

## John Lewis relies on innovative, rigorous competitor price checking to ensure beauty product customers are never knowingly undersold



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**Chris Noel**  
Manager Value  
John Lewis

### About John Lewis

John Lewis, regularly voted the UK's favourite retailer, began trading in 1864 with the opening of a first shop in London's Oxford Street. Since then, and through the efforts of 30,000 Partners (staff), they have succeeded in becoming the largest multi-channel retailer in the UK, with 32 John Lewis shops (28 department stores and four John Lewis at Home) and a growing online business johnlewis.com.

### Challenge

'Never Knowingly Undersold' has been a key part of the John Lewis brand since 1925 and is their unique and lifelong commitment to giving customers the best value through great products at great prices, supported by great service. To keep this pledge John Lewis regularly monitors competitor pricing and if another high street retailer is found selling the same item for less, either in their shops or online, John Lewis lowers its price to match even when it is a sale item.

The John Lewis partners are committed to offering the best value and service to shoppers across all ranges, however the beauty sector is particularly volatile with prices changing frequently. Competitor pricing is not easily available and has to be collected and collated from a variety of sources.

"Our branches were investing considerable time and effort in tracking competitors at a local level in-store and, in addition, our buying team was also trawling through press and different media," says Chris Noel, Manager Value at John Lewis. "But it was virtually impossible to stay completely up to date. We recognised that our pricing needed to be much more competitive and consistent on a nationwide basis and we wanted to cut down the time that our staff spent manually checking pricing."

### Industry:

Retail

### Profile:

UK's largest department store retailer

### Situation:

Manual competitor price checking was costly, time-consuming and limited

### Solution:

Nationwide automated capture of key competitors' online and store pricing details

### Results:

- Upholds commitment to best value for customer
- Enhances reputation for fairness
- Significant time and cost savings
- Enables accurate, faster decision making
- Customer refund requests reduced by 75%
- Increases revenue opportunities
- Collaborative service response for shoppers



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## Solution

In 2009 John Lewis chose SymphonyIRI to provide a solution because of their reputation for expertise in the health and beauty sector. They demonstrated that they had the capability to scientifically combine up to date pricing data from multiple sources in a highly changeable market, plus deliver it quickly in an easy to digest format.

Noel continues, "We were very impressed with the overall package that SymphonyIRI could offer - the combination of technology, field resources and reporting assets and the ability to pull all three together." This meant that John Lewis didn't have to involve any other third party suppliers, which was a compelling proposition.

## Benefits

SymphonyIRI uses technology complemented by its in-house reporting and field-based shopping services to collect and collate competitor pricing on a national level. Market research findings are reported back to John Lewis so that the buyers can make pricing decisions based on timely and accurate data on a weekly basis. As a result pricing is now consistent across all stores wherever they are located and potential local variations are no longer an issue.

"The process is now a robust and reliable one," comments Noel. "It supports our rigorous price checking instead of standing in its way."

## 75% fewer customer pricing queries

The more timely and accurate data has had a dramatic impact on John Lewis' pricing guarantee. Noel explains, "Refund requests from shoppers who find cheaper prices for our beauty products have already fallen by 75%, which is excellent news for both our customers and John Lewis."

## Brand values upheld

Noel stresses the immediate impact of the solution, "Now we can confidently deliver on our long-standing brand value of never knowingly undersold in a volatile market that is notoriously difficult to track." The buying team has much better control of pricing and can respond to changes as they occur or within just a couple of days.

## Saves time and costs

SymphonyIRI ensures that the data is up to date and changes are not missed in the event of a competitor website being unavailable for a period.

Noel says, "Collated information is delivered in an easy to use format and we do some spot-checking for accuracy. If there are any issues we report back to the SymphonyIRI team who are extremely responsive."

Joe Watkins, Analyst at John Lewis, adds, "It has saved us a significant amount of time and cost as local staff no longer need to spend time in stores checking competitor pricing and the buyers have been relieved of the administrative burden of collating data, and can focus on evaluating new revenue opportunities."

## Increased revenue

In a market which is highly competitive and influenced by economic conditions, John Lewis is continuing to grow revenue in the beauty sector when many other retailers are struggling to maintain sales.

Noel concludes, "This solution is enabling us to uphold our reputation for quality and honesty which is fundamental to our core values and the success of our business."



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**Joe Watkins**  
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