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Global Sportswear Retailer Partners with WIS International to Deliver Improved Self-Count Process

The retailer is an American-inspired, global brand that creates and markets sports and lifestyle products built upon a strong heritage and authenticity in sports, fitness and women's categories. The brand is committed to designing products and marketing programs that reflect creativity and the desire to constantly challenge the status quo.

Retailer Performs Self Counts

The sportswear giant began opening retail storefronts across North America in 1998. This created the need to perform store inventory counts at each location. The company started self-scanning in the United States and outsourced in Canada. By 2009, the company had expanded to 180 locations in North America and was experiencing difficulties with faulty rental equipment which resulted in accuracy concerns and increasing labor costs on inventory night. The Inventory Control Manager with the retailer said, "With the growth in locations and increasing number of counts, I began to see a pattern of consistently longer run times, broken equipment and frustrated store managers."

Sportswear Retailer Evaluates Inventory Service Options

Facing reliability concerns and limited flexibility with their rental equipment supplier, the company felt it was time to explore options. The retailer reviewed their current processes and future requirements to formulate a list of objective evaluation criteria. With the goal of selecting a single vendor to more efficiently manage the process, the company explored rental and full-service options with five service providers. The firm evaluated all providers using the same criteria – ease of use, company size, number of locations and cost. "WIS International became the standout provider because of their flexibility in offering both self-service and full-service solutions. During the test phase, WIS International also displayed their dedication to exceptional customer service. I came away from the test inventories with full confidence that WIS International was the best fit in each category and a service partner I could trust now and in the future," said the company's Inventory Control Manager.

Retailer and WIS International Work Side-by-Side for Success

One of the differentiators the retailer saw when selecting WIS International was their unique Partner System Rental, self-service option which is a hybrid approach combining the best of equipment rental with full crew manager support. With Partner System Rental retailers benefit from the combination of utilizing their own employees, the product knowledge they possess in conjunction with the patented, state-of-the-art WISard™ handheld terminal and an experienced WIS International inventory manager overseeing each inventory count.

Before taking the leap to convert all 150 U.S. locations to Partner System Rental the companies performed three test inventories. These tests included a mock scenario of how an actual Partner System Rental inventory would run. The first was a partial store inventory, the next was a complete in-store test and the final was also a complete in-store test during the week of Christmas. "The test inventories went so well that we decided to do a full-scale launch just two weeks later and have never looked back," stated the company's Inventory Control Manager.

WIS International USA
9265 Sky Park Court
Suite 100
San Diego, CA 92123
800-888-8210

WIS International Canada
3770 Nashua Drive
Suite #5
Mississauga, ON L4V 1M6
800-268-6848

WWW.WISINTL.COM



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Retailer Sees Measurable Results

Since partnering with WIS International, the company has seen several improvements. Before WIS International, retail store managers were stuck in the office on the phone dealing with equipment malfunctions and troubleshooting with technical support. Having a WIS International inventory manager at the inventories to oversee set-up, equipment training and manage all equipment logistics, the retailer's store managers have more time to focus on participating in the inventory, performing audits and supporting their team. The Inventory Control Manager said, "I can comfortably say that we have reduced our average count times by 1-3 hours across the board resulting in happier employees and reduced costs."

With the move to WIS International, the sportswear retailer has realized overall process improvements, improved auditing capabilities and accuracy using the WIS International proprietary Forced Recount™ process. Forced Recount is a proprietary service offering that provides greater confidence in inventory accuracy. As each section is completed, the WISard terminal forces the operator to manually recount the pieces and enter that number into the terminal. The manual count must match the original count quantity that was scanned, which is stored securely in the terminal. The win for the retailer is that inaccurate counters are identified early in the process to be re-trained and the company has greater confidence in the accuracy of the inventory.

The most important result of Partner System Rental roll-out has been the continued partnership between WIS International and the retailer. The teams work together to proactively resolve issues and are committed to ongoing improvement toward consistently increasing accuracy while reducing inventory run times. "It is very much a partnership and it has made a world of difference in the success of our counts and our relationship with WIS International," the retailer's Inventory Control Manager concluded.

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