



Leightons Opticians Sees the Business Case for Electronic ordering in the UK Optical Industry

London, UK February 10th, 2005 — Today Leightons Opticians and Supply Chain Connect Ltd announced the live implementation of the Supply Chain Connect electronic ordering system.

The Business Drivers

As a leading UK optical chain, Leightons Opticians set out to be the first to introduce a fully featured electronic ordering system into the UK market. With a network of 25 owned branches and a further 15 franchisees in the South of England, Leightons saw many ways in which electronic ordering could improve their service to customers, while increasing order efficiency with suppliers and showing real cost benefits for administration at branch level and at its Head Office in Farnham.

Leightons was also looking to provide the ability for branches to track purchase orders as they were processed by suppliers. Having already installed a Practice Management System (PMS) – F.O.C.U.S.™, supplied by Relcon software - Leightons was keen to provide a system which would allow the branches to continue to use F.O.C.U.S.™ to raise purchase orders, but then to have those purchase orders transmitted electronically, without need for subsequent faxes, emails or phone calls. Leightons knew they would be providing branches with time saving and resource saving processes – allowing the business to focus on their customers rather than paperwork. As all payments to suppliers are made centrally, electronic ordering also held the potential to produce a large reduction in the costs associated with manual re-keying and checking of data.

Leightons were keen to lower their administrative burden of doing business and wanted to do this in a way that also reduced cost for their supply chain partners. Finding the software partner that would rise to the challenge was the next step.

The Solution

Leightons Opticians, asked Relcon Software to assist them in finding a software provider that had proven experience implementing connectivity platforms that allow buyers and sellers to share critical order information in real-time. After reviewing the market they approached Supply Chain Connect, a company that they were already aware could meet their business drivers.

The Supply Chain Connect engine uses both integrated and web based applications – making it possible for Leightons branches and suppliers to connect to a single hub no matter what kind of system they use or where they are located. As Supply Chain Connect charges its connectivity users a modest monthly subscription fee, Leightons were able to see how they would quickly meet their challenge to provide the optical industry's electronic ordering system, with almost no upfront investment.

The Benefits for Buyers

The primary benefit for Leightons branches of using the Supply Chain Connect Private Supply Hub is the removal of paper from the purchasing and order management systems. Because Supply Chain Connect is integrated into their PMS, Leightons branches are able to place purchase orders without the need to print and send faxes. At busy branches, where hundreds of faxes or phone calls are made weekly, this improvement alone in the supply chain efficiency translates into tangible time and cost savings.

Tracking orders as they move through the system is another clear benefit to buyers. Leightons branches can see the progress of their order in the system, and with the status of every order available in real time



along with email alerts at each stage in the process, busy branch staff no longer need to spend extra time chasing up outstanding orders

The Benefits for Suppliers

One feature of the optical supply chain is the very large number of purchase orders arriving on a daily basis through a variety of mechanisms, all of which must be processed quickly and efficiently. Suppliers using the Supply Chain Connect Private Supply Hub can now see a consolidated view of all their buyers orders in a single user-friendly screen, all updated in real-time. All the data supplied by the Supply Chain Connect system can be viewed using a standard web browser, making implementation quick and easy, or can be integrated into the suppliers own back office systems thereby eliminating re-keying time, cost and errors (for example when fax orders are re-keyed into an accounting system). Supply Chain Connect offers a complete integration and supplier support service for all suppliers on its system.

The first key suppliers to work with the Leightons project are Luxottica and Marchon, and they, along with Leightons and Relcon are looking forward to enhancing their already successful working relationships.

Initial Feedback

Leightons Opticians are very enthusiastic about the bottom line value that their electronic ordering initiative demonstrates. As the MD, Neale Pugh, states, "This electronic ordering initiative will allow our branches to focus even more time on our core business of providing personal service and excellence. By reducing their time and costs associated with orders and purchasing we see enormous benefit filtering through the business."

The technology partners see this e-Procurement roll out as the first of many possibilities – both within the optical industry and with other vertical industries. "As the first PMS providers to create a link into a supply chain management system of this nature, Relcon is well positioned to offer F.O.C.U.S.™ users state of the art solutions which expand their horizons outside of the practice as well as robust, reliable and flexible solutions within it." Says Al Chetwode, MD of Relcon Software, "I can see Supply Chain Connect becoming an industry standard. There are so many clear benefits to both opticians and optical suppliers that it just doesn't make sense to not implement an electronic ordering such as this."

The technology and services provided by Supply Chain Connect underpin the project. As Errol Damelin, CEO of Supply Chain Connect comments, offering visibility into the supply chain is not just about the technology – it's about how to use the information available. "Our managed service approach means that supply chain partners can concentrate on their core businesses. We connect, train and support suppliers, so all users can reap the benefits. As we've seen with our other Hub implementations, electronic solutions to the supply chain are quickly becoming established in other markets and vertical industries."

Luxottica and Marchon – the names behind so many luxury brands in eyewear – are both long term strategic suppliers to the Leightons group of opticians and are the first suppliers to participate in the e-Procurement initiative.

Looking Forward

Laying the groundwork for future development, Leightons Opticians has plans for using the Supply Chain Connect solution as the basis for other applications, such as the ability to automatically match and pass invoices for payment.

For more information please contact www.supplychainconnect.com or phone +44 (0)870 744 1824