



An assessment of Laura Ashley's supply chain to identify cost saving opportunities in sea freight right through to stock room handling

Laura Ashley is a major clothing and household products retailer, with stores World-wide. All products sold are store branded, supplied from a range of vendors in Europe, the Far East, Asia and South America. Products are split between garments and household with the latter including furnishings, wallpaper, paints, glass, electrical goods, ceramics (tiles and tableware) and fittings.

Business Challenge

Key motivators for Laura Ashley included product development to meet the needs of target customers through focusing on signature product ranges, however Laura Ashley identified a number of inefficiencies in their supply chain due to their extensive product portfolio. James Ross Consulting were asked to undertake an assessment of packaging related handling issues within the Warehousing operation and Distribution chain, to identify opportunities and approach for performance improvement.

How JRC Helped

The analysis involved an assessment of the central Distribution Centre, covering the following: Product / order flow. Markets covered and picking / packing requirements (European / Export). Range of items stocked and range of packaging formats (within each product group). Compatibility of product quantity and size with storage and order picking requirements. Use of coding / labelling. Labour input into packing process. Return rates, by market for transit damage. Customer service input re: packaging issues / feedback from stores / markets. Overall Distribution costs for Sea and Air Freight (cube / weight ratio).

Value Delivered

On completion of this analysis significant benefits were identified from packaging change. In addition, JRC helped Laura Ashley to gain a greater understanding of individual vendor capabilities, packaging usage and other market segments.

About Laura Ashley

Once famous for its fancy floral print fashions, Laura Ashley Holdings has turned to furniture, home accessories, and decor to fill the till. Of the company's some 228 UK shops, less than half carry its traditional product line of women's and children's clothing. The company has repositioned itself as a lifestyle brand that is largely home furnishings, as it has shuttered apparel and accessories stores. Malayan United Industries owns more than 35% of Laura Ashley.

About James Ross Consulting

James Ross Consulting is a mid sized global manufacturing consulting, technical support and analytical services company, with offices established in the UK, USA and Australia. Their three competence groups, Cost Optimization, Technical Support and Analytical Services, develop a full spectrum of services and solutions that address business opportunities and challenges common across industries. See also www.jrconsulting.com.

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