



## Ireland's Leading Multi-channel Sales, Marketing and Distribution Service Reports 40% Service Level Increase with ProWMS

Stafford Lynch is Ireland's leading multi-channel sales, marketing and distribution service for the Irish retail market. The company provides services across a select portfolio of consumer brands. It manages sales, support and distribution for food, non-food and medicinal products across channels including multiples, convenience, home, B2B, foodservice, pharmacy, discounters, health stores and online.

### THE BUSINESS

- A 'source-to-shelf' business operating across multiple channels including food, non-food, medicinal, foodservice, B2B and pharmacy.
- Dublin-based distribution centre guaranteeing nationwide delivery and UK and European access.
- Capacity for around 7,000 pallets in single and double racking up to 15m.
- 600+ orders per week. Peak traffic reaching 110,000+ cases during busy periods.

Operating for over 40 years, Stafford Lynch has developed a competitive strength in fast moving, fast changing markets based on its comprehensive and proven range of services based around national account management, marketing, sales and merchandising, supply chain management, finance and smart ICT systems.

**Brands managed include: Baxters, Dr.Oetker, Energizer, PZ Cussons, San Pellegrino, Schwartz, Tabasco, Tetley, Walkers and Wilkinson Sword**

Stafford Lynch operates from a purpose-built distribution centre located in Blanchardstown, Dublin and manages over 7,000 pallets and 100 daily sales orders equating to 4 million annual case picks.

The business employs single and double racking systems up to 15 metres high. Sales orders were running at around 600 orders per week, with peak traffic reaching over 110,000 cases per week in the pre-Christmas period.





## THE SITUATION

- No dedicated WMS and an existing ERP system requiring integrating.
- A requirement to keep track of thousands of items passing along the supply chain.
- A business-critical need to ensure full product compliance - for instance across food and healthcare products.
- Managing 2,500 customers and 35 principal brand accounts - ensuring transparency and traceability.
- System specification and go-live in four months.

*"What the business needed was a fully joined-up system. So, any chosen WMS solution had to integrate with Microsoft Navision and the software in use for the handheld scanners and by the delivery drivers."*

**Paddy Lonergan**

Stafford Lynch's services to its principals and their joint customers are managed by multiple operating divisions, each with a unique structure and operation satisfying specific market sectors. The Retail Division, for example, serves the multiples' retail outlets and symbol groups, garage forecourts and independent wholesalers and cash and carry. It handles ambient dry grocery, including confectionery and condiments, beverages and snack foods, ethnic foods and a range of healthcare, pharmaceutical and baby care products. The company is fully ISO 9001:2015 accredited.

## CHALLENGE

Stafford Lynch's business systems mission-critical task was to track and account for the hundreds of thousands of items passing through the supply chain and received into, stored in and despatched from, its central distribution centre. In addition to logistics and warehousing, the business needed to manage over 2,500 customer and 35 principal brand accounts ensuring compliance with all relevant food and healthcare product regulations including the strict regulatory compliance demanded by the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA).

The company must also satisfy all of its principals as to the integrity of the supply chain. There must be complete transparency and traceability to support regulatory compliance, where mandatory or agreed best practice is required.

Microsoft Navision was used for the ERP. Previously the company used MS Dynamics GP and was also an early adopter of Great Plains. Microsoft Navision controls the sales order processing, order fulfilment and related financial administration, with solutions in the warehouse and for the handheld wireless devices. The company elected for Principal Logistics Technologies' ProWMS Warehouse Management System (WMS).

## SOLUTION

There were several factors behind the decision to invest in a specialised warehouse management system.

*"We had a growing business with no dedicated WMS, which meant that details for sales orders from Microsoft Navision were printed out and then the stock items manually assembled for despatch. That was inefficient and made it difficult to comply with the mandated traceability and regulatory compliance for the many food and healthcare products. What the business needed was a fully joined-up system."*

**Paddy Lonergan, Stafford Lynch**



*"We aim to manage our businesses from source to shelf, applying the specialist expertise developed over more than four decades to every part of the process."*

*"That includes continual development of our support operations, including IT and communication systems across procurement, logistics and warehousing, highly detailed inventory management and the general business functions of sales, marketing and finance."*

**Paddy Lonergan,  
Stafford Lynch**

**PRINCIPAL RELATIONSHIPS**

**MARKET DATA &  
CATEGORY MANAGEMENT**

**BRAND MANAGEMENT AND  
ALL MARKETING FUNCTIONS**

ProWMS needed to integrate with Microsoft Navision and the software for the hand-held scanners and delivery driver tablets. Having worked with a solution from Principal Logistics Technologies in the past, Stafford Lynch was confident of ProWMS's performance and standing as an intelligent, enterprise-level WMS.

It was key to ensure that the WMS could cope with the more sophisticated requirements of the extended product range.

Paddy Lonergan commented, *"We had a contract with a new principal coming online about that time which would require high levels of product traceability and that was very much on our minds in the timing and the choice."*

Other considerations included tight control of stock rotation. Apart from the traditional first-in, first-out element, about 75% of the products have best before and sell by dates needing strict observance. Most have relatively long shelf lives, but some of them, like crisps, have shorter periods, which potentially makes the control of aged stock challenging. In addition, product returns were a major business feature. Accounting for these, including decisions such as uplifting back into warehouse stock or disposal, was a key element, both of inventory management and traceability - and of customer credits in the financial system.

