



SUCCESS STORY

OWEN ALLEN SOLUTIONS

Owen Allen Solutions is a 3PL based out of Shakopee, MN. They have been in business for 6 years and have 25 clients with hundreds of brands, housing more than 10K SKUs.

Octolan Tech Helps Owen Allen Solutions Process Returns, Catch \$150k in Fraud

“When Ward [Thomas] and I started our 3PL, Owen Allen Solutions (OAS), the first call we made was to Ian [Redlin, of Octolan Tech],” says Jesse Mason, co-owner at OAS. “He helped us design and develop our first order management system.”

This partnership isn't new for Mason and Redlin – they've worked together on various technical solutions to 3PL challenges for nearly 20 years. So when Covid hit and OAS customers started seeing a big spike in individual product returns from end consumers, they again turned to Ian and the Octolan team for a more robust returns management solution.



Higher Online Sales = Higher Rate of Individual Returns

“Before Covid, we primarily focused on outbound projects. Any returns we processed were mainly overstock coming back from a retailer.” But Covid drove many customers online, where they often ordered things like apparel in several sizes with the intention to return whatever didn’t fit.

This drove up the individual return rate – and the complexity of processing individual return orders quickly overwhelmed OAS’ existing order management platform. “Every returned item is a snowflake,” Mason notes. “There aren’t many out-of-the-box solutions built to handle the complexities we were dealing with.”



Part of the issue for OAS was the diversity of products across their 25 clients: everything from children’s books to EV chargers, Christmas trees to apparel. Each product comes with its own process and rules for how to sort, inspect and handle the item. One example Mason points out is a shoe retailer who contracts with OAS.



“When their product comes back, we have an A, B or C grade; we also have to capture information like where it came from, tracking information and return authorization number.” The OAS team also has to know how to step through that return – opening the box, inspecting the shoes to make sure they haven’t been worn and that sizes match, etc.

“When you extrapolate that process to hundreds of brands and thousands of SKUs, you have to have the right solution to let clients define processes for each one. We knew Ian and the Octolan team would be able to provide exactly what we needed.”





Octolan Tech Provides a Solution that Works Across 10,000 SKUs

Octolan coordinated with the OAS I.T. team to implement their returns management solution so OAS could efficiently handle returns for all of their clients. And the partnership didn't end with handover of the solution.

"Ian's team and our team had standing meetings, either once a week or if something came up – they were always there to support." The Octolan team traveled to the OAS distribution center, walking through the solution with OAS employees and providing training on the new system. Post go-live, Octolan continues weekly touch-base meetings with OAS.

"We've got a team of six people who live in that system in our distribution center," notes Mason. "If they see opportunities for improvement, Octolan's always quick to help us work through them."

One interesting case that popped up thanks to the new software was an enhanced ability to spot fraud. "We handle a lot of returns for a major online retailer," Mason says. "Occasionally we're not getting back the product that's supposed to be in the box – especially for higher value items. We were able to gather better information to produce documentation and submit cases to the retailer. Just in the last nine months, we've recouped more than \$150,000 in fraud cases thanks to a better ability to spot them."



Excited for the Future: Continued Partnership Between OAS and Octolan

Mason is excited for the recently enhanced version of Octolan's solution, influenced by situations they encountered with OAS clients. The updated platform shows metrics like where returns are from, detailed by retailer and SKU. This will allow OAS to see at a glance which products may have a higher return rate, outside a standard deviation; or whether one retailer has higher return rates than others. This version also includes native Amazon connectivity and the ability to capture images that will help with fraud claims in the future.

All of this data is crucial for helping OAS advise their clients on potential process or product improvements to reduce their return rates over time. And for products that do come back, OAS is much better positioned to get products back on the shelf, into a refurbished goods program or liquidation. All of those actions reduce time a return spends on warehouse shelves, saving the client money.



“Come on down here if you want to see it [Octolan Tech] in action. I’m happy to show it off anytime.”



Mason's advice for other 3PLs who are nervous about getting into returns? "It can be challenging if you don't have the right partner. Until Octolan, I would have been nervous about taking on hundreds of thousands of return units, and now I look forward to those packages coming in every day."

He concludes with an invitation. "Come on down here if you want to see it [Octolan Tech] in action. I'm happy to show it off anytime."

Octolan Tech

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Supply Chain Optimization Without Increasing Headcount



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