



Integrated retail software supports growing success of **Smart Cartridge** franchise network.

Client profile

Founded in Edinburgh in 2000, Smart Cartridge Ltd has gone from strength to strength. In a highly competitive sector, it has developed into an international brand with over sixty retail stores throughout the UK, Ireland, Spain, Portugal and the Dominican Republic. Future expansion will see a move into other European countries, as well as in North America. This enterprising and ambitious approach to business took the company to the finals of the Entrepreneur of the Year Awards organised by National Business Awards for Scotland 2006. Smart Cartridge's services save

customers money, at the same time as making a positive impact on the environment. Its core revenue stream remains the refilling and remanufacturing of inkjet, laser, copier and fax cartridges, but over time the range has been extended with products such as office and stationery supplies and remanufactured printers.

The challenge


Smart Cartridge operates as a franchise network, with support being provided from the Edinburgh head office. Suzie McCafferty, International Development Director, outlines the level of change experienced by the company. "In just five years, we have taken the business into five countries. While this growth is exciting and exactly what we need to see, high standards of back-up and support to our franchisees must be maintained."

As part of the extensive technical and business development support offered to franchisees, Smart Cartridge had been aiming to introduce a bespoke electronic point-of-sale (EPoS) product for over a year, but found it difficult to source the right system. With increasing sophistication in the business and customer demands, franchisees were keen to start benefiting from a fully featured EPoS system. As Suzie notes, "The pressure was on the head office team to deliver!"

Any system had to provide the specified features, and connect to the company's Sage Line 50 financial system, which had supported the business right from the start. Ease of implementation was also a high priority.

The solution

An enquiry logged with Sage elicited a fast response from Sage Business Partner Eureka Solutions, whose Managing Director, Alistair Livingstone, promptly demonstrated the Sage PayPoint EPoS system at Smart Cartridge's Edinburgh office. Suzie recalls, "As the system was put through its paces, we could see that it had all the EPoS functionality stores need at the front end, and it would integrate closely with the Sage back-office systems to provide essential management information."



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Suzie McCafferty,
International Development Director,
Smart Cartridge Ltd.

While Sage PayPoint offered Smart Cartridge a readily available, off-the-shelf system, it could also be tailored to precisely match business requirements.

Implementation of Sage PayPoint for Sage Line 50 moved forwards quickly. Over a three-month period, new franchise stores across the UK and in Southern Ireland were helped to adopt the Sage PayPoint system as they joined the Smart Cartridge network. Being able to handle the different currencies required is standard functionality for both Sage Line 50 and Sage PayPoint.

Suzie comments, “It all went exceptionally smoothly and the pilot was well received in the stores. It’s hardly surprising really, as Eureka were very supportive and proactive throughout. Not only did they make the implementation as painless as possible, they recommended ways to tailor the product further to provide even more day-to-day support to our franchisees.”

Suzie adds, “There is always bound to be some nervousness about using a new system, but Eureka helped us to overcome this and encourage user acceptability by providing training for new franchisees in the stores and at our Edinburgh headquarters.”

The benefits

Since implementing Sage PayPoint, the business has seen major benefits, particularly in the areas of faster service to customers at the point of sale and improved stock control in the back-office.

On the retail side, selling to both cash and account customers is quick and easy via the simple-to-use touch-screens. Customisation by Eureka Solutions ensured that the screen layout perfectly matched the needs of the Smart Cartridge business, so sales staff have at hand all the features they need to deliver the excellent service which keeps customer coming back for more. They can now easily perform in-store stock queries at the point of sale, improving service while saving their own and the customer’s time, too.

Special promotions and multi-buys are automated by being set up on the backoffice Sage Line 50 system and communicated directly to the tills. Full details of any savings made are recorded on the customer receipt, reinforcing the value-for-money message.

All transaction details on the tills are available to the reporting tools within the back-office system. This reduces the previous administration load and frees staff to focus fully on the customer. Data on sales is automatically refreshed on the back-office Sage Line 50 system, so that, for example, falling stock levels can be monitored and appropriate action taken. Conversely, information on products that are not moving quickly can also be extracted.

“It’s all beautifully synchronised,” Suzie explains. “As we’re constantly extending our product range and introducing new marketing ideas, it’s essential that we analyse precisely what’s successful, so that our growth can be sustained. By having a single system in place across the network, we receive reports at head office from the stores in a standardised format.





Solution Overview

- A fully featured touch-screen point-of-sale system for improved service.
- A platform for the growth of the franchise network.
- End-to-end integration, from the sales counter to the back-office.
- Standardised reporting to the Edinburgh head office.
- Comprehensive, professional support from the company's Sage Business Partner, Eureka Solutions.

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Being able to adapt the solution once centrally at head office – to accommodate new products being despatched to the stores, for example – and roll out the new functionality across all the branches enhances Smart Cartridge's business agility.

Suzie stresses, "Innovation is key to our success, both in developing exciting new product lines and in the resources we provide to our franchisees. Sage PayPoint plays an important part in helping us to keep a step ahead."

The future

The pilot phase of the Sage Paypoint implementation is now complete in the first 14 stores, with the opportunity to extend into the rest of the store network.

Suzie says, "It's all worked out so well that we are offering it to our more established stores and to new franchisees as our network expands further. We have the confidence of knowing that the set-up in each outlet will be fast and streamlined and that customers, the franchisee and the Smart Cartridge business will all benefit."

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