



Working together to build strong systems

A company that operates 642+ branches and manages 450,000 trade accounts clearly needs robust software to ensure sales are processed efficiently and inventory is managed visibly and accurately.



Results

- A strong ten year partnership between Howdens and KCS
- Fast order processing and clear visibility of stock
- Seamless integration with Howdens' manufacturing solutions
- A flexible system that suits Howdens' trading style and autonomous depots
- A scalable solution used effectively across Howdens' 642+ depots

Ten years ago Howdens Joinery chose K8, an ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) solution developed by Kerridge Commercial Systems (KCS) to replace its ageing legacy system. Since then the relationship between the two companies has evolved into a strong partnership that has seen the KCS team working closely with Howdens to help them achieve their business objectives and regular reviews to plan future strategic developments.

Howdens has a simple philosophy according to CIO Clive Cockburn. "We firmly believe that having a kitchen fitted by a trade professional is absolutely the best way of doing it. It's a complicated process that can involve other trades like plumbing and electrical work. There can also be design changes made along the way. We're therefore committed to providing a great service to local builders to ensure they always have everything they need in stock at their local depot, to support them as they work and to help them make money."

Howdens uses K8 to process all sales transactions and to manage its inventory at depot level. The software interfaces seamlessly with other solutions the company uses for accounting and manufacturing. "We needed a system that worked fast, gave us clear visibility of stock and could do line checks whenever we wanted to," explained Bernadette Donohoe, Trade Systems Manager at Howdens. "One of our measures when we were searching for a new system, and which we still use after K8 upgrades, was to get a one line sale (a bag of screws) on to the system in four seconds! It took three minutes on some of the more complex systems we looked at. We also needed a system that would fit our specific trading profile of selling packages - when product codes can 'explode' out into several components."

K8 is a highly flexible solution and the KCS team pride themselves on being able to tailor the software to suit individual business models. For example, the two companies have worked closely together to deliver special projects that have given Howdens a trading advantage. KCS was also able to support Howdens - including adapting the software to local languages - when they set up over a very short time scale a 20 branch operation in France and start-up businesses in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. The flexibility of K8 also plays to the Howdens culture of encouraging individual depot managers to be entrepreneurial. Individual depots have a lot of autonomy when it comes to setting prices and choosing stock and stock levels based on local needs.

Case Study

Howdens Joinery Co.



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- Clive Cockburn, CIO, [Howdens Joinery Co.](#)

The strength of the relationship between Howdens and its technology partners is also illustrated at the company's regular 'Innovation Events'. Head of Trade Systems at Howdens, Stuart Perham, said, "These events give KCS and other key partners the opportunity to demonstrate their technology to our senior executives and business stakeholders— showing them how Howdens could look and use technology in the future. Our most recent was held at Gleneagles Hotel where members of the KCS team demonstrated live prototype software innovations associated with the builder's buying journey and new sales processes to help our depot sales staff - it was really fantastic. We are now gathering feedback from the event which will influence what we do over the next few years."

The annual KCS customer conference is another opportunity for Howdens to hear about the KCS roadmap and to build relationships. "There's always a relaxed and refreshing atmosphere at the KCS user conference," said Clive Cockburn. "There's no marketing gloss, you see demonstrations of live software and I'm always scribbling down notes and listening to other users' ideas, challenges and experiences."

K8 does much more than process sales and manage stock. It combines a suite of modules that includes finance, eCommerce, business intelligence and warehouse and delivery management. Customers control how the system is configured and who, in their operation, has access to what functionality. It's also designed to support single or multi-branch businesses and multi-location operations with central distribution centres – a feature of the software that has impressed Clive Cockburn. "In terms of technical scalability K8 is ready to go from 1 depot to 600+. It can be used just as effectively by small businesses as by large operations like ours. We may configure it a little differently but basically we all use the same system. That to me speaks volumes about the architecture and the technical capability of the system. For a small business with massive aspirations, there's no need to change to something else as they grow."

About Kerridge Commercial Systems (KCS)

We provide specialist software, services and support to deliver fully integrated trading and business management solutions to distributive trades customers, large and small – wherever they are in the world. Immersed in the distributive trades for over 40 years, our technical experts are thought leaders in trading and management technology, and our innovative and flexible approach ensures our customers partner with us for the long-term.

Our mission is simple: to design and deliver high performance, integrated ERP solutions that enable our distributive trade customers to source effectively, stock efficiently, sell profitably and service competitively.

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