



# ALCA DISTRIBUTION



## ABOUT OUR CUSTOMER

### ALCA Distribution

Founded and led by Loretta and Doug Fulton, ALCA Distribution is Canada's fastest growing distributor of baby and children's products. They sell and distribute a wide array of products to national as well as independent retailers across Canada and have developed a significant presence in the gear, footwear, maternity, sport and toy markets. What sets them apart from the competition is their trendy & fashionable brand portfolio, their exclusive distributorship agreements, their presence in all channels (B2B & B2C) and, perhaps most importantly, their best in class customer service and after sales support.

## KEY FOCUS FOR THIS PROJECT

EDI and Integration

## THE ISSUES TO RESOLVE

When ALCA was approached by HBC, a major Canadian retailer - their first on a national level - they were, of course, delighted.

Standard operating procedure for large retailers is to mandate EDI and, at that time, EDI was not part of ALCA's business process. That said, both Loretta and Doug have professional backgrounds in the technology industry so they quickly saw the benefit to the automation EDI would bring to their business. While they understood IT, they did not know EDI so needed guidance and a trusted EDI service provider.

Looking for a provider they asked a few of their vendors for suggestions and chose a provider - with regrettable results. The cracks in that relationship appeared almost from the beginning. The service provider wasn't able to integrate with QuickBooks, so much of the work remained manual. Changes from trading partners resulted in purchase order and connection errors - which cost ALCA in time and money. Support was virtually non-existent: When ALCA needed assistance with an issue, they often got no response nor were they provided with a dedicated point person.

After severing that first EDI service provider relationship ALCA once again tried a new provider. That relationship also failed to meet either their expectations or their needs. While they had anticipated that EDI would be advantageous to their business process, ALCA found that the wrong service providers were actually resulting in a drain.

Armed with the hard-won knowledge of what they needed, ALCA made a third and final attempt to find the right EDI service provider.



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### THE INTEGRAL GROUP SOLUTION

ALCA informally polled their vendors and customers to find the best EDI supplier and Integral Group came highly recommended. When ALCA investigated Integral themselves, they found a company that aligned well with their own philosophies and exceeded their requirements. As a smaller family owned firm, ALCA found value in partnering with an EDI service provider with a similar background and found exactly that in Integral. ALCA needed to work with a company who, like them, was vested in customer support. ALCA wanted a key contact and an issue escalation plan; Integral provided that. And, finally, cost was a factor and Integral's flat rate pricing was exactly the model ALCA was looking for.

Working with Integral, ALCA was able to integrate EDI into their workflow; allowing them to satisfy HBC (and all other major retailers) and add a measure of automation to their process. From HBC, ALCA went on to do EDI with other trading partners enhancing those relationships. EDI also allowed them to add drop shipping to their offerings. ALCA knew that in order for them to grow in a meaningful way they needed to incorporate even more automation ... thus lessening the burden on employees and increasing accuracy by reducing the need for repeated copy/paste data entry.

ALCA switched to Brightpearl (from QuickBooks) as the ERP system that could better accommodate their growing needs. Once again, they found themselves less than satisfied by Brightpearl's recommendations of integration suppliers, so ALCA turned to Integral Group. The integration has been a resounding success and ALCA credits Integral for technical expertise and project managing the process.

ALCA is a small distributor with minimal overhead in an industry with slim margins. All of the above automation – and more planned for the future – gives them more resources to service their customers and hit their revenue goals without increasing manpower.

In two words, the solution, for ALCA, was Integral Group.

“ Integral Group came very highly recommended to us ... and everything that we were told was true!

The Integral Team has respect for their customers. They explain what we want to know – in as much detail as we ask for – but don't assume that we know nothing.

With the help of the integration that Integral has implemented, ALCA has been able to take on more business and manage our workload more efficiently.



Loretta Fulton, Owner  
ALCA Distribution