

Astley Clarke

Uses Aptean Retail ERP to Move From UK Player to Leading International Omnichannel Retailer



Industry

Jewelry Retailer

Challenges

- » Legacy system couldn't scale for omnichannel needs
- » Enhancing customer service
- » Integrating new wholesale business

Benefits

- » £6 million turnover & 25% business growth
- » Improved customer service levels
- » Single view of operations
- » Stronger supply chain partnerships and ecommerce integrations

When Scott Thomson was appointed CEO of jewelry retailer Astley Clarke, his first major decision was to put plans in place to move the business from a UK-only marketplace to an international omnichannel brand. From his previous experience as CEO of the global footwear company FitFlop, which grew from a project in his garage to a global company turning over £180 million within five years, he knew the first step was to implement the right core system.

The ERP system of choice for Thomson and for Astley Clarke was Aptean Retail ERP *Elucid Edition* – introduced to the business within months of the new CEO's arrival.

“I was looking for an agile, out-of-the box package. We reviewed quite a number of solutions, but I really liked the Aptean product.”

Scott Thomson CEO, Astley Clarke

And in the years since, it has been the backbone of the retailer's ecommerce, international and wholesale growth.

“I knew about scalability and getting the right system in at the beginning – that's an important factor,” explains Thomson. “I knew what I didn't want and what I needed.”



“What appealed was the flexible management of product catalog information for the omnichannel environment – be it for wholesale picking, individual orders, web fulfillment or managing concessions stock.”

Scott Thomson, CEO Astley Clarke



Mapping out a plan for global growth

Established as a fine jewelry online marketplace in 2007, Astley Clarke’s business model was to become the Net-a-Porter of jewelry. But at the time of Thomson’s appointment, larger fashion players such as Net-a-Porter, Matches and Farfetch were beginning to focus on the jewelry category, and the new CEO decided a new plan was needed.

The aim was to continue developing Astley Clarke’s strong presence online and expand into the wholesale market through partnerships with the likes of Harrods, Neiman Marcus, Saks and Selfridges.

With these added complexities and new commerce channels to contend with, Apteian was ready to provide the technology required to support these new ambitions.

“We identified the need for a better ERP system that was generally omnichannel – we had a larger modular-based system before that was clunky and not fit for purpose,” Thomson notes.

“I was looking for an agile, out-of-the box package. We reviewed quite a number of solutions, but I really liked the Apteian product.”

What appealed was the overall combination of managing all of the retailer’s product catalog information flexibly in the omnichannel environment – be it for wholesale picking, individual orders, web fulfillment, or managing concessions stock.

“It is flexible – and the important thing was we didn’t have to bespoke it. We didn’t have to do very much to map our processes. It was quick to implement and is robust,” says Thomson.



Aptean the enabler

Thomson describes the Aptean retail system as “the bedrock” of the business, used for managing the product directory, costings, margins, the warehouse, and customer service. Having it in place has enabled Astley Clarke to roll out more customer-facing services.

“Aptean Retail ERP *Elucid Edition* is a very flexible, but a robust and dependable system,” Thomson explains.

“It’s a facilitating ERP system and the sexy stuff is done much closer to the front end. We’ve put in better review systems, user-generated content, automated emails, as well as refer-a-friend and drop-a-hint solutions. The Aptean Retail ERP solution dependably sits behind it making sure everything works.”



“Due to its scalability and dependability, the **value of Aptean Retail ERP is almost priceless** because I can spend money on marketing knowing we can cope with the demand when it arrives.”

Scott Thomson, CEO Astley Clarke

In a changing retail landscape, where omnichannel shopping experiences continue to grow and event-driven peaks in trading contribute to systemic failures in retail operations, brands require technology that provides peace of mind.

All jewelry companies are heavily weighted towards the final quarter of the year. This period is now increasingly centered on Black Friday, and retailers must have systems in place that can cope with spikes in online traffic and fulfillment demand.

“We might do more in the Black Friday week than we do in the whole of February,” Thomson comments.

Ease of integration

Many retailers of a similar size to Astley Clarke, which sees half its £6 million turnover come from online sales and the rest split equally between wholesale and concessions, require a system with strong ecommerce integration capabilities.

The Aptean system is fully integrated with Astley Clarke's ecommerce platforms as well as delivery providers, including DHL and FedEx.

Thomson describes the Aptean Retail ERP integration with the ecommerce platforms as hugely valuable in providing online channels with accurate stock information and the ability to pre-order.

"If a customer goes to our website and a product is sold out – a specific date will be given for availability," he explains. "That figure is based on looking at our open purchase orders and then looking at when items are due to ship – giving the customer a clear idea of delivery timescales."

"The alternative is to take a product off the website if you don't have it in stock, but it's better to give customers a chance to pre-order with the required transparency. This level of understanding about stock level and fulfillment promise is also a notable feature when dealing with wholesalers and department stores," says Thomson.

Cross-border compliance

For a business such as Astley Clarke that has placed international expansion at the heart of its strategy – like many similarly-sized companies – compliance is a crucial challenge. The Aptean solution offers a catalog system containing international tariff codes, duty information and multiple currencies, enabling the jewelry brand to trade with 150 countries.

The results

Astley Clarke implemented Aptean Retail ERP *Elucid Edition* to help grow its jewelry business. During that time, the brand has seen turnover leap to around £6 million – and the company grow by an additional 25%.

Internationally, the brand is currently growing by 35% year on year, thanks to the key partnerships and relationships with over 100 global stockists – and its sophisticated systems. Astley Clarke ships to 150 countries with a target to move towards the £30 million turnover landmark.

Future goals

As well as its fast-growing ecommerce operation, Astley Clarke has a visible presence in department stores around the world and a boutique located under its head office in London. The CEO plans to ramp up the company's omnichannel strategy in the next couple of years, with a high street shop on the roadmap for Astley Clarke.

"Without a store, you're telling three-quarters of the story. You've got to have something on a high street to position yourself, and Aptean is well placed to help us do that because a lot of their customers have stores," notes the CEO.

Modern retail brands face massive competition from value players, agile pure-plays and new entrants to the market. Thomson says that a reliable core system is a critical requirement for any company looking to succeed.

Thomson continues, “If you’re not achieving 8 to 9/10 on everything – assortment, free shipping, great customer service, great website photography, good value for money, beautiful packaging, and interesting content on social media – customers are not happy.”

Aptean Retail ERP *Elucid Edition* has provided flexible fulfillment options and numerous carrier integrations, enabling Astley Clarke to provide a premium delivery service, but most importantly, the retail solution is the central system underpinning the Astley Clarke business.

Thomson and the Astley Clarke team have also been able to successfully open a store, assisting them in achieving their ambitious growth plans, and continuing to serve customers in the way they wish to be served, thanks to the core technology the business has put in place.



Are You Ready to Learn More?

Aptean Retail ERP can help improve your omnichannel operations and enhance customer satisfaction. Find out how, now.

Contact us at info@aptean.com or visit www.aptean.com.



About Aptean

Aptean is one of the world’s leading providers of industry-specific software. Our enterprise resource planning and supply chain solutions are uniquely designed to meet the needs of specialized manufacturers and distributors, while our compliance solutions serve specific markets such as finance and life sciences. With both cloud and on-premise deployment options, Aptean’s products, services and unmatched expertise help businesses of all sizes, across many industries, to scale and succeed.

For more information, visit www.aptean.com.