



Torex™
Defining customer experience

ethelaustin

“Torex™ has removed the surprise element from our business. It’s enabled us to identify risk and opportunities – and that’s good for both the bottom line and the customer.” – *Frank Christiansen, head of IT at Ethel Austin*

Knowing the company

More than 70 years ago, Ethel Austin started knitting in a Liverpool sitting room and spawned one of Britain’s biggest value clothing retailers that today has a nationwide network of 300 stores with 2,800 employees.

Ethel Austin’s longevity is due partly to its ability to reinvent itself in response to changing customer needs.

Most recently, it has increased its focus on women’s fashion, committing to an ambitious programme of store refurbishment, re-branding and seasonal stock rotation.

This created new management challenges, including the need to increase responsiveness, and tightly manage markdowns to optimise profit while minimising residual stock.

Defining the strategy

Ethel Austin had already installed the Torex Compass-SCM planning solution, and Torex Power-POS, which had provided the data visibility, process efficiencies and planning capabilities that were critical to establishing its new strategy.

However, the system was tailored for instances where the company purchased stock months ahead, and did not adequately support its new fashion focus. Reports were monthly, hampering buyers’ efforts to assess stock performance and respond quickly to trends. Stock could not be dated and categorised, making it hard to determine markdowns that would influence customer purchases to minimise residual seasonal stock without unnecessarily squeezing margins.

Because of Ethel Austin’s confidence in Torex, they asked Torex to address these issues with a cost-effective solution that would support its new business model while preserving and enhancing its existing IT investment.

“Torex had become an integral part of our operations so we didn’t want to mess with that,” said Frank Christiansen. “We also knew its solutions were highly

Ethel Austin Snapshot

- **Industry** Retail
- **Solution** Torex SCM
- **Product** Torex Compass-SCM with WSSI Monitor
- **Platform** Microsoft® Windows NT, Microsoft® SQL Server

configurable and that, because Torex consultants had retail backgrounds, they understood what support our business needed.”

Choosing the solution

Ethel Austin needed its systems to provide a more detailed, rolling picture of its business and enable greater responsiveness. Consequently, Torex worked closely with Ethel Austin to develop a weekly stock, sales and intake (WSSI) monitor as part of the Torex Compass-SCM suite.

The WSSI monitor enables users to key data in once, then retrieve it in a wide variety of useful reports, both within WSSI or in other, integrated systems. It has an intuitive user-defined workflow through views, making it easy for employees to adopt.

The new, integrated Torex solution provides a rolling view of margin, tying together existing stock, forward commitments and Open To Buy by price type. Accordingly, any scenario modelling shows the true impact that different promotional options would have on the cumulative bottom line.

The solution also provides drill-down capability across dimensions including product, time and seasonality, providing full data interrogation and query capability. This improves trading decisions and ensures key continuity stock is always available while seasonal items are continuously refreshed, which is critical for customer loyalty.

Plus it enables weekly reports – at high or detailed level as required - which empowers Ethel Austin to respond more quickly to trading patterns, more tightly control stock and improve cashflow.

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– Frank Christiansen

Achieving results

“We’re extremely impressed with how much the Torex solution enables us to do. It does a lot under the covers but is simple on the surface, making it really easy for all our employees to use,” said Christiansen.

As well as improving tracking and responsiveness, the superior modelling capabilities help users to forecast stock and budget requirements with greater confidence.

“Significantly, it’s removed the surprise element from our business. It’s enabled us to anticipate risk and opportunities – and that’s good for both the bottom line and the customer,” added Christiansen.

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With more than 20 years experience, Torex is the leading European-based global provider of proven, best-in-class solutions that help over 7,000 customers provide a defining customer experience in the retail, petroleum and convenience, fast moving consumer goods, and leisure, food & beverage markets.

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