

Little London Boutique

Case Study



The Client

Little London Boutique (LLB) came into being in 1993 when owner, Lynne Waller, saw a niche in the market for women's designer clothing. With her keen eye for style and her love of mixing well-known labels and up-and-coming designers, she has created season after season of well thought-out, covetable pieces.

Whilst the business has been based upon offering UK and international brands, over the past 2 years it has reinforced its identity through the development of own-brand merchandise. Fast becoming the linchpin of the business, this will shortly account for two-thirds of stock items. Designed from the fabric upwards, LLB's clothing and accessories are manufactured exclusively in the UK.

Working to a low-volume, high-value sales model, individual customer service has been critical to LLB's success. This emphasis, coupled with desirable stock, meant that LLB quickly gained a dedicated following. Today, it has four boutiques, in Chichester, Winchester, Guildford and Tunbridge Wells, and a popular web site where signature items can be purchased.



"The J2 650 tills are aesthetically pleasing units, fanless & silent."

Lynne Waller, co-founder of Little London Boutique

The Solution

The Process

Unable to source a simple tool tailored to the apparel sector that could make its business more efficient and manage both stores and the web site, the retailer turned to LOIS Systems. LOIS created a bespoke solution for LLB's needs; one that has developed as the retailer has evolved.

LLB is now entering a period of expansion. Its plans are ambitious and include between 20-30 new store openings in the UK in the next three years. International expansion is on the cards too, based on the franchise model. LLB also has plans for wholesale, selling its own-label stock to independent retailers and department stores.

"The LOIS software solution will remain the hub of our expanding business," explains Lynne Waller, co-founder of LLB. "However, after 16 years, we decided it was time to upgrade our point-of-sale hardware."

LOIS turned to its partner, J2 Retail Systems, and specified the installation of J2's latest PC-based touchscreen till, the J2 650, for each of the four stores.

"J2 hardware works perfectly with the LOIS software, which was designed for touchscreen operation."



The Benefits

- Integrated PC-based tills form the hub of front-office and back-office operations, driving sales transactions, accounts, reporting, inter-store communications and security
- Silent, stylish and space-efficient, the J2 units fit unobtrusively into the intimate sales environment of each boutique
- J2's fanless operation is ideal for the clothing environment; as dust from fabrics can cause malfunctions and lead to hardware being unreliable and ephemeral
- Universal software is accessed via the tills, integrating web-based and store-based activity
- Live stock management intelligently selects items to fulfil online orders from store stock, thereby minimising goods held and eliminating the need for separate warehouses
- The complete system is easy to use and lets staff focus on selling rather than on IT processes

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The Results

The backbone of the system is its ability to track stock in real-time and to share this between LLB's outlets. In-built intelligence results in stock being picked from the nearest or most appropriate store, making sure to maintain sensible stocking levels, for web or store orders. This facility is critical for a forward-order business, especially one with several outlets, where the speed at which goods are sold makes all the difference. With LOIS, orders can be taken, payment processed, and products shipped immediately. Inter-store transfers are equally instantaneous.

As franchise partners come on stream, they too will be offered the LOIS and J2 solution as part of their LLB relationship, and will link into the stock-sharing system. Overall, stockholding and warehousing requirements are reduced. "This is a huge bonus, and means we can scale the business and manage our merchandise efficiently without the expense of more technology and more stock," says Lynne Waller. LLB's transactional web site will be extended to be a global site giving extra net access to all store and franchise staff.

All LLB's boutiques are relatively small spaces, from 600 – 1200 sq. ft. They use décor and stock displays to create a setting conducive to quality

clothes purchase. Observes Lynne Waller: "In this intimate environment, the drone of a fan in a countertop system would be obtrusive and unwelcome. Fanless operation also minimises the effects of air-borne fluff that clothes shops face."

LLB finds J2's 650 stylish, discreet and practical. This new model offers virtually silent fanless operation and, as a dual processor unit, is extremely powerful. As Lynne Waller details: "Point-of-sale performance is particularly critical when running a LOIS system, as all fulfilment across stores and web site is managed from here. With e-commerce and shop operations synchronised, the till is used as our universal access point. From the till, our staff manage sales transactions, place orders, and transfer stock, absolutely everything. This puts the onus on LOIS software and J2 hardware to harmonise and give us reliable performance."

LLB uses the PC-based J2 650s for its management reporting, inter-store messaging, and to run its instore music system and CCTV-based security. The retailer will soon be posting streaming video from the stores straight onto the web site. "LOIS and J2 is a real end-to-end solution that manages the business in its entirety."

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About J2 Retail Systems

J2 Retail Systems is a specialist manufacturer of PC-based touchscreens, LCD touchscreen monitors and point-of-sale hardware to the retail, hospitality and leisure industries. With 70,000+ units installed worldwide, its clients include leading-brand retailers such as Greggs and First Quench Retailing, and hospitality and leisure operators including several cinema chains, and hundreds of pubs and restaurants.

By controlling its own design and manufacture, J2 has built a reputation for innovation, reliability and cost-effectiveness. Credited with introducing 'thin client' EPoS to the market, J2 uses emergent technologies wherever possible to reduce the cost of hardware ownership.

About LOIS Systems

Specialist retail solutions provider, LOIS Systems, conceived its software and services from the shop floor upwards. The company's origins are in fashion retail and it was for the requirements of Little London Boutique that development first took place. Unable to source an appropriate system off-the-shelf, LOIS created one that is simple to use and rich in functionality.

LOIS keeps up with new trends and efficiencies in both IT and retail and, today, new retailer partners are using the LOIS system and helping the

company to broaden its scope. The result is a one-stop solution that is agile enough for single stores and comprehensive enough for the largest multi-store enterprises.

Logical processes flow in conjunction with normal retail functions. Their pivot is a single, integrated stock management system, which enables retailers to manage product across stores, mail order and the internet in real-time. This universal, multi-channel approach minimises stockholding and maximises efficiency.



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