Supporting Online Retail with Cost-Efficient Shipping

CSF Couriers Limited of Trinidad & Tobago passes on shipping savings to their customers by consolidating their online purchases. The result is increased accuracy for the company and higher satisfaction for customers.

We're already seeing the benefits because customer information is updated right away, so they're happy.

Mr. Partapsingh, owner, CSF Couriers Limited

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Logistics Software Solutions

At a Glance

CSF Couriers Limited offers a "skybox" service that enables their customers who order online to send their online purchases to one of CSF's Florida warehouses to export to Trinidad and Tobago. Additional services they offer include consolidation and repacking of items and ocean services to ship cargo.

Challenges

When you run your own business, keeping costs down and customers happy are two key elements to staying in business. When Junior Partapsingh looked at the cost of importing goods into his home country of Trinidad, he realized how expensive it was and wanted to reduce that cost by taking control of the shipping. "When I got the opportunity to open a shipping company, I took it," Mr. Partapsingh said.

Junior Partapsingh owns a video gaming and electronics store in Trinidad, the West Indies. The store sells computer games and hardware such as consoles for PlayStation and Xbox. In 2006, he created a shipping service for his own goods, and now he offers a courier service for customers who buy items online.

The CSF Couriers Limited website offers a registration page for customers to create an account which enables them to use the CSF Courier address when ordering items online. The packages are sent to one of CSF's warehouses in South Florida.

"I opened two locations in Florida when I saw an opportunity to provide consolidations because there aren't many companies offering it in my market. We don't want our customers going elsewhere to find a service if we can provide it. Consolidating saves our customers money, which they really like," Mr. Partapsingh said. Customers of CSF Couriers consist of 80% individuals and 20% companies. They can use one of two warehouses that CSF Couriers maintains in Florida.

One warehouse is located in Pompano, Florida, which is used for regular shipments, and another warehouse in Miami is for special packaging. "We chose Pompano because it is close to a Trinidadian community and convenient for individuals to drop off packages that they want us to ship for them," Mr. Partapsingh said. "The

Miami location is useful for many of our business clients who make purchases from their suppliers. They can deliver items or we can pick it up for them."

Packages from both Florida warehouses are consolidated into one shipment and included on one Air Waybill. The items are loaded onto an AmeriJet flight daily and sent to Trinidad.

On the CSF website, the customer selects a pickup destination at one of the CSF locations in Trinidad or Tobago or requests delivery. CSF Courier has multiple locations in the north, south and central parts of the island, as well as on the nearby island of Tobago. All the CSF locations are connected by Magaya software.

Connecting Two Countries

The two locations in Florida use the same Magaya database; each one is organized as a separate division within the company. The Trinidad office has a separate Magaya database, which has all the customer data. To connect all the databases, they used the Magaya XML API. Mr. Partapsingh talked about the reason he needs to connect all the information.

"As new customers sign up online every day, they make shipments right away. Many of them are also Amazon Prime members so we have

to meet those fast shipping expectations. Their information is saved in our Trinidad database, but we need access to it in the U.S. database also. Before the API, we had to get the information exported from the Trinidad database and imported into the U.S. database every day. Sometimes we had duplicates, and the per-customer rates did not always come through for each customer," he explained. "The API now checks to see if there is a different rate for each customer and updates the second database automatically. Any changes to the customer profile from the Trinidad database are updated in the U.S. database. We configured the API to automatically check every 100 minutes for any changes a customer may have made to their account."

The API connection provides positive results for the staff of CSF and their customers: "The API has helped a lot because now it's one less task for someone to do or for someone to forget," Mr. Partapsingh said. "We're already seeing the benefits because customer information is updated right away, so they're happy."

Other ways CSF makes use of their Magaya software is by creating reports about the number of packages shipped from each warehouse in Florida. Their accountant needs to know the number of packages arriving in Trinidad because taxes are due based on a percent per package.

Mr. Partapsingh also commented on the benefit of customizing the invoices in the software so they will print two on a piece of paper. "This saves us money and time because we don't need to print two invoices and staple them. Now we have one copy for the customer and one for us."

CSF uses the built-in online tracking, Magaya LiveTrack, to let their customers view and print their invoices online at their convenience.

Managing Growth Successfully

When Mr. Partapsingh opened CSF Couriers Limited in 2006, it was just him and a driver. Now he employs 23 people in the Florida warehouse and 90 in Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Partapsingh recalled how he decided to get software for his business as the volume increased and outpaced his manual processes.

First, he added more employees, but he knew he had to automate processes. "We did a lot of things manually before Magaya. We had a million different formulas in spreadsheets to get the level of detail we wanted. At the end of 2012, we looked for software and evaluated many different programs. The customer service from Magaya made a difference for me. I value customer service for my customers, so I wanted to work with a company that felt the same way. We were also able to get some custom coding for the Magaya system to meet our needs. That's what we wanted."

To help handle the increased volume accurately, Mr. Partapsingh added a bar code scanner to his operations. After items arrive in Trinidad & Tobago and clear Customs, the CSF staff scans the bar codes and verifies the packages by comparing them to the manifest. They create a Warehouse Receipt document for all items as they arrive and add the delivery zone to it in the computer. Previously, they wrote the delivery zone on the packages for approximately 4,000 pounds of cargo per day. "That's about 800 to over 2,000 packages per day," he said. "Now the zone is included when we scan the package, which avoids the package getting put on the wrong delivery truck."

Future Planning

Future services he plans to offer include more locations in the islands and more technology to support them. "I'm considering the CubiScan scale and WMS Mobile to process more items during peak seasons. Fourth of July and Thanksgiving sales generate a lot of packages. Every year the volume keeps increasing," he said.

"I'm always keeping an eye on what the competition is doing. I compare their services and see what I can offer something better to my customers," Mr. Partapsingh said.