

## Boots Retail International: Getting ready for new markets

**"Flexible, safe and efficient export processing is an important pre-condition for making a leap forward," says Ian Sandey, Export Manager at Boots Retail International. "You cannot simply set up 50 stores in new markets without knowing how to ship the goods to these destinations."**

Boots Retail International (BRI) is a young division of The Boots Company PLC, one of the leaders in the healthcare and beauty industry. For the distribution of the Boots brands, the company has set up a far-reaching retail business with stores all over the United Kingdom. There is hardly any high street where you cannot see the characteristic blue & white logo. The same is now to be achieved on the Continent and in Asia.

"We are about to open up new markets," says Ian Sandey. Pilot stores were established in Thailand and the Netherlands; Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong were to follow. On the shelves of these stores, customers will find many of the same brands that are also offered in Britain. "We export our goods directly from the UK." However, formulation of cosmetics and healthcare products may be quite critical when it comes to exports: "For certain products we have special compositions depending on the national regulations of the country to which the product is to be shipped," adds Ian.

This was an important circumstance that had to be considered when choosing the export software. Boots International Retail decided to go for the export solution ASSIST4 Export by the German software vendor AEB. Ian Sandey knew the Stuttgart-based company from his previous job at Boots Healthcare International (BHI). But the two installations differ in various points. "We couldn't simply duplicate the BHI version. BHI is a long-established large company. BRI is a new division and there were many more factors to consider."

For example, Boots Retail International does not have a large OPS system as BHI has with its SAP R/3. "This was an unusual requirement," explains Kai Seela, Manager of AEB's UK Team. "We had to link ASSIST4 to Lotus Notes. In the majority of installations, there is a comprehensive SAP system from which we download the data. At Boots Retail the major part of the processing is done in ASSIST4." This includes, for instance, the maintenance of the customer master files or the sales price calculation including country-specific uplifts. "The fact that ASSIST4 offers such possibilities has finally convinced us," says Ian.

The employees in the warehouse now enter the delivery notes directly in ASSIST4. A check routine verifies whether the country code matches the respective product ID (to make sure that skincare products that have been intended for the Netherlands are not erroneously shipped to Thailand). After the packing of the goods, ASSIST4 forwards the transaction to the shipping department. At this stage the despatch and export documents are created. All documents including commercial invoices and the monthly Intrastat report are produced in ASSIST4.

Ian concludes: "We were looking for an export solution which was flexible enough to meet our specific demands and one we could see meeting all our future growth expectations. Right from the beginning it was clear that an 'off the shelf' installation wouldn't do. Therefore it was good to have a partner like AEB."