



Brødrene Dahl's New e-Sales Strategy Generates Serious Business Value

As part of its effort to expand its business beyond that of a traditional wholesaler, Brødrene Dahl is working hard to optimize its e-commerce strategy. BDnet, the new Brødrene Dahl e-commerce system, plays a key role. Using BDnet, customers can place orders online, gain access to an overview of stock and invoices, review their order history, and more. Based on Lawson ERP and e-sales solutions, BDnet is generating significant value both for Brødrene Dahl itself and for its customers.

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“Our aim is to make a difference for our customers,” explains Steen Petersen, channel manager at Brødrene Dahl. “Distributors today demand more than a traditional customer-supplier relationship.” With 57 departments dispersed across Denmark and a product range of approximately 50,000, Brødrene Dahl is Denmark’s leading distributor within the plumbing, water supply and entrepreneurship segment.

“As market leaders within [our segment], we’ve made a strategic choice to transform [our company] from being a traditional distributor that solely supplies products to customers to being a modern supplier capable of dealing with various customer demands and information needs,” Petersen adds. “It’s our vision to be the leading creator of value in this line of business. Through the use of modern technology we will create new value for our customers.”

The central nerve system in Brødrene Dahl’s latest strategic venture is BDnet, the company’s new e-commerce solution, which is based on Lawson ERP and e-sales solutions.

Business Benefits

“There is absolutely no doubt that the main advantages of BDnet are that we save a lot of time in handling digital incoming orders and that our customers can find the information they need 24 hours a day,” Petersen explains. “We are releasing resources from manual registration tasks to more valuable tasks such as additional sales. At the end of the day, these results will be visible on the bottom line.”

Via BDnet, Brødrene Dahl’s customers are able to order products online and access a large database of product and product optimization information. They can also review their product consumption, invoices, order history and more.

“To be able to manage well in an environment of intensifying competition, we need to have the best possible e-commerce solution, one that creates value both for our customers and for ourselves,” Petersen stresses. “The optimal trade/commerce solution must live up to traditional wholesale distribution values with a reliable, swift and cost-effective product flow, but also supply the customer with a customer-specific, quick and efficient information flow. We have achieved all of this with BDnet.”

The change from Brødrene Dahl’s old system to the new one was huge. “Our previous e-business solution wasn’t online—our customers had to enter their orders in an offline system and then transfer them to us via modem,” Petersen admits. “We weren’t able to give them a reliable time status or any customer-specific communication.”

With the shortcomings of the offline business system in mind, the main focus in building BDnet was on meeting all potential customer needs. “An independent plumber typically requires different commodities and information than a large industrial plumbing company,” Petersen explains. “Previously we’ve had trouble meeting these various needs, but with BDnet we now have a common information database, which lays the foundation for future value for our customers,” Petersen says.



Why Lawson?

With 57 branches serving customers all over Denmark—each of which has a product range adjusted to meet local demands—Brødrene Dahl recognized in the late 1990s that its existing enterprise solution would not be able to fulfill the future needs of a company of its size and complexity.

According to Jesper Clausen, the company's research and development manager, the company selected Lawson as an IT partner in order to set up "... a modern, process-orientated system that will enable us to have the strength and competence necessary to develop the trade solution of the future ... [and] ensure that we are able to maintain our position as the leading value-adding company within our sector."

The Implementation

To optimize the value of its investment and achieve a quick payback time, Brødrene Dahl chose to base BDnet on standard solutions from Lawson. As a result, the major part of the integration between the solutions was in place immediately. Brødrene Dahl's primary task was therefore to configure the standard solutions to meet its own specific requirements with the help of two consultants from Intentia. For example, it was necessary to make a few adjustments to some of the standard features in Lawson e-sales solution to meet Brødrene Dahl's needs.

"Everything fell into place and I must admit that we have obtained an absolutely amazing product," Petersen says. "BDnet lives up to all our demands."

After the solution was up and running it was extensively tested. "We have of course tested BDnet both with our own employees and at customer sites, and we have received positive reactions from everybody who has used it," Petersen says.

Brødrene Dahl began to offer its customers access to BDnet in early 2005. Prior to this, 200 of the company's own employees attended courses to learn how to use the system.

Future Plans

"With BDnet we have made a strategic choice to develop our trade solution with our customers. Thus, apart from being able to place their orders electronically, they also gain access to valuable information that is useful not only to the individual who places the order; but also to the rest of the company," Petersen explains. "We believe this is the best foundation for our ability to deliver value to our customers—both today and in the future."

In three years' time Petersen says he expects to receive about 20 percent of Brødrene Dahl's orders via BDnet. "There is no doubt that one of the major benefits of BDnet and Lawson e-sales solution is the strengthened relationships we now have with our customers," he stresses. "The system is designed to manage our various customers' needs in a simple way. For example, a smaller company often prefers to place its orders with us via BDnet, while a larger company may chose to place its orders in its own systems, which we then automatically receive in Lawson e-Sales through XML. The bottom line is that our customers save a lot of time on phone calls when they can check their order status online."

By implementing BDnet and Lawson e-sales solution, Brødrene Dahl has now has a fully integrated solution that can manage each and every one of its customers' various needs and generate value all around.

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About the Solution

BDnet is the result of a collaborative effort between Brødrene Dahl and Lawson, and is based upon Lawson ERP system (Lawson M3) and Lawson e-sales solution.

"In the future [Lawson M3] is going to handle all our business processes—including communication, administration, invoicing, financial control, logistics—to ensure a high level of customer satisfaction," Clausen concludes. "The implementation process will be done in phases, and when it is complete there will be some 800 people using [Lawson M3] at Brødrene Dahl."

About Brødrene Dahl

Brødrene Dahl started its business in 1866 and is today the market leader in heating and sanitation products in the Nordic countries.

In 1987, Ratos Group became the owner of Brødrene Dahl as part of Dahl International AB. Dahl AB is the second largest wholesaler within the plumbing, water supply and contracting segment and is also established in Finland and Poland. In the spring of 2004, Dahl International became part of the large French industry group Saint Gobain.

Brødrene Dahl has a strong position today with more than 50,000 item numbers, 998 competent employees, 57 branches in Denmark and subsidiaries in the Nordic countries.