

Automation is key for distributors to act fast and meet customer demands

By [Samantha Proctor-Parker](#)

16 Nov 2017

Competition is high amongst South African and international distribution companies and margins are continually under pressure. Wholesalers and distributors have to constantly look for ways to better manage their stock holding and streamline their processes, from sales to shipping, and purchasing to warehouse management, in order to retain a competitive edge.



Samantha Proctor-Parker

Introducing an end-to-end business management tool to automate processes is key to improving your bottom line. Here are a few examples of how adopting an integrated business management solution can dramatically change the way SME's handle their businesses, particularly in terms of warehousing and distribution.

Customer service

Differentiating yourself by excelling at customer service and keeping prices competitive will result in a successful and sustainable business. Providing great customer service involves a number of things. Offering the right product range is crucial while operationally it is vital to ensure you have adequate stock, fast delivery, effective returns handling and the ability to proactively deal with complaints.

Inventory control

The goal of inventory control is to generate maximum profit from the least amount of inventory investment without hindering customer satisfaction levels or order fill rates. An integrated business solution optimises inventory, which leads to increased productivity and reduced costs while ensuring that project expenses and budgets are not exceeded.

Planning

If you don't know how much you need you cannot plan effectively. The right online business management tool will allow you to plan ahead to take advantage of volume buying where necessary. Systematic and coherent delivery planning ensures that goods are received in good condition and in the shortest space of time to meet customer demands.

It is important to understand what stock is on hand and the lead time between order and delivery is to ensure that lean inventory is maintained. Maximum profits and increased margins can now be obtained with a modest investment. Having visibility into your cash flow will ensure that stock holding is optimised to yield the highest return on investment while maintaining customer satisfaction.

By ensuring you have real-time visibility into sales forecasts and history through an automated online system, you are able to determine how much stock you should keep to satisfy both current and growing demands. Managers can thus make informed decisions about the optimal levels of stocks and supplies to be kept at a distribution centre or across a network of warehouse locations.



©Wavebreak Media Ltd via [123RF](#)

Integration

An Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software, such as SAP Business One, makes a dramatic difference to a business' overall management and functionality by merging sales, financial management, banking, purchasing, manufacturing, inventory management, and customer relationship management. SAP Business One manages all aspects within a business and provides comprehensive insight into daily operational tasks and processes.

Stock can now be ordered automatically on the system, received into the warehouse, scanned into inventory holding and sent to the general ledger to prepare financial statements – without any need for human interaction or intervention.

Many SME's are still relying on disparate or offline systems which generally require recapturing of data into one system or another. The duplication of efforts is time-consuming and often leads to errors in reporting. Adopting the right online business management software can help these businesses work smarter and free up time to focus on growing their brands.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Samantha Proctor-Parker, Cape Town Sales Manager of Bluekey Seidor. Proctor-Parker has over 10 years of experience in selling comprehensive IT solutions and business management software. She specialises in bringing innovation to key areas of business, spanning multiple industries, as well as providing key solutions to industry challenges. Proctor-Parker is passionate about growing the SME market and recognises that investing in technology will assist with streamlining businesses processes so that the focus can be on what's important - growing your brand and bottomline. Bluekey Seidor is part of the Seidor group of companies and has a reputation for on-time delivery of complex, and simple, integrated business management solutions to SMEs, ensuring real and tangible benefits to business owners.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>