Outward Hound was a small company at the time and we were looking for a system to organize our product data,” she says. “We didn’t have a lot of standardized processes in place and wanted a tool that would pull everything together. We had all these spreadsheets and documents in different locations, with no easy way to find out if we were looking at the correct version of a product design or the most up-to-date costings, for instance.”

As Rosen notes, “It was the perfect time to implement a PLM solution, as we were still in the infant stage when it came to organizing our product-related processes. We knew that getting a PLM in place early would make it much easier to scale up the system, onboard users, manage changes and add more brands as we grew.”

BEST IN SHOW

Rosen had a positive experience with Centric at a previous company, which contributed to Outward Hound’s decision, but the company did due diligence and considered several PLM vendors.

“We spent quite a bit of time evaluating companies and having people come in to do presentations to see what would align best with our business, but once we started doing in-depth research, Centric was a no-brainer,” says Rosen.

“Centric PLM was by far the most user-friendly and we could see that as a company, Centric invests a lot back into the solution to make sure it keeps up with industry and market trends. They spend a lot of time updating the system – it’s very current. The Centric team really have their fingers on the pulse of both the industry and the latest technologies.”

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CHALLENGES

- + Rapid growth and acquisitions
- + Needed a central location for teams to access product data
- + Product information scattered across spreadsheets and other documents
- + Difficult to find the most up-to-date versions and information
- + Communication with suppliers

SUPPLIER SYNCHRONIZATION

Outward Hound kicked off their Centric PLM implementation with core Centric modules in June 2016.

"The ability to connect factories to Centric was an enormous benefit for us," says Rosen. "We prioritized it because it was so important. The supplier portal improves communication and efficiency, allowing us to more evenly share workloads and responsibility with our suppliers. We have actually reduced our supplier base, even though we are growing, as we are able to work effectively with a small number of core factories through Centric PLM."

Rosen adds that Outward Hound has noticed significant improvements in the speed and accuracy of daily operations and communication across the company.

"With Centric PLM, we can organize all of the information related to a product in one location, a center where everyone can access up-to-date data," she says. "The ability to track what's happening with each product is just amazing. As we grow, it's critical for us to have everything in one system so we can stay organized and get products to market on time."

DIGITAL FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

Outward Hound is continually looking for both organic and acquisition growth, so it's always a busy time. However, Rosen concludes, there are plenty of plans to do more with Centric PLM.

"Next year, we'll be looking at adding PLM apps to make sure we're using Centric as effectively as we can be," she says. "Going forward, we're putting together a cross-functional Centric team to onboard users even faster and maintain a PLM knowledge base."

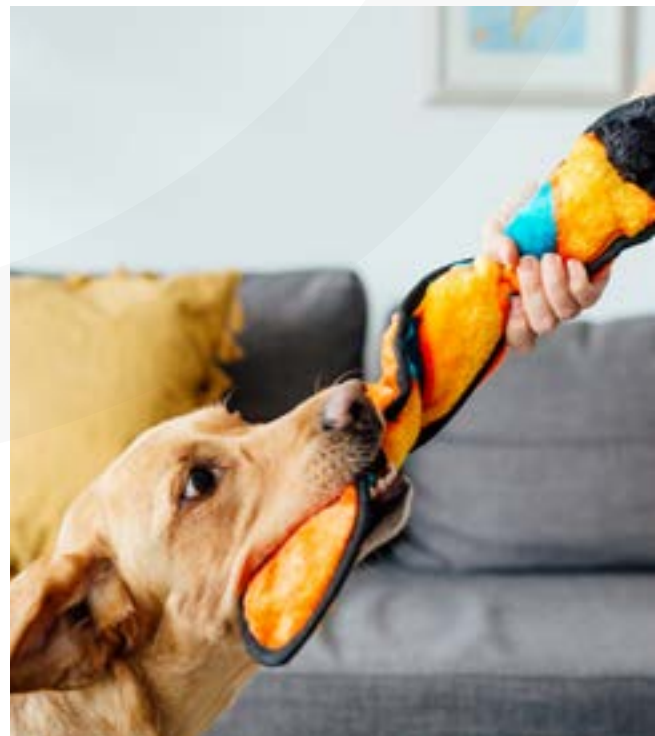
"So far we have been relatively autonomous, but as we add more PLM functions and users we will probably be testing out Centric's support a little more! We've had very few issues, but Centric are always on hand with a quick response whenever we need them."

Centric PLM has been the digital foundation for Outward Hound's ambitious growth strategy, says Rosen. Outward Hound's SKU count has multiplied by 8 times and the number of PLM users has tripled since implementation, while incorporating a growing number of brands.

"Centric PLM is absolutely part of our growth plan," Rosen affirms. "It has met our objectives and will continue to be a strong foundation for our business as we grow, enhancing organization and communication. People from product development to marketing to quality control can come into the system and get information they need. It's all about efficiency and working smart."

RESULTS

- + Dramatic improvements in communication and data consistency
- + Number of SKUs multiplied by 8 and PLM users tripled in 2 years
- + Connected suppliers within 6 months, improving efficiency and sharing workload
- + Saved 20% time in product development
- + PLM replaced a dozen spreadsheets just for costing only
- + Single source of up-to-date product data for everyone who needs it





ABOUT OUTWARD HOUND

Outward Hound® was founded to improve the lives of pet parents with meaningful innovations that Raise The Woof! A lofty goal? Sure. But that's why we've built a team of dog-loving designers and product experts. We believe that good products should do more than satisfy a need: they should make life with your dog healthier, happier & more fun! They should inspire you to try new things and empower you to discover new possibilities with your furry friend. We work to solve common problems in fun & engaging ways. Whether it's creating a smarter feeder that helps your dog eat healthier or designing a toy that can truly stand up to tough chewers, we're dedicated to making quality products that you and your dog can enjoy for a long time. You can find our award-winning products in global Omni-channel retailers. Our growing product portfolio includes interactive dog toys, games, gear, holiday accessories and feeding solutions.

ABOUT CENTRIC SOFTWARE

From its headquarters in Silicon Valley and offices in trend capitals around the world, Centric Software provides a Digital Transformation Platform for the most prestigious names in fashion, retail, footwear, luxury, outdoor and consumer goods. Centric Visual Innovation Platform (VIP) is a visual, fully digital collection of boards for touch-based devices like iPad, iPhone and large-scale, touch-screen televisions. Centric VIP transforms decision making and automates execution to truly collapse time to market and distance to trend. Centric's flagship product lifecycle management (PLM) platform, Centric 8, delivers enterprise-class merchandise planning, product development, sourcing, business planning, quality, and collection management functionality tailored for fast-moving consumer industries. Centric SMB packages extended PLM including innovative technology and key industry learnings tailored for small businesses.

Centric Software has received multiple industry awards, including the Frost & Sullivan Global Product Differentiation Excellence Award in Retail, Fashion, and Apparel PLM in 2016 and Frost & Sullivan's Global Retail, Fashion, and Apparel PLM Product Differentiation Excellence Award in 2012. Red Herring named Centric to its Top 100 Global list in 2013, 2015 and 2016.

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