



How Progressing DIFOT, Flexibility and Scalability Set POLITIX Up for Supply Chain Success

About POLITIX

Since 1975, POLITIX has been on a mission to ensure Australian men are dressed in the kind of innovative and superbly tailored fashion that helps them be the best that they can be.

The company's dedication to its customers has seen it grow into a leading national high-end men's fashion retailer with almost 100 stores across Australia including concessions in both David Jones and MYER. POLITIX provides casual, professional and formal wear that is known for its exceptional detail, on-trend design and air of luxury.

Fast is the essence of fashion

There is one overriding necessity in the fashion industry, and that is the need for speed in terms of delivery times. AXIMA has been providing fast, efficient and reliable international freight forwarding, customs, transport and 3PL solutions to POLITIX since 2009.

As Dylan Craig, POLITIX Merchandise Planning Manager explains, the business is one where new products need to be in-store for the peak trading times of Thursday evening through to Sunday in most states, every week of the year.

To achieve this speed, POLITIX make use of air freight to bring a proportion of its products into Australia. AXIMA works closely with the airlines and with the relevant parties in China to ensure a smooth and seamless uplift of products that are packed into AXIMA's air freight containers.

Once they arrive in Australia, AXIMA manages the unpacking of the goods, and then the domestic transport leg to the POLITIX South Yarra warehouse.

In addition to air freight, where possible, sea freight containers are used. The 20 and 40 foot containers arrive into Australia and are unpacked by AXIMA and delivered via separate trucks to their distribution point, which may include one of the series of new stores the company is in the process of opening.

"We must have the appropriate product in store on time," Dylan says. "AXIMA works closely as a partner to ensure our product is in store when we need it there." The logistics planning task also needs to take into account factors such as stock levels, stock turns, the impact of trends, and repeat orders for best-selling items.

POLITIX

Situation

Leading national high-end men's fashion retailer with almost 100 stores required a proactive and flexible freight forwarder to support expansion across Australia.

Services Provided

- International freight forwarding
- Customs clearance and consultancy
- Domestic transport
- Container unpacking
- Specialised logistics advice
- Other logistics services as required

Result

- More reliable and responsive freight forwarding services
- Improved delivery in full, on time (DIFOT)
- Ongoing cost reductions and efficiencies
- Enhanced flexibility and scalability
- Improved and proactive communication
- Increased trust, confidence and security

Planning for supply chain success

In his role, Dylan needs to be able to look ahead and plan for both the demand levels for new trends, and the “everyday products” that might sell more steadily. “The key to our forecast planning is being able to react quickly,” he says. “AXIMA’s flexibility, scalability and strong networks with freight providers are an asset in terms of being able to mobilise solutions quickly in response to our needs.”

As part of its overall supply chain strategy, POLITIX plans further out from Ex-Factory dates to maximise the share of product shipped into Australia via sea freight. Dylan says this is an optimal solution in terms of improving efficiency and reducing freight forwarding costs. AXIMA has assisted with increasing the sea freight share by ensuring Dylan is advised of the cut-off for loading well in advance, so the POLITIX team in turn can communicate the required timeframes to the company’s suppliers. “Then we can work with them on lead times on fabric and production.”

Having accurate, timely and clear information also means that if a detail is changed on a product, for example, Dylan and the POLITIX team can establish how that will change the production schedule, and how to ensure the product fits into the shipping cycle so it will reach the end customers on time.



AXIMA works closely as a partner to ensure our product is in store when we need it there.



Dylan Craig, Merchandise Planning Manager, POLITIX



Reading the pulse and responding

“AXIMA is both reliable and responsive – and also have a deep understanding of POLITIX’s supply chain needs as they work with us as a partner,” says Dylan. “They understand our business. They have taken the time over the course of the relationship to get to know POLITIX. That knowledge of our business helps AXIMA deliver us with supply chain success.”

Because AXIMA’s service can meet the tight timeframes involved in high street fashion, Dylan gains some added positives. “Getting stock in over a particular weekend has a real benefit,” he says. “If it’s in-store for the weekend’s trade, we can get an early read on a new product line. That allows us to make reactive decisions in season, assess product performance, and place urgent repeat orders.”

