Top Five Capabilities

your OMS may lack

Freestyle: The Inside Scoop on Order Management

Discover five ways your order management system may be hurting your ability to create a profit-driving customer experience

Your Ultimate Business Goal:
Keep Customers Coming Back For More

Clearly that statement falls into the category of things easier said than done. It would be nice if creating customer loyalty and repeat business was a simple matter, but it has many facets. At least one aspect of it is clear, though: a great order management system (OMS) is absolutely key.

What is Order Management?
Order management encompasses everything that happens behind the scenes once the customer submits an order. OMS ensures that the order is processed efficiently, shipped promptly and delivered quickly. A comprehensive order management solution affects all aspects of your ability to please customers.

Why is your OMS the secret ingredient? Because meeting today's customer expectation for sales and delivery performance is just as important as your overall marketing efforts and products. More than three quarters of consumers say they will stop doing business with a company after a bad experience. Back office processes are crucial tools for shaping consumer attitudes, both pro and con. An efficient back office operation guarantees your ability to provide a simple purchasing process and respond efficiently to inquiries and complaints.

More than three quarters of consumers say they will stop doing business with a company after a bad experience

For this reason, it is a critical mistake to regard back-end order fulfillment processes as an afterthought. To keep customers happy…and to keep them coming back…the order fulfillment process must run like a well-oiled machine, processing and shipping orders to customers accurately and efficiently while giving you the visibility and control you need to optimize the customer experience.

Five Crucial Areas Where Many OMS Systems Fall Short

There are five important areas where order management systems often fall short:

1. Supplier and PO Management
2. Multichannel Management
3. Real-time Reporting
4. Simplifying Shipping
5. Integrations

Let's take a look at each of these potential pitfalls individually.

#1:
Proper Supplier and PO Management

Integrating supplier management into your OMS system is necessary to effectively manage inventory levels and avoid out-of-stock situations. Being able to communicate with your supplier directly from your OMS provides several important benefits:

- Share alerts when nearing low level products.
- Generate automatic updates for all sales channels. Managing your suppliers in a separate system can lead to major disconnect between sales channels.
- Make sure shipping is properly managed—especially drop shipping.
- Track the fulfillment process so you don't lose sight of the order after it is sent to the supplier.

For stock management, an OMS with an advanced inventory module adds the power of 'Scan and Shelf' receiving to give you complete visibility into purchase forecasting. The OMS should also provide an interface for synchronizing with external inventory and manufacturing systems.

Takeaway: Break through the bottlenecks and streamline your processes.

#2:
Multichannel Management

Selling on multiple channels is inevitable today. Your customers are everywhere, and this can send your business into a frenzy— adding sales channels can create bottlenecks and cause customer concern in your processes. Creating an omnichannel customer experience requires more than just setting up multiple channel options. To be properly equipped for success in this environment you must efficiently monitor sales and fulfill orders from all channels, but manually updating multiple orders from several channels can be daunting.

An excellent OMS halts the frustration by automatically importing orders from each sales channel into one solution, which lets you process them in batches and fulfill them fast.

An advanced OMS system can let you:
• Manage up to 50 different companies in one system.
• Maintain separate inventory and customer information for each company.
• Conveniently process all your orders from a single selection screen for each company.
• Quickly switch from one company to another with just a few mouse clicks, or choose to share inventory across companies.

Other multichannel-related features that an advanced OMS system can offer include:

Import/export functionality and dedicated integration that lets you connect your OMS to outside webstores for efficiency.

Multi-business capability that lets you run an unlimited number of eCommerce stores, catalog fulfillment or cross channel companies from one OMS.

Interactive credit card authorization to automate authorizations and transactions directly with your bank or credit card network.

Telemarketing management to provide customer support and sales teams with tools like an inbound call log, outbound call and callback scheduling, call notepad, and caller interest level tracking.

List management functions to create segmented targeted lists of customers and prospects for marketing campaigns. The ability to then identify your best customers and then develop specific campaigns and pricing programs to capture more business from them is a feature present in the best OMS solutions.

Takeaway: In a multichannel world, your OMS must pull together all orders in one comprehensive automated process. Don't settle for less.

#3:
Real-Time Reporting

The last thing you want to do is disappoint a customer by posting an item for sale when there is insufficient inventory to fulfill it. When products are flying off the shelves and sales are soaring, that's the worst moment to encounter the dreaded "unexpected stock-out." To avoid overselling an item, you need a way to accurately monitor your inventory levels across all channels and real-time reporting that lets you know your current situation at all times.

Review orders by status

An advanced OMS system should provide up-to-the-minute status reports that allow you to select and review:

• Orders by status.
• Orders that have not been picked, packed, shipped or backordered.
• Orders awaiting credit card approval.
• Orders with a particular stock item.

In addition, you should also have an advise-ment screen that populates with a 'what you we do next' prompt as orders are processed.

Your customers should also be able to call and obtain order statuses in real-time from a customer service team member.

