K8 software set to deliver automation and visibility to Collinson

Scotland's leading independent tile distributor, Collinson Ceramics, is to implement K8, the fully integrated, business management software solution, developed by Kerridge Commercial Systems (KCS).

Collinson imports and distributes ceramic and porcelain tiles and operates out of a flagship showroom in Edinburgh, branches in Inverness and Dundee and a distribution centre in Dalmeny. Predominantly a trade business, it also supplies retail customers, kitchen and bathroom showrooms, and high specification commercial projects across the UK. Some stock is sourced from the UK but most tiles are imported from Italy, Spain and Dubai.

Stewart Wilson is Operations Director and has been with the company for seven years. He said, "Our key differentiator is customer service and we like to go the extra mile. For example, our drivers start at 6am to ensure we can get deliveries to site by 8am. We're also proud to have been trading for 35 years and to have so many long-standing members of staff."

Over the years, the company's legacy system was upgraded and modified several times to keep up with the demands of the growing business. Eventually it became clear to Stewart that it was time to move to a more sophisticated solution. "Our old system just wasn't very intuitive to use and processing anything was very labour intensive," he said. "Our sales have doubled in the last five years so I started to look for something that would give us the automation and visibility we needed."

Stewart thoroughly researched the functionality of a number of systems before eventually narrowing down the choice to K8 and one other option. Although he could see benefits in both offerings, Stewart concluded that K8 was by far the best solution and KCS the partner of choice for the Collinsons business. "It was a combination of reasons in the end," he said. "Some of our buying partners use K8, and they told us what it could do. Secondly the professionalism of the KCS team when they demonstrated the system and put the whole package together was very impressive; but primarily it was because right from the outset I believed K8 software was by far superior to anyone else's in the market."

K8's ability to get to the right information quickly really stood out. Stewart explained, "The whole process is just more visible in K8. For example, it makes it easy to check and double check the price and the margin are correct before anything gets charged and the customer sees it. It's easy to use too. It used to take three labour intensive steps to transfer products from our distribution centre to one of the branches. In K8 it's just one easy step. And that means there's far less potential for human error."

K8 lets the Collinson transport team view the loads on the system, so it's easy to see when trucks are full and exactly what's on them before they go out.

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> Stewart Wilson, Operations Director Collinson

The warehouse management part of the system has the flexibility to enable a particular product to be stored in more than one warehouse location, and a highly sophisticated perpetual inventory control ensures that stock levels are always accurate. Full financial accounting software is also integrated within K8 to maximise the efficiency of transaction processing.

A key system function for a tile distributor is the ability to recognize batch numbers. Stewart said, "Batch recognition is really important for us as it will reduce the potential for different batches being sent to site, as well as significantly reducing wastage." The same functionality within the system will help the team manage the shelf life of adhesives and ensure that oldest stock is sold first. "Of course we used to manage batches and shelf life before K8 but it all had to be done manually. Now everything will be automated."

Collinson will also be using the Project Control functionality within K8 to help register and monitor all the activity surrounding a project that typically could take up to three years to complete. "This is a crucial function for our commercial business," said Stewart, "as there's often a five step process involved in projects where architects, interior designers, main contractors, sub contractors and fixers are all involved. Again this is an aspect of the business that we currently manage manually but, having everything that relates to a project linked together automatically in the system, will help us manage them more efficiently and ensure we're all fully aware of any changes that are made."

Stewart and his team are also looking forward to being able to scan PODs into the system so they'll be easy to find when requested by a customer. "Even scanning the PODs into the system will save us half a man day a week," said Stewart, "because it will save us so much filing. At a later stage we plan to implement the K8 delivery app that allows drivers to capture digital signatures, updates the orders and automatically emails signed PODs back to the customer".

Stewart said their current system had to be manually manipulated each time to process a direct order, and that there was always the risk of something not being charged out when it was delivered direct to site. "With K8's automatic functionality around directs, that risk will be eliminated. This is really important for us as we're increasingly working with large commercial contracts. The ability to manage call offs automatically within K8 is also hugely important to this aspect of our business and will save us a lot of time."

Rather than install and manage servers on site, Collinson will deploy its K8 software from the K-Cloud. "We're fairly limited in terms of in-house IT ability," explained Stewart, "and it will be more reassuring for us knowing all our data is constantly backed up and securely stored in the Cloud."

Stewart said that from when he first started talking to the KCS team, he found them to be highly professional and very open and honest. "Since the first demonstration, I've been very impressed with every aspect of the KCS operation. Now we're in the implementation process, I can see the project manager and his team are a really well organised and committed bunch of people. And as far as the software is concerned, in my opinion there's no question that K8 is the market leader."

About Kerridge Commercial Systems (KCS)
KCS provides advanced, fully integrated business systems, installation and support services for the manufacturing, wholesale and distributive markets. The company has over 40 years of extensive knowledge and experience of working with wholesalers, distributors and manufacturers across many sectors. The company's class leading solutions are functionally rich and highly flexible.

The KCS product solution set has a track record of delivering wide-ranging benefits including greater operational efficiency, cost savings and resource and asset utilisation, together with real-time information for management decision making.

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