

How one retailer learnt the **naked truth** about their stock...

THE case study to stop retailers from 'losing their shirts!'



The **Leading** Stock Take Company

Can you compete in modern clothing retail when more than a third of your stock is actually missing?

How WIS and a leading retail client collaborated to turn around a shambolic annual independent stock take...

Last year (2020) WIS was approached by a long-standing client about counting their clothing line.

The client was not happy with the incumbent stock count company, as they were getting appalling service...

People were not turning up to count the stock when promised. The counters that did turn up were not trained on the products and, since counters did not arrive as a team (WIS teams all arrive at the same time, in a company minibus and wearing uniform), sometimes one individual would turn up on time and just hang around until someone else from the incumbent stock count company turned up to tell them what to do. It was a complete shambles!

We quickly set up software to give the reporting structure that underpinned the whole project, right down to the programming of our scanners that would be used on the actual counts. At the same time, Data Dashboards were developed that would show count progress live as well as give access to some really insightful analysis on where any problems were being found and indications of what courses of action the client may want to consider taking to solve them.

We set our count up on tablets. This is so much faster than having huge printouts being tramped from corner to corner of stores to resolve anomalies or for the client to do audit checks and make sure they are happy with results. It saves on paper – lots of it – saves on time and also makes certain that sheets cannot be lost. However, most importantly it allows us to interrogate the data to alert clients to any issues and indicate where and how these issues are arising. And that is information upon which approaches to resolve the issues can be based.

We did a couple of trial counts. Based on our performance, the incumbent was thrown out. However, keen to make sure that they got the best company for the job our client initially split the business equally between us and a competitor, so they could compare performance.

The second stock take company, our competitor, had furloughed their staff as this was during the pandemic. Unfortunately, that meant that they were very slow to react. WIS on the other hand were fleet of foot and got

straight on with the work. In the end it transpired that WIS finished its half of the stock count before the other company had even started!

On approaching the count, we believed that the previous company had set themselves up to fail by scheduling the count to start at 5am each morning. No wonder they were bedevilled by no shows and loss of staff, as that is neither a night shift nor a day shift. And, of course, the client has to get people to man the store whilst the bleary-eyed counters start their work. At that time of the morning? It was never going to happen! Plus, the client needed mornings free to actually operate the business. So, it was agreed that it would be better to move the count to afternoons and evenings, which we did. The result was that throughout the work we had no problems with no shows.

A second problem we saw was that the incumbent had not asked for the client to audit their counts (probably in part because of the 5am starts!). Basically they just turned up, counted and skulked off. With no representative there to audit our counts the client could not really get a grasp of how accurate the counts being done were. Not having work sample checked by the client means there is no transparency. More importantly any queries with stock identity and so forth could not be resolved without an appropriate member of the client's team being available. We were left wondering how in the past any issues were resolved. Although the final count result tended to indicate that the incumbent had not been too concerned with the resolution of anomalies, or indeed accuracy generally!

WIS is always looking to add value. It is an important part of our culture and perhaps the reason why typically we are initially given part of a count and subsequently the client entrusts us more and more of their business, until we have 100%. By adding value, we become more useful to the client than other companies. A key part of this added value is to be found beyond the Data Dashboards, software and technology. It is found in our people, who take their work seriously and our passionate about doing it to the highest standard possible. This translates into a more professional, committed approach, than you might find with teams counting stock elsewhere.

For example, unlike some companies who send anyone into a job that can count and is available, WIS carefully trains its staff on the specific job in question. In this case the count started with one count team and a second manager. The second manager was trained in the specific processes that had been agreed, count order, what to pay special attention too and so forth. Once that manager had a firm grasp of all the key aspects of the count, he was 'certified.' This means WIS formerly writes to that manager with a certificate that states he or she is certified to manage a team on that count. The formality is part of the seriousness with

which we take our work. It is unique to WIS.

Only certified managers run teams on each count. Then the two teams run by two certified managers each trained another manager to certification who will then run another team. And so we built from 1 to 2 and the 4 and 8 teams and so on. The feedback we received in post count surveys from our client included many compliments about the professionalism of WIS, product knowledge and accuracy. This is a direct result of the seriousness with which we approach our work.

Here are some of the comments from the managers of stores that we counted...



Worked quickly and were very polite. Found this process much quicker and efficient than previous stocktakes.

Completed earlier than expected. Dealt with boxes efficiently.

Pace and accuracy. Knowing stock was low, I was still happy with timing with minimal disruption.

Everything good including the demonstration from Alex and Kim, timing of count and impressed with how tidy the store was left.

Manager and his team came across as very professional and worked well within their time frame. I will be giving feedback to my Area Manager regarding the professional and positive attitude from the manager as well as his team.

Team was very professional. Everything ran smoothly.



At the conclusion of the count, it was found that the incumbent had perhaps been asleep on the job - as the client had suspected. Because when we got to the final results, we found that only 65% of what was supposed to be on the shelves was there. Fully 35% of the stock was missing. And for a progressive retailer, especially one that operates in the online space, that level of stock inaccuracy is a recipe for disaster and completely unacceptable.

Following completion of the count the client reviewed the relative performance of the two stock take

companies, WIS and our competitor. For this year WIS has subsequently been awarded 100% of the business. And that is good news because it means that our approach to optimising the client's stock control will be undiluted.

As an organisation we pride ourselves on continually looking for ways to add value to our service for our client. Now we are fully in charge of the audit we are in the best possible place to help increase accuracy, help grow sales and so increase the client's profitability, as we have done for an increasing number of retailers in recent times.

If you would like to discuss how WIS can bring advantages to your operation, then email Geoff Chaplin: GChaplin@wisintl.com or Diane Wilson: DWilson@wisintl.com or call +44 (0)1904 795 550

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 International has become one of the industry's largest and most trusted suppliers of Inventory Counting Services worldwide.

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

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