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## Specialist outsourced logistics operator iForce maintains year on year growth

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Figures posted by iForce show the specialist outsourced logistics operator has yet again maintained its upward trajectory of year on year growth in both its e-fulfilment and returns processing operations, bucking the pervasive business gloom around last year.

Over the course of 2009 (1st January to 31st December) the company fulfilled 4,782,192 online orders for its portfolio of clients, which equates to the dispatching of 18,772,153 items for the 2009 calendar year. This is up by over 25 per cent on the 3,799,685 orders fulfilled during 2008. That's nearly 1 million more orders. Comparing this to the 645,413 orders fulfilled throughout 2005 demonstrates just how much this sector, along with iForce, has grown.

As you would expect, throughput also increased during the all important peak business period of October to December when 2,306,052 were fulfilled, which is up by almost 28 per cent on the 1,804,666 figure for the same period in 2008.



In addition the company also increased its throughput on the returns side of its business, handling 3,355,899 items in 2009 compared to 3,235,829 in 2008.

During 2009 iForce commenced significant new fulfilment and multi-channel returns operations for retailers such as Sainsbury's and Habitat; the latter client providing iForce with its first European fulfilment operation, while the former is seeing the efficiency benefits of housing multichannel returns and e-fulfilment under a single roof. Both of these contracts represent important retail trends.

Mark Hewitt, iForce CEO commented: "Unlike the high street, online retail is still experiencing strong growth as the recession drives consumers to seek the best possible value and they are using online retail to find it.

"Retailers know that they must have a transactional website to compete and are also aware of the inherent customer service challenges. Processes such as online fulfilment and handling returns - not only from online but retail store channels also - are both complex and can incur significant costs.

"Like their customers, retailers are also seeking value during these times so are looking to outsource these activities to specialist operators, who can scale and deploy tailored solutions, experienced staff and their expertise to gain best value. Indeed we have seen that in the current economic circumstances, that operational efficiency is imperative."

Mark expects the sector, and iForce with it, to continue its relentless growth during 2010 as ever more retailers develop online retail and returns processing services. "Our challenge will remain the same as the one we face every year," he said. "That is managing the growth of our existing clients' order volumes and product ranges together with integrating new clients to ensure they achieve the same high levels of success."

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