

Custom Marketing Gains Power and Reliability With IBM Product Mix From Mainline

Custom Marketing Services (CMS) is recognized as one of the premier third-party logistics companies in the Southeast. The company provides a variety of services including: warehousing; transportation; pick, pack and ship fulfillment; display design and manufacturing; product development and sourcing; and complete integrated logistical support.

One of its core operations is an automated warehouse picking system. This service attracts many of Custom's customers and is critical to its success. And, with its more than 1.3 million square feet of facility space, optimizing its IT environments is a significant component to the company's future growth.

The Challenge

As an established third-party logistics company, CMS historically had used a Microsoft-based warehouse management system (WMS), which was owned by a CMS customer. However, when CMS added a new, large client, they were required to add another automated warehouse and implement their own warehouse management system. A new warehouse management system would be a major undertaking, and not a decision to make lightly.

It wasn't just the software that needed to change. To truly establish the most effective warehousing system, CMS needed to look at the hardware that would be running the new software.

"With a growing client base and demands for faster, smarter service, we needed to make a significant change in our IT infrastructure," said Shane Roberts, senior systems analyst for Custom Marketing.

"Mainline won our business based on cost, quality of service, expertise and dedication to the customer,".

- Shane Roberts,
Senior Systems Analyst for
Custom Marketing

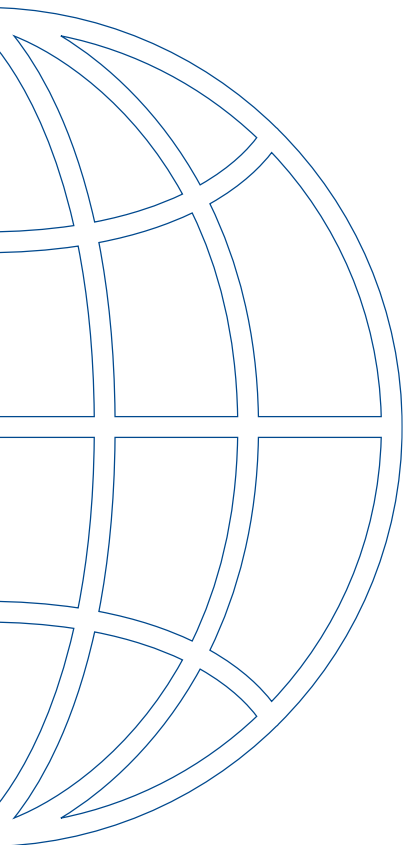
The Solution

Roberts asked Mainline to come in and assess their current IT environment. It did not take long for Mainline to find several ways to improve operations and reduce costs for Custom Marketing.

Custom Marketing needed a new operating platform with the appropriate database and storage systems.

Mainline determined that by virtualizing Custom Marketing's IT environment, using IBM System p servers, an immediate impact could be realized. Specifically, Mainline recommended using Advanced Power Virtualization with LPARs on System p servers to consolidate their new WMS system for their new client. Short for logical partitioning, an LPAR takes a computer's total resources – processors, memory and storage – and splits them into smaller units so that each can be run with its own instance of the operating system and applications. Logical partitioning is typically used to separate different functions of a system, such as Web serving, database functions, client/server actions or systems that serve multiple time zones and/or languages.

The virtualized, or partitioned, System p environment allowed Custom Marketing to increase performance, increase reliability and reduce costs across multiple applications. Also, additional environments can be added to the partitioned System p environment quickly and easily without having to purchase new hardware.



Mainline: solutions you need from people you trust

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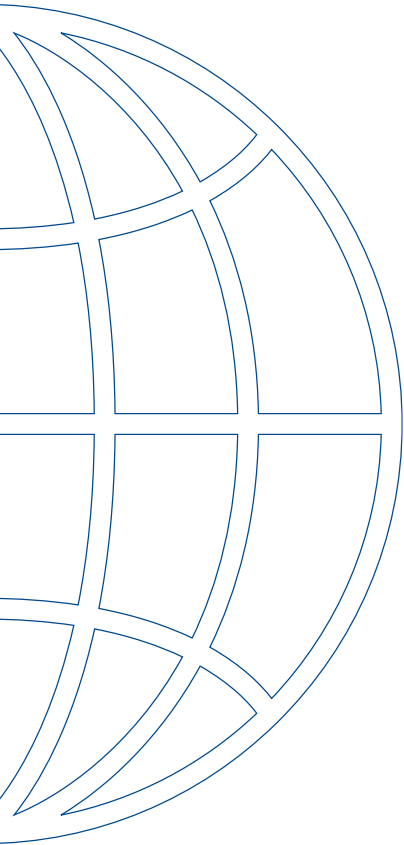


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The solution from Mainline also included an IBM tape library, Tivoli Storage Manager and an Oracle database. This complete solution was built to interface with upgraded order management/picking software that Custom Marketing obtained from a third-party vendor.

The Results

As part of a three-person I.T. department, Roberts' main area of responsibility is making sure this system is 100 percent operational, 24 x 7. "If the system does not function properly, it impacts customer service, and shipments do not get out the door in a timely manner," said Roberts.

"Almost immediately after implementation, we noticed improvements in our operation," said Roberts. "Our processing time has improved, and we have a system that is much more reliable."

In addition to operational improvements, Custom Marketing has experienced cost savings, increased ease of use and improved customer service.

"Our new system is more efficient and allows us to deploy staff in other areas – like order picking and packing," added Roberts. "In addition, our system up-time is near perfect. The only time it is down is when I personally bring it down."

Why Mainline

"Mainline won our business based on cost, quality of service, expertise and dedication to the customer," Roberts said.

"I knew of Mainline and their reputation for customer support and service," Roberts said. "Even though Custom Marketing is not a huge company and the solution was relatively small, Mainline made me feel like their most important customer, and the continued support has been fantastic."

"Mainline has built its business on understanding our customers' pain points and delivering the best solution," said Bart Hall, account manager for Mainline.

"We focus on service and support throughout the entire process – from initial consultation through post-sales support."

For more information about this solution, call your Mainline account representative or call Mainline directly at 866.490.MAIN (6246).



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