

Retail Inventory Services A Case Study - Waitrose

When it comes to managing their most valuable assets, Waitrose start with knowing what and where their inventory is.

Determining the quantity of items that they have on hand within their stores and their price points is an essential part of running an efficient operation. With WIS International's help, the inventory counting process is completed accurately, on time and efficiently.

Who are Waitrose?

A supermarket, a specialist food shop, an ethical buyer, an environmentally sound business? There are a lot of ways to describe Waitrose & Partners. Yes, they are passionate about food – and about the people that they sell it to – but they are never complacent. With 384 stores they can't afford to be.

Grocery retailing is fiercely competitive; one that challenges constantly to find new ways of maximising every opportunity.

Recent History

WIS and Waitrose have worked closely together since the start of 2015. Following a rigorous testing and tender process, WIS were awarded 50% of the Waitrose stock taking programme.

By the end of 2015 the other vendor involved had been deselected and WIS awarded with 100% of the count portfolio for a three-year period. During this time a close partnership developed and using dedicated count teams, building on experience time after time, service, accuracy and timeliness kept on improving.

In 2018 another rigorous tender process commenced, even more demanding than in 2015 with a greater emphasis than ever on count and counter assurance. WIS were again successful, retaining 100% of the count portfolio for another three years.

In 2019 and beyond count standards have continued to improve, with the addition of extra count teams to support the heightened count frequency. More and more importance is being placed on the counts to drive on-shelf availability and of course sales.

With a greater understanding of the post count data through analytics, both companies can dive in and understand what is really happening at count, manager, counter, category and SKU level, across several KPI's. Always seeking continuous improvement with complete transparency.



Benefits for Waitrose

Accuracy – Waitrose benefit from our attention to detail, audit trail and customised process. Our WISard™ data collection terminal has built-in alerts to assist WIS International auditors in providing accurate results and helps to eliminate common count errors.

Trained Workforce – Trained, direct employees provide the inventory expertise facilitating a smooth and accurate count. The use of R.F. technology provides real time insight into an inventory's progress.

Project Management Expertise – Successful Physical Inventory takes planning to succeed. With sixty years of project management expertise we take care of all the details to ensure flawless execution of the inventory

Technology – Technology is an important component of an accurate stock count. WIS International provide to Waitrose the latest bespoke developed equipment and software to ensure the utmost data integrity.

Count Assurance – Utilising the latest tools and the vast array of data available to interrogate, data dashboards have been developed that enable Waitrose to view in real time not just the progress of the count, but also after the event in depth analysis of key performances buy store, count manager, counter, sku and category. Absolute count assurance is guaranteed, total transparency.

Example generic dashboard.



The Service

WIS International provide full-service inventory counts in all 384 stores multiple times a year.

The frequency of counting is determined by the count results of each store as they are generated, timings between counts lengthened or shortened as required to ensure best on shelf availability and comprehensive management information that means any local issues are understood promptly.

A full-service inventory count really does mean "full service." From the initial consultancy we then take time to understand in detail the specific needs of each client.

Then we develop software to technologically underpin the planned count which undergoes rigorous testing before being deployed.

The teams who will be working on the count undergo thorough training, so they properly understand the business, the objectives, and the context in which the count will be undertaken. They also receive simulation training for the bespoke version of the software that they will be using.

At each count the WIS teams arrive in company minibuses wearing full uniform. The scheduling of each team ensures that they are efficiently deployed and that each count will be undertaken calmly and professionally with speed and accuracy.

WIS provides all the equipment necessary to complete the count. All that we ask for is a table and a plug socket!

The store is involved throughout, first in the team brief and then continuously during the count. With the latest tablet technology, store management can observe and understand how the count is progressing whenever they wish.

The warehouse is counted before store closing and handed back promptly to the store for replenishment. The sales floor count starts at closing, once the warehouse count is finished, and is completed within a pre-defined run time.

Throughout the count, store staff can audit the counters using Wi-Fi and tablet technology, the days of paper audits are long gone - more accurate and environmentally friendly.

Using the latest on hand stock files, variance reporting on the night is carried out - another layer of checking to ensure the most accurate count possible.

Finally, the count is complete. The result is agreed. A client satisfaction survey is completed, and the files transmitted promptly to Waitrose for processing.

The next morning WIS' field management reviews each count for its performance against key performance indicators.

The web portal dashboard is updated automatically and made available to both WIS and Waitrose.

What are people saying

"Very efficient, informative and very positive. Great morale and great team spirit"

"Went very well. xxxx and his team were very professional a pleasure to work with. The audit was one of the smoothest I have done"

"The stock take was very professional, very efficient and well timed and very well managed. Good team to have in."

"Great manager and team very flexible to our requests and excellent communication. Thank you, we would very much welcome xxxx and his team back here again."

"I am proud of the work we do with Waitrose, it has been fantastic journey, I believe we have both learned much about how to deliver a world class count programme. The latest developments we have put in place to deliver count and counter assurance takes us both to another level of understanding."

*Geoff Chaplin, Managing Director, WIS International.
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"As you would expect Waitrose is a very demanding customer, always seeking world class service delivery. Everything we do is focused on delivering the best experience for our customers, making sure that their expectations of stock availability are exceeded at every visit, and when we are in store counting stock the customer does not notice... Our relationship with WIS International is very much a partnership, already four years in and a commitment in place for another three years."

*Keith Rosser
Partner & Manager, Contract and Service Development
John Lewis Partnership
E: keith.rosser@waitrose.co.uk*

WIS International

WIS International has been delivering accurate results to many of the biggest names in retailing and manufacturing for more than sixty years.

With more than 200,000 physical inventory counts taken every year, WIS has become one of the industry's largest and most trusted suppliers of Inventory Counting Services worldwide.

In addition, WIS also provide merchandising services such as new product placement, point-of-sale display services, fixture installations and product recall return services.

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