Track inventory proactively

From an inventory tracking standpoint, an advanced OMS should provide a centralized mechanism that ensures you are publishing accurate available-to-sell levels to your sales channels.

Proactive tracking identifies potential trouble spots in your omni-channel order fulfillment process way before they become actual problems.

This is especially crucial when bundling multiple products (kitting). Whether you sell an item on its own or in groups, the OMS should ensure your inventory levels for items remain visible and accurate. Pick slips created will identify the individual items that make up the kit, guaranteeing that your warehouse packs the right items. If you sell products that are assembled, packaged or personalized on demand, this capability is a must-have.

Takeaway: Real-time reporting in your OMS, tied to order processing and inventory management, is a necessity. Don't try to live without it!

#4:
Simplified Shipping Process

Your OMS should send out orders efficiently and error-free. Integrating the shipping process alleviates bottlenecks and cuts the risk of manual data entry errors. That's a customer experience win for you and your customer, who will receive products faster.

Here are some key OMS capabilities that can optimize your shipping process:

Improve pick, pack and ship with barcode scanning. This is the most efficient way to pick and pack orders. Using a barcode scanner saves time and ensures complete accuracy (barcode data entry has an error rate of about 1 in 3 million).

Offer integrated rate shopping and package tracking. The world of eCommerce innovation demands that you offer the free, 2nd day and lower-cost shipping options that your competitors use to attract and capture business form your organization. Having access to these features and being able to deliver them to your customers as attractive selling points will help build loyalty and win repeat orders.

Tailor your company's shipping policies to your specific market. An OMS that performs automatic shipping calculations lets you create customer shipping charge schedules for each shipping method. The schedules can be customized based on factors such as:

• actual costs
• order total
• number of items
• C.O.D. premiums
• and more

Automatically correct, verify and print addresses. This reduces shipping delays and carrier imposed penalty fees associated with fixing inaccurate addresses. Your OMS should print shipping labels, access tracking information and control shipping rates.

Takeaway: Integrating shipping automation into your OMS is a win-win for you and your customers. Do it!

Freestyle
solutions

#5:
Tight-Knit Integration

The difference between a good and great customer experience may depend on the communication between your eCommerce store and your OMS. If the communication of orders passing from your eCommerce store to your OMS is not solid, errors can occur.

Continuous tight-knit integrations between systems close the loop to ensure they are in sync at all times, thus maximizing the benefits of your OMS while helping you process orders more efficiently.

Good integrations require a strong application programming interface (API) to leverage the power of your OMS with external entities, such as the retail website.

Takeaway: Tight integration with external systems is essential to make sure orders are always updated.

"Order management is the single source of truth for inventory movement. With a tight integration into ecommerce, order management can connect shoppers to their order history and allow for easy exchanges and returns….This keeps shoppers engaged on the ecommerce site and delivers experiences that keep them coming back."
Kate Milne, Order Management and Unified Commerce, Salesforce.com

Order Management:
the Secret Weapon for Long-Term Sales Growth

Of the many capabilities that an advanced OMS should provide, be sure not to overlook the five areas we've covered here:
• supplier management
• multichannel
• real-time reporting
• simplified shipping
• tight integrations

In the ongoing effort to achieve business goals and gain a competitive advantage, savvy companies of all sizes and at all stages of maturity know that there is one indispensable ingredient: **creating an outstanding customer experience.** More than half of consumers say they complain to family and friends after a bad experience. Only a reputation for excellence, dependability, and efficiency—in other words, delivering well on your promises—can power your long-term ability to keep current customers while generating referrals and new sales.

Look at your order management system as the secret weapon for lowering your operating costs, raising your execution performance and building an awesome customer base for organic growth.

About Freestyle Solutions

Freestyle Software provides essential order, inventory and customer management solutions to growing multichannel retailers that integrate easily with eCommerce platforms to drive efficiency, productivity, insight and growth. Over 2,000 merchants rely on Freestyle Software's Multichannel Order Manager (M.O.M.) and SiteLINK solutions to automate their back-office operations and drive business growth. Freestyle customers collectively generate more than $200 million in sales each month and engage over a million shoppers daily.

About M.O.M.

Freestyle's Multichannel Order Manager (M.O.M.) is the leading PCI compliant order management software built for multi-channel retail and distribution businesses. M.O.M. enables effective order entry and import, inventory management, order fulfillment and customer information management to streamline processes, cut costs, improve customer service and increase revenue.

For thousands of small to mid-size customers, M.O.M. sets the standard for order management software for operations. Freestyle lets customers manage the critical aspects of their business, including essential integrations with carriers, payment card processing and accounting systems. Retailers can be sure that inventory is always accurate, orders ship smoothly and their customer service team can respond with confidence and focus on meeting their customers' needs.

For more information, visit www.Freestyle Solutions.com and follow us on Twitter @Freestyle Solutions

Freestyle
solutions ®

visit **www.freestylesolutions.com** **for more information about us and to learn more about how our products can help you grow your business**