

CUSTOMER PROFILE

DISTRIBUTION

LAWSON AT AUTODISTRIBUTION



Lawson M3 Retail to the Rescue at Autodistribution

Autodistribution wanted to unify and consolidate its network of distributors by implementing an integrated IT solution that was tailored to meet the specific needs of the distribution industry. Lawson M3 Retail from Lawson turned out to be just the solution it was looking for.

“We chose Lawson M3 because of Lawson’s commitment to two things: technology, based on a Java solution that is deployed in most professional distribution companies; and taking care of people. Lawson is a company with a human touch that combines high standards and responsiveness over the long term.”

Olivier Van Ruymbeke, Chairman and CEO, Autodistribution



Business Benefits

Lawson M3 has considerably simplified a variety of management processes at Autodistribution since its introduction in March 2002. Its specialized distribution functionality is helping the company simplify its organization, notably in the areas of purchasing and inventory management, which are key processes in determining its efficiency and profitability.

For example, Lawson M3 allows Autodistribution to log each outgoing part in real time. "Since we began using Lawson M3, we prepare an average of over 6,000 order lines for parts a day, with many peaks of 8,000," explains an enthusiastic Patrick Hébert, ERP project manager in the company's IT department. "Before Lawson M3, we had a tough time handling 4,500."

Lawson M3 has also helped Autodistribution rationalize and simplify its invoicing processes. "As a specialized distributor, our business model requires us to centralize all the invoices for orders placed by distributors; that amounts to more than 120,000 invoices a month," Hébert points out. "The central office issues invoices to distributors three times a month. Lawson M3 simplifies inputting, allows us to exchange EDI files and supports the use of an automatic scanner. All these improvements greatly speed up the process."

But the benefits don't end there—more are on the way. "Lawson M3 is going to help us create a national data warehouse repository, whereas before we had no shared communication tool," says Hébert.

The Company

Autodistribution is the top European distributor of parts for equipment, auto repair, heavy road vehicles and industry, posting cumulative sales of EUR 1.22 billion in 2001. The Group distributes its items under various brand names, including Autodistribution, AD PL, AD Industrie, AD Moteur Plus, Garage AD, Carrosserie AD, AutoService AD, Maxauto and Axtio. It employs approximately 6,000 people.

Autodistribution's network consists of 173 companies and 560 retail outlets across France. Fifty percent of these companies and retail outlets are group subsidiaries, while the other fifty percent are franchises. The network's proximity to its customers, combined with its tight management of inventory in stock, enables it to deliver parts for most of the vehicles currently driven in France within two to four hours, depending on geographical region. In addition to supplying parts, Autodistribution offers a full range of services, including marketing, national contracts, IT, management assistance, new installations, and so on, through its brand-name organizations.

Why Lawson?

Autodistribution selected Lawson M3 because, after surveying a wide variety of the alternatives on the integrated solutions market, it found that Lawson M3 functionality was a uniquely perfect fit with its needs as a professional distribution company. Further, Autodistribution liked the Lawson partnership culture and its firm commitment to results. The fact that Lawson M3 is a Java solution was also appealing to Autodistribution, since Java technology enables effective e-business applications, and effective e-business applications are fundamental to the success of decentralized distribution companies.

"Successful makeovers of IT systems depend not only on the quality and performance of the solution chosen, but on how well it suits the business and on flawless deployment," says Olivier Van Ruymbeke, Autodistribution's chairman and CEO. "We chose Lawson M3 because of Lawson's commitment to two things: technology, based on a Java solution that is deployed in most professional distribution companies; and taking care of people. Lawson is a company with a human touch that combines high standards and responsiveness over the long term."

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Autodistribution was also won over by the fact that Lawson M3 enables the integration of Internet-based collaborative solutions with a company’s own portal. “The future of our organization is on the Internet, in terms of simplifying procedures and bringing together distributors,” says Hébert.

The Lawson integration expertise was another important consideration in Autodistribution’s decision to choose Lawson M3. “Lawson’s integration expertise shows its commitment to results and simplifies implementation by eliminating the inevitable tensions between publishers and integrators, who don’t have the same interests at the same time,” Van Ruymbeke explains.

The Implementation

Hébert was involved in every phase of Lawson M3 implementation at Autodistribution. He stresses the importance of involving in-house users, “without whom nothing will happen,” he says. The effectiveness of the Implex methodology and the complementary skills and expertise of consultants made it possible to meet deadlines, “especially during the configuration and parameter-setting phase, which is the most important,” he stresses.

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The solution went live at Autodistribution’s headquarters in Morangis in March 2002. All the other sites will gradually follow suit beginning in June. By 2003, the solution will be up and running across the entire network.

The Future

As Autodistribution sees it, its future lies on the Internet. “Lawson M3 Java technology and thin clients will gradually shake up the company’s entire organization because it’s a solution that is tailored to our business as a distributor and it’s going to evolve with the market,” Van Ruymbeke says. “We’re in it for the long haul with Lawson.”

About the Solution

Autodistribution has opted to deploy all Lawson M3 Retail components (excluding the production management component) and Corporate Portal.

Platform: IBM AS/400.



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