



## Lawson Provides Maximum Comfort to MAXI-COSI® Supplier

Dorel Netherlands (Dorel), designers and distributors of child car safety seats and strollers, boasts over 5,000 customers in 58 countries. With revenues growing at 30 percent per year, the company realized in 2001 that its IT systems were not equipped to support the existing logistical procedures, and were going to prevent a secure business future as the company grew organically and by acquisition.

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Henk Gommans, IT Manager, Dorel Netherlands



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**Jeff Brands CCFO, Dorel Netherlands**

Maxi-Miliaan, the Dutch company famous for its MAXI-COSI® car seats, was acquired by Dorel in 1994. Dorel designs its own child car seats and specifies manufacturing requirements to external subcontractors in the Far East, the Netherlands and Eastern Europe. All textiles and components are delivered to Helmond in the Netherlands for final assembly. Orders from the major wholesale and retail chains are consolidated at the Helmond center and it is from here that all orders are dispatched.

Other products, such as strollers, are designed in Helmond, with manufacturing and final assembly done in the Far East. The finished products are delivered to one central location in the Netherlands for onward shipping, but in some cases a consignment may be delivered directly to another geographical location.

With such an extended and complex supply chain, Dorel needed to drive down costs but still retain superior flexibility in meeting market demands. It turned to Lawson for the company's ERP software solution to meet this challenge.

## Business Benefits

Due to the use of disparate systems and varying synchronization periods, Dorel's old IT system could not provide management information in real time or offer anything remotely resembling supply chain transparency. Over the years, local software solutions had been “bolted” together to support sales ordering, warehousing and financial management, and it was becoming impossible to gain an accurate picture of physical stock or to offer a capable-to-promise service to customers.

Within the IT department, the daunting effort required to maintain systems and data integrity was prohibiting efficient business operations, and the software applications and IT infrastructure were restricting business growth. Plans were underway to acquire Quint BV, the Dutch company that owns the Quinny stroller brand. Henk Gommans, the IT manager at Dorel Netherlands, is quite candid, “I and my department could not support our business goals in the coming years with the systems we had.”

Dorel employs only 250 people across its entire organization, yet it operates in a multinational supply chain, delivering its range of consumer goods to every shopping district in Europe. “We operate internationally and have the needs of a large organization, but actually we are a mid-size company and have the resource constraints that go with it,” Gommans says.

Recognizing their restrictions, it was vital for Dorel to utilize information technology to maintain a lean operation and still deliver consistently to an unforgiving market. Using the Lawson M3 has meant that, as Gommans says, “If there is a change in the supply chain or in the market, we can fulfill the requirement immediately.” He gives some impressive figures to back this up. “We originally budgeted to deliver 700,000 car seats to the market in 2005, but the market demanded almost 1 million—an increase of more than 40 percent over forecast—but we have been able to manage the increased production with the same number of staff.”



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Delivery-to-promise is as important to Dorel as producing high-quality products. By acting as a catalyst to improve its overall customer-facing operations, the Lawson M3 has enabled Dorel to meet a 95 percent “perfect delivery” target. This is a far cry from the past. As Gommans states, “Previously, Dorel could not promise deliveries to its customers. Now it can.”

Gommans is also proud that “post implementation, [Dorel] is now a truly reliable supplier to its customers. We will continue to use [the Lawson M3] so we can benefit from its performance even further.” This is a sentiment supported by Jeff Brands, the CFO at Dorel Netherlands. “Although we have a market-leading brand, our customers must remain at the center of our business. [The Lawson M3] has made it easier for us to serve our customers with more professionalism and focus.”

## Why Lawson?

Dorel began a strict selection process to choose the right ERP solution provider. Gommans explains, “Together with our selection agency, we initially drew up a list of 20 potential suppliers. We had to make sure that the chosen system was flexible, could adapt to market demands, and could support us as our business expands.”

With a project team formed, “All vendors were scored against the criteria of functionality fit, vendor reliability, ability to deliver on a global scale and, of course, budget,” Gommans explains. A further requirement of a 95 percent standard functionality fit made Lawson one of two final candidates, and the Lawson M3 ultimately won due to its superior performance.

## The Implementation

The implementation project began in the Netherlands and Germany in January 2003. The UK operation joined in six months later. Dorel chose the Java version of the Lawson M3 from the start. Gommans says, “Java is the future standard of Lawson. We want to be ready for any new graphical interfaces, and ensure that any updates or modifications we may need in the future can be easily implemented with minimum disruption.”

Ensuring that your company can grow and be prosperous into the future is a big issue, and implementing an ERP system is not as simple as flicking a light switch. The implementation was challenging and although deadlines were extended, the commitment of both companies never faltered. The introduction of a new wave picking method at the Dorel distribution center brought new issues for the Lawson consultants. As Gommans comments, “When you introduce an ERP system, you find out so much about your own company. You are forced to face your own problems. We did this and we now have much more transparent processes.”

All issues were managed within the implementation project; that and high management support were key in making the project a success. Brands states, “Everyone at Dorel was involved in the selection of [the Lawson M3]—management, the IT department and many users. We have never had a reason to regret our choice.”

The company has seen dramatic growth. From servicing just the local market to becoming a global supplier, Dorel has to retain customer loyalty and offer value at every turn. The implementation of the Lawson M3 has played a

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significant part in achieving this success. "Our customers tell us that now they have their reliable Maxi-Miliaan back. We were a mid-size company, but we are now a global mid-market supplier, offering customer-focused reliability," Gommans says.

**Future Plans**

The future is already planned. During 2006, Dorel will implement the full Lawson ebusiness suite. Gommans says, "We will extend the use of [the Lawson M3] to support our business processes as our company expands across countries and product ranges."

Looking ahead Brands comments, "We had a very good 2005 and Lawson has been a very important part of that. I am confident that the expanded use of [the Lawson M3] will make Dorel even more efficient and give us a greater return on our investment."

Dorel has a vision for its future. "We will make our company transparent to the outside world by publishing information as if it were displayed in the shop window in one location for the whole world. If we decide to start a new operation in another country tomorrow, we would be able to utilize [our Lawson M3] to support it. Our system is reliable, flexible and secure," Gommans concludes.

**About the Solution**

Dorel's Java solution for 150 users runs on IBM's iSeries platform. The solution supports Dorel's financial, sales, logistics, procurement and warehousing requirements. The Lawson e-sales suite will be implemented during 2006.

**About Dorel Netherlands**

Dorel Netherlands, a subsidiary of Dorel Inc. in Canada, is a rapidly growing global enterprise and a world leader in the juvenile products industry. Headquartered in Helmond, the Netherlands, Dorel Netherlands has sales offices in Germany and Great Britain and operates in more than 50 countries worldwide. The company's products include car seats, baby carriages, strollers, furniture, baby care products and home safety products. It features such reputable brands as MAXI-COSI®, Quinny, Béb  Confort, Safety 1st, Baby Relax, Monb b  and Babi d al.