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FrontLines Returns – Product Returns Management System

In highly competitive industries, profit margins are getting tighter and it is becoming increasingly difficult to gain a competitive advantage. Controlling costs is the primary focus in today's corporate environment. Customer service is now seen as the main, or indeed only, competitive advantage in mature industries where product features and price are no longer effective differentiators. **FrontLines Returns** is a point solution to help track, streamline and manage the complexities of product returns. FrontLines Returns reduces the cost of processing returns and increases customer satisfaction.

As companies strive to wring every cent out of their logistics costs, they're increasingly taking a hard look at their reverse logistics practices. And no wonder – they may find a motherload waiting to be mined. *GettingStarted inReverse, Leslie Hansen, Inbound Logistics, January 2002*

The returns management process is undergoing an extreme makeover. Refusing to remain a neglected supply chain component pushed off into a dark corner, returns management has changed its name to the more-sophisticated “reverse logistics” and is stepping out of the warehouse, heading for the executive boardroom. *Multichannel Merchant.com, May 2006, Debra Ellis*

The back-end returns management functions of receiving, inspect/test and repair, and shipping is “*the land that IT forgot.*” While IT solutions and automation have been put in place over the last two decades in sales (CRM), marketing (web content and email campaign management), R&D (software development suites), accounting (ERP and MRP) and customer support (knowledgebase management and help desks), the back-end returns and repair functions in most companies today have little to no IT tools or process automation. Sure, ERP and MRP systems often have a RMA “module”; however, such static modules are simple record holders of RMAs for accounting and inventory purposes, and cannot be extended or configured to track and manage your actual returns and repair process. This is where **FrontLines Returns** comes in – it is totally configurable and extendible to meet your specific RMA, returns and repair process.

The norm for most companies in returns processing is a manual, paper-based scenario: RMAs are processed by phone and email or a web form that simply sends an email to support, requiring manual intervention by customer service on each return request. Needed customer and product information is acquired by emails and phone calls and tracked in excel spreadsheets. Paper checklists are attached to returned units and filled in at each stage of the return process or repair by service reps. Service reps are continually interrupted by phone calls and emails from irate customers demanding the status of their returns. Reports are collated manually from the excel spreadsheets and individual unit check lists at the end of each month. It is very difficult to track returns and see the real time status of an individual return. It is difficult to enforce returns procedures and policy and almost impossible to show compliance to ISO quality standards with such paper-based, manual systems.



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FrontLines Returns changes all that. FrontLines Returns is the first-to-market, hosted, web-based, software-as-a-service solution that allows you to track and manage your product returns. FrontLines Returns allows you to implement **your** returns processes and policy, as it is totally configurable. FrontLines Returns allows your customers, distributors and OEMs to request RMAs over the web and to see the status of their returns anytime over the web. FrontLines Returns is a low cost, low risk, quickly implemented solution providing immediate benefit and rapid ROI.

Accepting returns may be a required back-end procedure, but it turns out that marketing and service opportunities abound in reverse logistics. Strategically managing the return process throughout the supply chain enhances the customer experience. After all, handling merchandise returns is an important customer touch point. Customers who have positive return experiences are the most loyal buyers.
Multichannel Merchant.com, May 2006, Debra Ellis

Your key customers, dealers and distributors will be more likely to buy and distribute your products if they are confident that product returns will be handled efficiently and quickly, and if they have online visibility into the status of their returns to ensure it. FrontLines Returns delivers this to your customers and distributors over the web, 24*7.

FrontLines Returns helps to reduce the costs of processing returns and provides your organization with a powerful competitive advantage – faster processing of returns and happier customers.

FrontLines Returns Value

The “value” of FrontLines Returns, simply stated, is that it will help your organization:

- Increase customer satisfaction,
- Reduce the cost of processing returns, and
- Help you meet ISO quality requirements for returns processing.

Here is how FrontLines Returns provides these key benefits:



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- **Increase customer satisfaction**

FrontLines Returns:

1. Allows your customers, distributors and OEMs to get RMA authorization much quicker, over the web, 24*7;
2. Presents your RMA policy and procedures on the web in a self-service knowledgebase;
3. Allows your customers to see real-time status of their returns over the web, anytime; and
4. Reduces the time to process a return, getting the repaired or replaced unit back to the customer faster.

