



## HOW POLISHING UP INTERNAL SYSTEMS LED TO A SPARKLING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE FOR **JFH JEWELS**

Digitising his business processes has enabled jewellery wholesaler John Harrison to enjoy higher growth, better margins and more satisfied customers and staff - a sparkling result all round.

Harrison grew up working in his father's jewellery business and, after his father passed away, worked for one of his father's suppliers until 2016, when he set up JFH Jewels, a wholesale distributor.

In 2019 he moved into manufacturing, with the acquisition of a pearl making business that previously supplied it. Today JFH Jewels employs five people and supplies jewellery to retail stores all over Ireland.

While his background ensured Harrison knew all about jewellery, business systems were new to him.

"I started out with a pen and a sheet of paper because I knew no different," he explains. "Also, I didn't have the budget to put in place the kind of digital systems I knew would work. In my head I thought that's for the big guys, it's an A4 page for me."

From the beginning Harrison travelled the country taking sales orders with pen and paper. As the business grew, customer orders and stock control became more difficult to manage manually.

In 2019 his Local Enterprise Office put him in touch with a digital mentor to help.

### **MORE TIME FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

Working together, their first step was to digitise the sales ordering process by developing an app that sits on his phone or tablet.

"It looks more professional to our customers and is faster - orders are sent back to our head office instantly," he says.

"It's also much easier to use. We can add products and customers to the app ourselves. Where previously most of my time spent in store was spent on order administration, now I can spend more time engaging with our customers," he explains.

It frees him up in other ways too. "Before I'd have to go back to the office at night to update all the orders manually.



Now we have a picture of each product on the app, and we add various components to it as per the customer's order by reference number. The component details get sent to the maker immediately and the item is back with the customer either the same day or next. Before the whole process took at least a week."

## LESS TIME STOCKTAKING

The success of the sales ordering project encouraged him to digitise his stock management systems too.

"We have thousands of raw material components," he explains. "When customers order from our pearl jewellery range we need to have the raw materials on hand to make the piece. We integrated the digital order taking system with the digital stock management system so that we can now check if we have the raw material needed to produce an order and, when an order is confirmed, the system depletes the stock level immediately. As a result, we always know our raw material stock levels."

Reorder warning points mean staff get notifications when stocks are running low. "It means the stock is up to date all the time," he says.

That compares to the previously arduous task of monthly stocktakes. "We were counting drawers full of components, some of which are just 2mm long," he explains. "It was extremely time consuming and not at all time-efficient," he says.

The plan is for component parts used to be fed directly into a new cloud-based accounting package, which will optimise internal processes even more.

## WORK ON THE BUSINESS NOT IN IT

Running the business now is a much easier task than it was prior to the introduction of digital systems. "I'd be out on the road selling from nine to five and coming in at night to do all the ordering myself. I was not working smart, I was working in the only way I knew," he explains.

“**IT HAS MADE US FAR MORE PRODUCTIVE, STREAMLINED AND EFFICIENT”**

Nowadays, by using Google Drive, all the team can access order information instantly. "It has made us far more productive, streamlined and efficient, from the start of the sales process to the finish," he says.

"Service is a huge part of what is a very competitive business. If I can get a 1 per cent advantage on my competitors, that's massive."

He has achieved the benefits he hoped for, and more. "As a result of digitisation we have shortened our lead times to customers, we have reduced internal communications, and freed up time to work on business development and value adding activities," says Harrison.

"It has opened our eyes to what's possible and we will continue to see new opportunities to use digitisation to improve our business performance and competitiveness."

The new systems have enabled him to work on the business, instead of always working in it, he adds. "Now I can concentrate on business development and new ideas, instead of being too exhausted. The goals have changed completely. The digital journey has transformed my business, 150 per cent," he says.



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