The two companies are also a good cultural fit as supply chain partners. “AXIMA is focused on POLITIX as a customer, and we are focused on our stores and retail teams as a customer. This match works well,” Dylan says. Both companies also share values of diversity, respect and high attention to detail.



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Dylan Craig, Merchandise Planning Manager, POLITIX

Delivering success through communication

One of the ways AXIMA helps Dylan succeed at meeting the goals for his role is through timely, pro-active and honest communication. Just as POLITIX sales staff receives feedback from the end customers, and stores provide feedback to head office, POLITIX and AXIMA provide feedback to each other. Alignment and collaboration is a vital part of supply chain success.

“Over time we have developed a good understanding of AXIMA’s freight and logistics capabilities. It is a good fit. We are two very similar customer-focused businesses, and that’s one reason why we work so well together,” says Dylan.

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“If they see a delay coming, they proactively let us know in advance,” he says. Whatever the problem might be on the horizon, AXIMA’s team will investigate and propose solutions, such as a different flight, or a different port. They will also leverage the company’s clout and established relationships with airlines and logistics providers, as well as the expertise and local relationships of the AXIMA team on the ground in China, to make sure timeframes are met.

AXIMA also provides a deferred service where appropriate, as part of working with POLITIX to continually improve outcomes. “We’ve got an understanding that everything’s urgent, but some things are more urgent than others,” Dylan says. “If we desperately want something on a particular Thursday, AXIMA will move heaven and earth to get it to their warehouse by 2pm and then get it onto a truck. It is amazing some of the things AXIMA has been able to achieve.”

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An example is the import and delivery of marble shop fixtures from a new supplier in China. The high-quality fixtures needed to be delivered on tight timeframes. AXIMA succeeded in ensuring a smooth and efficient process of having them shipped from the factory in China all the way through to the relevant stores in Australia on the day of their fitout. "They took great care of the product and there was a high level of customer service," Dylan says. "It was definitely out of the square." There were multiple store sites and dates involved, including one day where deliveries were required to three separate Department stores, each of them in a different state and all at the same time.

The positive qualities that define my experience with AXIMA are the level of communication, the level of security and the trust and confidence I and my team have in their services. The customer service really stands out. They are just really focused on us and they care about the outcome for us.

Dylan Craig, Merchandise Planning Manager, POLITIX

One of the annual criticalities for POLITIX is Chinese New Year, which results in a shut-down of stock flowing out of China for around two months. Dylan says the POLITIX team and AXIMA are usually working four to five months in advance to prepare for the Chinese New Year period, working backwards from the sea freight and air freight cut-offs to ensure products will still be able to reach customers at the right time and in season.

When the unexpected occurs, Dylan says the positive relationship with AXIMA means the POLITIX team can "jump on the phone" and speak to exactly the person they need to.

There is also an advantage for POLITIX in AXIMA having its own team members and offices in China. "Our suppliers say that having AXIMA team members on the ground in China, communicating with them in their own language is very important in terms of getting stock out on time," says Dylan.

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Going the extra mile

Regular meetings between AXIMA and POLITIX are part of what keeps the relationship strong. The meetings include key people such as AXIMA's Director of China Trade, David Gao and Customer Service Specialist, Junior Time. In addition, to continually improve, AXIMA will always make time to speak with Dylan and the POLITIX team to debrief if anything has not gone according to plan. "Whenever we have a problem to be solved or an issue to overcome, David goes over and above to support us," says Dylan.

Behind the scenes, proactive approaches also build trust. AXIMA will, for example, alert Dylan if any of the freight forwarding or customs documentation is missing – and make efforts to track them down and ensure all the administrative requirements are properly met. "They are aware, and they are always thinking ahead and planning on our behalf," he says.

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If there is an issue, they will pull a team together and problem-solve it."

Dylan says that while POLITIX has gained a level of cost savings, the peace of mind and confidence his team gains is paramount. "They deliver us with supply chain success. They continually step up, and they meet challenges with gusto. They understand what we're trying to achieve in the fashion industry – to help our customer be the best that they can be, and they help us be the best that we can be."

