



Plow & Hearth Retail and Consumer Goods

Package Design and Test Lab

Plow & Hearth Makes Satisfaction and Savings a Package Deal

Plow & Hearth is a leading national catalog, retail and Internet company based in Madison, Virginia, with annual sales exceeding \$100 million. The thriving company turned to Customer Solutions when it faced a challenge in its mail order business with product packaging.

Client Challenge

Since 1981, when Plow & Hearth launched its first catalog of home furnishings and decorative items, the company has grown rapidly. Today Plow & Hearth is a wholly owned subsidiary of 1-800-FLOWERS.com and mails more than 65 million catalogs annually, featuring high-quality items produced by vendors from the United States and abroad.

The company encountered packaging challenges after expanding into new product areas, including everything from delicate lamps to heavy bed frames. Vendors were sending products directly to Plow & Hearth customers without repacking items for individual shipment. Some items were occasionally arriving scuffed, broken or with parts missing. When customers called to report damages, Plow & Hearth would reshipe the items, paying the additional transportation costs, to ensure customer satisfaction.

To meet its core objectives of keeping prices fair while achieving high customer satisfaction, Plow & Hearth needed to find a cost-effective way to reduce the damage rate. "We have a long, excellent relationship with the people at UPS," said Caroline Busick, Director of Mail Order and Retail Distribution for Plow & Hearth. "They introduced us to the packaging experts at UPS."

GEOGRAPHIC AREA SERVED
United States

CHALLENGE

Find a cost-effective means to reduce the damage rate during shipment for the products of a leading national catalog company.

SOLUTION

Analyze the products and their packaging at a state-of-the-art package engineering lab to pinpoint the causes of damage and use the data to develop economical and protective new packaging specifications that vendors can easily adopt.

RESULTS

- Virtually eliminated damages-during shipment
- Significantly enhanced customer satisfaction
- Reduced transportation costs
- Boosted sales potential

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— *Caroline Busick*
Plow & Hearth
Director of Mail Order and Retail Distribution



Our Solution

Plow & Hearth sent packaged products that were experiencing high damage rates to the package design and test lab for analysis. Using high tech equipment that creates varying levels of temperature, air pressure, shock, compression and vibration, the lab can simulate moving a package throughout a supply chain.

After pinpointing the weaknesses of the product containers, Customer Solutions developed detailed new packaging recommendations. Plow & Hearth forwarded the information to its vendors, who readily complied, since the UPS guidelines — including exact specifications and photographs — were easy to follow and economical.

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With the support of Customer Solutions, Plow & Hearth was able to bring back popular, high-margin products that had been dropped from its catalog due to damage issues, and confidently expand into other product lines to further grow its business.

"Customer Solutions enables us to be proactive with the packaging rather than reactive," Busick said. "Now, before new items go into our catalog we get samples and send them to the UPS lab to make sure the packaging passes the test. Our vendors are also pleased with the results and some of them have started working directly with the UPS lab, saving us more time and money."

The Results

Customer Solutions developed a balanced solution for Plow & Hearth that enhanced customer satisfaction, reduced transportation costs and expanded the company's sales potential.

Plow & Hearth recently selected Customer Solutions for its coveted Partners in Quality Award, in recognition of the value that the packaging solution continues to bring to the company.

For more information please visit us at ups.com/customersolutions.

