



From racks to hangers to shelves

Last updated on 08/10/2014 - 14:52

07/10/2014 - 17:00



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KUALA LUMPUR: When you think about warehouses and logistics, the image of a dark, musty and industrial-looking facility comes to mind.

But not all warehouses are made the same and for SnT Global Sdn Bhd, some of its warehouses are like huge walk-through wardrobes where racks and racks of clothing are stacked atop one another.

Yes, it may look like a fashionista's dream closet but in fact it is a functioning warehousing and logistics facility that caters to the likes of Robinsons, Marks and Spencer, and Anakku.

The garment-on-hanger (GoH) system that occupies SnT's Subang warehouse is a purpose-built facility that spreads over 37,000 sq ft and comes with well-defined custom-built racks for systematic storage of different types of goods, mainly clothes and footwear.

GoH is a relatively new concept in the region but is widely used in Western countries to store garments before shipping. It is believed this method helps cut cost by reducing handling charges. "We started off by providing conventional logistic services to brands. However, all that changed over the years. We noticed the retail apparel business is very competitive.

"Customers are no longer telling us about delivering their goods from point A to B. They want to know how we can help save cost and improve efficiency," explains SnT group CEO David Wong.

Through this facility, SnT provides seamless execution of supply chain services including warehousing, distribution and value-added services such as goods receipt, storage, and pick and pack, designed specifically to meet fashion retailers' requirements.

Generally, most garments arrive at SnT's facility hung on a rack and transported around the supply chain in that state. While it looks like taking up more space, the method actually allows for more garments to be transported and sorted easily.

"For apparel, everything looks alike but sizing can be different. That is why we use radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology to sort through each variation," says Wong.

He reveals the company has invested over RM4 mil to set up the Subang facility and is currently working towards recouping the investment.

The integrated facilities which are spread out across six locations can process over 1,000 orders a month for customers throughout Malaysia. SnT is able to deliver up to 200,000 items a month to over 300 destinations.

Wong says his team is able to affix over 300,000 price or bar code tags onto garments or other goods a month as part of its value-added services.

Wong started SnT back in 2000 as Ship and Track, a software developer that offered logistics tracking over the internet.

Following the dotcom bust just three years into the business, the company switched strategy to become a logistics solution provider with call centre services.

Today, its services go beyond physical delivery or warehousing-related functional services to include logistics business process outsourcing (BPO).

"We knew we did not want to be just another logistics player in the market. We are in the late-logistics provider category which means we serve as a single-window supply chain manager for our customers' needs."

One of the biggest issues faced by those in the logistics business is missing items, resulting from both inside and outside sources. "Such occurrence can kill our business as customers will lose trust in us if it happens often. As such, security is important at our facilities."

Also, high-value items are shipped in locked cages which are accessible to only a select group of personnel.

As many of its customers' regional hubs are in Singapore, SnT has to ensure all garments reach the intended store before it opens.

"It is our customers' principle to have fresh items every day as they rarely keep a lot of stock at each store. That means our trucks would have to move at odd hours to meet the demand," says Wong.

Through its eLogistics platform called "HeLP", SnT enables end-to-end integration of the warehousing and delivery services with the customers' existing business processes. The system connects customers with freight forwarders to coordinate worldwide transportation from the UK, Sri

Lanka and China in order to ensure smooth delivery of goods from their regional hubs to SnT's warehouse.

Incorporating IT in the physical side of the business came naturally for Wong, who had over 15 years of experience in IT prior to starting the company.

Apart from fashion retailers, SnT's clientele includes companies from the information communication technology (ICT), fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), consumer electronics, paper, bio-pharma and e-commerce industries.

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