The Stafford Lynch team, working with Principal Logistics Technologies, gave themselves just **four months to specify the system and have it go-live**. Initially, all goods inwards were taken into the WMS by labelling the pallets with unique barcode identifiers. After a few weeks, most of the warehouse stock was already labelled and a one-off manual exercise was undertaken to complete in-store pallet labelling. At that point, the replenishment functionality was switched on and the warehouse staff trained in the WMS using wireless handheld terminals.

# Sophisticated and User-friendly Supply Chain Solutions

**MULTIPLES**

**CASH & CARRY'S**

**WHOLESALERS**

**SYMBOLS**

**INDEPENDENTS &  
FUEL FORECOURTS**

*"Before installing the WMS we reckoned our service levels were operating at 70-85% accuracy. But after implementation we saw over 98.5% accuracy. That is now the performance level on a regular basis. The business can see its stock levels accurately all the time, and in real time, which in turn facilitates the efficiency of the procurement team. Similarly, accurate stock movement recording underpins the company's demand planning model."*

**Paddy Lonergan,  
Stafford Lynch**



The training process included the pickers becoming accustomed to following the picklist rules in assembling orders. These include, for example, a feature which means that a more conveniently located pallet cannot be substituted for what is specified, hence ensuring consistent rotation. Warehouse picking is done via motorised pallet trucks, taking from the central pickface bays containing various product categories. A separate team replenishes the bays as required when the system monitors stock falling below trigger levels.

ProWMS controls the stock levels and replenishment, the order assembly pick lists on the handheld terminals, and a range of information relative to each order like customer and specific store, sales rep, carrier, picker and date and time stamps. Each picklist incorporates best routing according to pre-set rules, optimising location order, also ensuring that fragile items are loaded towards the end of the list.

Out in the field, the core reps and delivery staff also work with handheld devices, which have built-in GSM data communications to link back to the HQ systems. Order taking is straightforward, feeding directly into the sales order processing system.

Paddy Lonergan commented *"Where our smart systems come into their own, is in dealing with the many exceptions that occur daily. Short orders happen at our goods inwards point while in our own deliveries they are now uncommon but do happen. Returns are a regular feature, including rejection at the delivery site because, for example, the customer decides something is too close to its best before date."*

*"Other events might include transit or packaging damage. The important element is the automated and accurate handling of these exceptions so that returned goods can be checked and appropriately accounted for, down to case level and below."*

Such events are recorded with proof-of-delivery on the handheld devices and transmitted back to ProWMS. These often involve third-party delivery contractors which generally have a five-day window to return goods. This is monitored by ProWMS and notices or alerts are raised when the procedures are not adhered to, including reminders to the hauliers concerning what they should be returning. A dedicated returns function monitors all such activity, including inspection and re-labelling, or re-categorising, of goods. In this way the company can give complete visibility of all returns to customers and principals.





*"Principal Logistics Technologies specified the system and had it go-live in just four months. The business objectives have been consistently attained, notably in the efficiency and accuracy of our warehouse functionality."*

*"We have a robust ICT platform for growth and diversification. Equally, if not more important, is that we're now able to raise our customers' expectations to, what we believe are, world-class levels."*

**Paddy Lonergan,  
Stafford Lynch**



**Joe O'Shea**

A somewhat similar system function monitors product shelf-life in the warehouse. All stock at 30 days remaining shelf-life is removed from available status and quarantined. Some products may then be appropriate for special customer deals, others will be marked for disposal. The key point about returns, and other exceptions, is that all order fulfilment is fully tracked and never allowed to lapse due to the kinds of one-off occurrences that are inevitable in distribution.

Stafford Lynch has 16 van sales staff which effectively operate as an internal warehouse for administrative purposes. Each sales rep has their own 'depot' which they drawdown stock each week from the central warehouse as replenishment orders. When an order is delivered, the barcode scan automatically decrements the stock position in the main warehouse and in the rep's 'depot'. This aspect of the system has been tailored for the company's Schwartz distribution and merchandising function.

Stafford Lynch was delivered a proven set of systems for all aspects of its business operations. Microsoft Navision is the core ERP platform with ProWMS from Principal Logistics Technologies, as the hub between a fully integrated central warehouse and inventory management system. The warehouse handheld devices and the GSM-enabled units used by staff in the field use barcode scanning and messaging software which interfaces directly with ProWMS.

The company now has an integrated, end-to-end set of solutions for its ERP, warehouse management and fulfilment functions.

*"Stafford Lynch now has a proven set of robust and efficient systems for all aspects of its business operations. Microsoft Navision is the core ERP platform with the ProWMS Warehouse Management System effectively acting as the hub between a fully integrated central warehouse and inventory management system."*

**Joe O'Shea, Principal Logistics Technologies**

## **About Principal Logistics Technologies**

For over 30 years, Principal Logistics Technologies has been a leader in the design and delivery of innovative warehouse management software (WMS) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) software. Our technology and services optimise operational performance, reduce OpEx, and increase revenue for 3PL, distribution, wholesale, manufacturing, and retail warehouse businesses. The company supports enterprise-level and multinational businesses with complex single and multisite operations spanning 3PL, chemicals & hazardous goods, hard & soft commodities, chill picking, cold storage, cross docking, eCommerce, FMCG, pharmaceuticals & healthcare and more. We operate from offices in Dublin in Ireland and Manchester and Birmingham in the UK.