



Do I need stock control?

Technology has transformed modern industry. There are now more people sourcing and selling amazing new products and everyday essentials straight to customers. They can now be shipped more effectively and quickly than ever before. Customers are also savvier and scrutinise the delivery process harder than ever before. Next day delivery, even same day delivery are both modern day expectations that have a huge impact on your stock levels. They can quickly put the unsuspecting entrepreneur under pressure so gauging those stock levels and making critical stock ordering judgements can be the difference between a satisfied customer and one that will never return to your site.

Stock control software is a technology which many businesses have introduced in one form or another over the past decade. There is a necessity for something mechanical and automated to take the heavy lifting off human shoulders. In this article, we'll consider the merits and look at how it can complement your business.

Automation

The chief benefit of stock control software is that it saves on labour. If you're paying someone to do a menial task, like keep track of how many boxes of Skittles there are in a warehouse, then you might save yourself the money (and them the time) and have it done automatically.

This is only sensible. Humans are suited to some tasks, while computers are suited to others. Monitoring stock levels, and placing orders when they drop beneath a given threshold, now falls quite firmly into the latter category. Human beings are capable of suffering lapses in concentration, of becoming tired, and, consequently, of making mistakes. Machines suffer from none of these foibles.

Of course, this isn't to say that it isn't useful to have some human involvement in stock taking. After all, we need to be sure that the system is functioning properly, and that no stock has gone missing, been stolen, or is otherwise unaccounted for. But for the main day-to-day grind of stock control, the machines are often crucial.

Reliability and Speed

If something is done automatically, it'll necessarily be done that little bit more quickly – and sometimes it'll be done a lot more quickly. If you're taking delivery of a new batch of stock, a barcode scanner system might allow you to add the new items to the system in an instant. They'll then be added to the system instantly – and with the minimum labour.

Moreover, stock control software ensures greater reliability. If yours is a business which relies on maintaining a given level of stock, then it's vital that new stock is ordered in whenever existing stock levels dip below a certain threshold. With automation, you can ensure that this happens consistently every time.



Integration

Stock control software will link seamlessly with the other software that drives your business. For example, an Electronic Point of Sale system might automatically update a stock level after every sale. This will ensure that no time is spent waiting for a human being to manually update the stock levels. This allows all of your website, marketplaces, physical outlets and telesales to be precisely in sync with one another. This level of integration makes 'stock outs' a thing of the past.

Moreover, this integration will allow the point of sale to access information about a customer's order history, allowing their experience to be tailored and uniquely targeted to them. If you're dealing with many hundreds of customers every day, it's impractical to implement this level of targeting without involving automation.

If your stock is spread out across multiple sites, then this integration becomes all the more valuable. You'll be able to ensure that your staff and customers are all able to find out in an instant whether an item is available – even if that item happens to be located on the other side of the planet.

This allows for easy drop-shipping (a practice whereby a merchant is able to ship a product directly from a manufacturer to a customer without ever handling it). This is obviously a great deal more efficient. It hugely reduces shipping costs, and therefore allows for higher profits.

Data

Of course, the one thing that automated machines can't quite yet be entrusted with is the ability to make decisions on the future direction of a company. But what they can do is provide human management with the data required to make informed decisions. Good stock control software will provide the accounting functionality to allow this. By presenting profits, margins, stock levels over time in the form of an easy-to-understand graph, the software will allow you to see at a glance the trajectory of the items you're selling. You'll then be able to understand just how profitable each item is, and be in the best possible position to make decisions on its future.

The best stock control software will even perform automated analyses on margins, and provide warnings when sales dip below a pre-defined acceptable level. This means you'll be appraised of potential problems as quickly as possible, and that you'll be able to take corrective action, where necessary.