- **Reduce the cost of processing returns**

1. Improve efficiency of handling returns

- FrontLines Returns ensures that all the information required to process the return is gathered in the RMA request upon submission. FrontLines Returns prompts the customer to enter all the needed information on the web form. Information can also be read from external databases and automatically entered into the RMA request upon submission.
- FrontLines Returns can automatically check serial numbers and warranty upon RMA submission. Manual intervention by your service reps is no longer required for these simple, easily automated, tasks.
- FrontLines Returns ensures that all the necessary information on the return is available to service reps well before the unit arrives in receiving – no more “what is this return?” questions.
- FrontLines Returns sends notification emails to your customers, service reps, and others involved in your RMA process (such as customs brokers) at any stage of your RMA process. Without FrontLines Returns, emails must be generated manually by your service reps – a very time consuming task.
- FrontLines Returns ensures that your RMA process is followed by your service reps consistently. You define **your** RMA process in FrontLines Returns – the states the return flows through, the data that you wish to gather from the customer and the service reps, and the workflow rules (when emails are sent, to whom, and what data is in each email).



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2. Improve tracking of RMAs.

- FrontLines Returns ensures that your service reps add all the information about the return/repair that you want to track at the proper stage of return handling.
- FrontLines Returns allows service reps and managers to track all RMAs by RMA No, by State, and by customized reports to see the real time status of any return. Service reps can create their own views and reports suited to their tasks.

3. Reduce phone calls and emails from customers and distributors by 70% - 90%.

- Without FrontLines Returns, your customers and distributors will call you constantly when they are 1) trying to understand your RMA procedures and get a RMA number, and 2) trying to check on the status of their return. These calls swamp your service reps and test and repair staff leaving them little time to actually process or repair returns. These calls and emails are very distracting to your staff as the customer usually wants an immediate response, and without the effective tracking capabilities of FrontLines Returns, your service reps must scramble to form a response to each customer.
- With FrontLines Returns your customers and distributors never need to call you again! – for questions about returns processing that is. They have access to a knowledgebase about your RMA procedures and policy on your website. They can request an RMA online and get the RMA number and shipping and packaging instructions immediately. They will receive emails from FrontLines Returns upon submission, when the unit is received at your shop, when the unit goes in for repair, etc. They can log on to FrontLines Returns anytime and see the real-time status of their returns. Customers prefer this self-service approach to RMA because it provides instant and correct answers. The dramatic reduction in phone calls and emails to your service reps provided by FrontLines Returns will make your returns process much more efficient.

4. Improve visibility into your RMA process.

- FrontLines Returns allows managers to create metrics and status reports to ensure service level agreements are being met, and to discover trends for process and product improvement.



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- **Help you meet ISO quality requirements for returns processing**
 - FrontLines Returns defines and enforces your RMA processes, and automates the simple and repetitive steps.
 - FrontLines Returns holds all the RMA requests in a database. Custom reports and tracking features easily show that your defined RMA processes and procedures are currently being followed and have been followed in the past for ISO audits. Without FrontLines Returns, your manual, paper-based approach using emails and excel spreadsheets makes it very difficult to prove compliance.
 - New service reps can be trained very quickly in your RMA processes by using FrontLines Returns from day one.
 - FrontLines Returns allows you to develop a “paperless” returns handling system – all the data needed to track a return is in the RMA request data record – custom fields, states, and history of all state changes and workflow events and actions.

Benefits of FrontLines Returns Software-as-a-Service Technology

- FrontLines Returns is totally configurable by you – there is no need for customization programming by us ever. FrontLines Returns matches your returns processes and can be extended or altered at any time by you. You define the data you want to record and track, the states of your process, the emails to send and when and to whom. This can be defined for one or more returns processes that match your various product lines, and the unique needs of your key customers and distributors.
- FrontLines Returns is hosted on our servers. There is no software or hardware for you to buy, no internal IT resources required on your part, no worry about backups or maintenance – we do it all, you just connect over the web, anytime from anywhere. This enables branch offices and worldwide support and returns operations to have access to the same system and processes, 24*7.
- FrontLines Returns has one low, predictable, monthly fee.
- FrontLines Returns is very easy-to-use by your service reps and your customers and distributors – if they know how to use an Internet browser, they can use FrontLines Returns.
- Rapid deployment – less than a week.
- We “guarantee” value for your organization. You don’t start paying the monthly fee until you are up and running and totally satisfied with the value provided by our software and service.



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- Rapid time to benefit – immediately upon deployment. As soon as you go live with FrontLines Returns your customers and distributors will be using FrontLines Returns to request and track all their RMAs. From deployment, your service reps will use FrontLines Returns to implement your returns processes consistently and to track, report, and process all returns much more efficiently than ever before.

What should you do ?

The next step is yours.

If you handle a lot of returns, or have a steady stream of returns from key customers, distributors or OEMs, we have a great solution for you. FrontLines Returns will help you track and manage your returns and provide a web interface to your customers to request RMAs and track their returns.

If you have a need to improve your returns handling and provide better service to your customers and distributors, contact us for an online demo of FrontLines Returns. We will show you the capabilities of FrontLines Returns, and how some of our key customers have implemented FrontLines Returns for their customers – industry leaders like Panasonic and Emerson Electric.

Please contact us at:

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and visit our website at: <http://www.frontlines247.com>