



## EH Smith embraces digital era with solutions from Kerridge CS

Digital solutions have helped many builders' merchants future-proof their operations and open up new opportunities, including EH Smith. Senior Business Analyst James Cave reflects on how K8 software has helped the company grow, adapt, and meet its digital ambitions for the future.

The need for builders' merchants to adopt digital solutions has never been greater. Technology has proved integral to helping merchants tackle challenges, including those posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, but also position them for future success.



### Highlights

- Establishing a digital roadmap to future-proof operations
- Being able to access the K8 system remotely
- Automation of purchase ledger processing
- Eliminating time-consuming delivery management processes
- Plans for adopting e-apps, including K8 ePOD and K8 eReceipts

EH Smith, one of the UK's largest independent building, timber and brick suppliers, is the perfect example of a merchant that is using digital solutions to become more agile and adaptable.

James Cave, Senior Business Analyst at EH Smith, reflects on how Kerridge Commercial Systems' (KCS) K8 software has become the core platform for supporting its trading operations, and helped the company remain competitive in even the most difficult of circumstances.

### Preparing for a successful implementation

EH Smith installed its K8 business management software two-and-a-half years ago, and now supports the business with everything from sales right through to general management and finance. The business learnt a number of valuable lessons during the implementation phase, which James believes any builders' merchant should consider when choosing a new ERP provider.

"Do not underestimate the complexity of your own processes," James urged. "Don't assume that the consultants or stakeholders who are configuring the system understand the business in the same way that you do - you have to be really clear about walking through the processes."

"The day-to-day tasks aren't going to be what catches you out. Try to identify any exceptions before you go live on your new software, as this way, you should only be left with the real outlying issues that nobody could ever have predicted"

He also recommended getting "real life users" involved from the start, as they will help identify any areas of the software that need clarification, or processes that should be put in place before the system goes live.

EH Smith made the most of the support that was available from KCS post-go live by organising a number of consultancy days to address issues as they arose. This provided the business with access to an on-site consultant with an in-depth knowledge of the system, therefore adding an "extra layer of support" during the weeks following the implementation.

James acknowledged: "I'd say our implementation was 90% smooth sailing - you'll never capture everything before go-live, although as with all major changes there were teething issues. We had a dedicated project team which definitely helped."

## Case Study

# EH Smith



// Many of our back office functions could be performed from home - we have a VPN that enables people to use the system from anywhere, and the KCS client had no problem handling these access requests.

- James Cave, Senior Business Analyst, EH Smith



### Facilitating a new norm

EH Smith has staff across 11 branches, so when choosing a software provider, it was essential that everyone could access the system remotely as the Covid-19 pandemic took hold.

K8 has also enabled EH Smith to automate a large proportion of its purchase ledger processing, which has reduced the need for staff to be on site.

"If all our purchase ledger invoices were still coming in via mail, email or post, and we had a team of people processing them manually on the system, then we would have struggled hugely during the lockdown period. Fortunately, since going live, we have been taking advantage of moving suppliers to EDI processing of purchase invoices, so this is one area K8 has really helped us with," noted James.

### Looking forward to a digital future

Digital transformation has been expedited among builders' merchants over recent months, and EH Smith is already exploring other solutions that could benefit its operations in the future.

"There's quite a digital roadmap ahead of us," James confirmed.

"We're very interested in integrating K8 ePOD into our software. We have already implemented delivery management which replaces old paper-based processes which were time consuming and prone to error. The day's delivery schedule for a branch is now managed on screen in a simple drag and drop user interface."

"K8 ePOD will give our drivers access to an app that enables them to capture signatures electronically and take photos of deliveries and site conditions, which are all automatically fed back into K8 and attached to the sales order - this feels like the next natural step in our delivery management journey."

EH Smith is also considering adopting K8 eReceipts, an app that will allow the business to book receipts from purchase orders immediately into stock, and manage any issues as they arise. This will help streamline the booking in and goods in processes.

"I think it's common knowledge that builders' merchants have historically been slow to adopt new technologies. However, we're now starting to see in builders' merchant forums that the uptake of these solutions is accelerating.

"The industry is waking up to a digital era - and it can only reap benefits," added James.

### About Kerridge Commercial Systems (KCS)

We provide specialist software, services and support to deliver fully integrated trading and business management solutions to distributive trades customers, large and small - wherever they are in the world. Immersed in the distributive trades for over 40 years, our technical experts are thought leaders in trading and management technology, and our innovative and flexible approach ensures our customers partner with us for the long-term.

Our mission is simple: to design and deliver high performance, integrated ERP solutions that enable our distributive trade customers to source effectively, stock efficiently, sell profitably and service competitively.

### Contact Kerridge Commercial Systems

UK +44 (0) 1488 662000

Ireland +353 (0)1 469 3375

K8info@kerridgecs.com

www.kerridgecs.com