



Shimano streamlines warranty claims process with Ricoh

CASE STUDY: SHIMANO

The Challenge

Companies active in the supply of goods to end users face the challenge of managing warranty processes, and Shimano is no different. With a large range of products in the market, ensuring claims are processed quickly and efficiently is very important.

About 12 months ago, as a result of growing sales, the company's Australian subsidiary realised it needed to rethink the way in which warranty claims were handled. The number of claims was increasing and staff were struggling to keep up with the resulting workload.

"At that time the warranty process handled by our dealers was very manual in nature," says Tim Clarke, IT Manager at Shimano Oceania Holdings. "Dealer staff had to print out forms and fill them in by hand and then capture the data in Excel spreadsheets."

Clarke says there was also a lack of visibility on the progress of warranty claims for our dealers and distributors which led to higher service call volumes.

This lack of visibility also made it difficult for Shimano's internal warranty team to ensure it had the resources and stock available to process claims within a reasonable time period.

"Also, we had an internal reporting requirement that meant we had to capture certain data about the product and the claim and pass it back to Shimano in Japan," he says. "This reporting could take up to two hours per day and resulted in duplicated effort on the part of our technicians."

The Solution

After considering a number of alternatives to streamline warranty claim processing, a

ABOUT SHIMANO

Shimano is a global manufacturing and distribution organisation. Established in Japan in 1921, the company has grown to become a leading supplier of cycling components, fishing tackle, and rowing equipment.

With more than 12,000 employees and annual revenues above \$US2.5 billion, Shimano provides products to customers across Europe, the United States and the Asia-Pacific region. In Australia, the company's Oceania Holdings subsidiary has 100 staff and is headquartered in Sydney.

SHIMANO

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decision was made in mid-2016 to deploy a solution comprising Laserfiche Avante with Forms and Forms Portal from Ricoh.

"After seeing the Ricoh solution in action, it quickly became apparent that it would help us in resolving issues, not only with our warranty process, but also with many other processes across the business," says Clarke.

"The flexibility of the workflow solution, together with the knowledge and confidence of the local reseller, was unmatched by any other product or vendor in the market."

Deployment was undertaken by Shimano's internal IT team in conjunction with Ricoh and was completed within 12 weeks.

The Results

As a result of the new workflow platform, Shimano's entire warranty claims process has been revolutionised. Dealers are able to lodge claims using a self-service web portal that removes the need for cumbersome paper trails.

The web portal is accessible via the company's ecommerce site which passes along details such as the dealer account code which is matched against the Shimano ERP system. This, in turn, populates details such as delivery address information and all they need to enter is their name, phone number, and email address.

When an end user has a problem with a Shimano part, they return this to either their dealer or distributor where it was purchased from and the warranty process is initiated by that dealer or distributor completing and submitting an electronic form through their portal.

Customers are simply asked to provide proof of purchase together with a description and images of the affected parts via the portal and these details are captured in the repository.

The form is then printed and posted in



the box with the faulty part to Shimano head office's where it is processed by the warranty team.

The dealer is notified as to the status of their customer's warranty return so they can personally advise the customer.

"The Ricoh solution has given us the ability to allow our dealers to track warranty claims throughout the entire process via the customer portal," says Clarke. "The portal also gives them the ability to track return packages via our transport partners."

Clarke says the platform also allows the dealer network to submit a web form to raise a new warranty request from their Partner Portal.

This negates the need for data re- entry and reduces the chance of errors being made.

"We now have in place an automated process that supports a purpose-built workflow to guide the warranty process from start to finish. We can also provide dealers with updates on the status and progress of each claim."

Clarke says all warranty service requests are stored electronically which significantly improves the retrieval and accessibility of documents.

"It has ended our dependency on paper as well as saving costs by increasing efficiency and driving compliance because the audit trail history is captured automatically," he says.

For the company, benefits flowing from the deployment include a significant reduction in call volumes and a greatly improved visibility across the entire warranty process.

More accurate and timely reporting has also been made possible with Shimano anticipating a saving of up to 30 hours per month in time to generate reports.

Future Plans

Buoyed by the success of the program, there are now plans to roll out the solution across other parts of the company. Clarke says initial areas are likely to be the warranty process used for cycles in New Zealand as well as Australia and New Zealand fishing areas.

"We are also looking at warehousing processes that we can automate including customer pickups and deliveries," he says.

"Also, in the IT department, we can use it to automate user creation and are investigating the possibility of using a similar solution as our primary asset register."

Looking further ahead, Clarke says there will continue to be more ways identified in which Shimano become even more efficient.

"I'd be surprised if it couldn't improve at least 80 per cent of our current processes," he says.

"When you think outside the square, the solution Ricoh has designed is amazingly flexible and powerful."

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