

Odyssey Fulfillment Managed Services Give Distributor IMCD an On-ramp to State-Of-The-Art Sample Handling, Greater Transparency and Green Advances

THE CLIENT: IMCD

To think of Netherlands-based specialty chemical distributor IMCD as the middleman between principal chemical suppliers and manufacturers of chemical products, is a dramatic understatement. IMCD – a global leader in the marketing, distribution and formulation of specialty chemicals and ingredients – grows markets for its suppliers and functions as an extended sales organization for specialty chemical manufacturers. With a focus on the industrial and life science sectors, IMCD is the bridge to chemical samples that are sent all over the world – which spur innovation in advanced materials, coating & construction, home care and I&I, lubricants & energy, synthesis, beauty & personal care, food & nutrition, and pharmaceutical products.

THE CHALLENGE:

As complex as product development can be, getting chemical samples into the hands of product developers is tricky business. The samples must arrive in good condition and include all necessary paperwork and technical documentation. They also need to arrive quickly, or the sales opportunity could be lost. For years, IMCD catered to the dedicated sample space through their third-party logistics service providers across a multitude of European countries. But these larger warehouses, predominantly used for handling of its regular business, did not consider small sample handling a core part of their business. As result, IMCD was not able to obtain the required service for adequate sample handling. Also, the arrangement did not meet the IMCD digital requirements going forward.

Due to significant growth of its business over the last couple of years, including the absorption of sample setups of acquired companies, IMCD started to lose visibility on sample management and transparency on the consolidated handling process.

"In addition to getting all the paperwork, packaging and labelling correct across a multitude of warehouses, we needed to ship samples out at the highest possible speed to fulfill the need of the R&D department of our prospect and turn the sample into sales. Often, a person working in R&D developing and testing a new product will pick the most attractive, accessible package and if the sample works, they often won't use the other samples on the shelf – so the opportunity is lost."

Stan Bijsterveld, Director Global Supply Chain, HSEQ and Sustainability at IMCD.

ODYSSEY LOGISTICS & TECHNOLOGY: KEY TO SUCCESS

Bijsterveld expressed his concerns to an industry colleague who recommended Odyssey for outsourced chemical sampling fulfillment and logistics services. Soon after, an Odyssey chemical sampling expert in the Netherlands met with Bijsterveld to discuss capabilities and services. Odyssey's chemical sample fulfillment business unit serves more than 65 major manufacturers that trust it to store, pick, sample, pack and ship their sample and small revenue orders. To date, Odyssey has processed more than 13 million sample shipments through its state-of-the-art warehouse and distribution sites strategically located in Europe, the U.S. and Asia.

Bijsterveld's tour of Odyssey's regional warehouse and distribution operation provided everything he wanted. Odyssey's chemical sampling clients have access to call services, internet ordering, email confirmations and website shipment tracking and reporting. Odyssey also uses data matrix barcode control designed for efficient sample order processing, labeling, material handling, inventory management and client reporting.

EYEING END-TO-END VISIBILITY & TRANSPARENCY:

In addition to needing a solid partner for chemical sample fulfillment, IMCD wanted a solution to link its customer relationship management (CRM) system data to Odyssey's tracking system for chemical sampling. IMCD envisioned a powerful automated tool to serve as its opportunity pipeline to nurture and grow more sales for its principal suppliers. Using sophisticated business intelligence (BI) tools, Odyssey created a solution to link its sample order data to IMCD's Salesforce CRM to provide end-to-end visibility and transparency.

"This was a huge step forward from local warehouses throughout Europe sending out samples. From the moment of sample request, we lacked transparency on how and when the sample was sent and when to follow up. Now we have very powerful, visual, connected data thanks to Odyssey."

- Stan Bijsterveld, Director Global Supply Chain, HSEQR and Sustainability at IMCD.

A CHEMICAL SAMPLE FULFILLMENT PARTNERSHIP BEGINS:

In September of 2020, IMCD and Odyssey officially began its partnership for chemical sample fulfillment and logistics services. The two companies first focused on developing the right process. When IMCD directed the flow of samples to Odyssey, its experts noticed that multiple sample sizes were used.

"Odyssey helped us substantially improve and professionalize our sample fulfillment. We took the time to really think it through. Now, anytime we want to onboard another principal supplier, we know exactly what we need to do."

- Stan Bijsterveld, Director Global Supply Chain, HSEQR and Sustainability at IMCD.

Odyssey recommended rationalizing the packaging SKUs to eliminate bottlenecks. Odyssey also made sure that all required documentation was attached to the sample shipment according to legal legislation and customer needs. With standardized processes and structure, every sample that leaves Odyssey's distribution center is fully traceable, in the right condition with the right documents—Odyssey runs a very tight ship.

"Now, we know exactly when a sample has shipped and we reach out to the prospects and existing customers after a couple of days to engage. Working with Odyssey has enabled us to act a lot faster on the samples we send out."

- Stan Bijsterveld, Director Global Supply Chain, HSEQR and Sustainability at IMCD.

IMPROVING SUSTAINABILITY:

Since consolidating its chemical sample fulfillment program through Odyssey, IMCD requires less stored materials and reports that its samples are fresher, and it has reduced waste and destruction cost for expired materials. Also, waste is further reduced because some of IMCD's principal suppliers are also existing customers of Odyssey. It can tap into the product inventory of these customers and replenish from that inventory to use as samples for IMCD. Furthermore, moving away from dozens of rented warehouse space throughout Europe to one centralized location has reduced IMCD's carbon footprint.

SIMPLIFYING THE COMPLEX:

IMCD reports that its principal suppliers love the shift to Odyssey for chemical sample fulfillment. The move has made everything less complex. Often, a principal supplier wants to offload sampling to their distributor and IMCD now has a partner that provides a professional approach and hassle-free, reliable service.

As a result of the success in Europe, the company is exploring opportunities to partner with Odyssey in the U.S. as well as China to replicate the successful solution.

"As we continue to grow, automated processes are needed to provide transparency. The dashboarding we can provide through Odyssey allows us to share data with customers and suppliers in just a click."

- Stan Bijsterveld, Director Global Supply Chain, HSEQR and Sustainability at IMCD.

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