



## Retail Solutions **CASE STUDY**

### Consolidating Vendors for a Growing Company



#### **Blue Ridge Product Solutions**

##### **CHALLENGE**

- Rapid growth added supply chain complexities, costs, and administrative work for online retailer.

##### **SOLUTION**

They collaborated with C.H. Robinson to consolidate shipments, standardize schedules, and meet requirements.

##### **RESULT**

The company's new processes and efficiencies saved 15% on transportation costs, cut transit time by three days, and reduced administrative work.

Blue Ridge Product Solutions is an online retailer based in Richmond, VA. They manufacture, import, and distribute consumer products, including home décor; furniture; kitchenware; sporting goods; and patio, lawn, and garden items. They have offices in Ningbo and Guangzhou, China. They also offer distribution services out of Valencia, CA.

Blue Ridge Product Solutions works with several factories in China to design and manufacture its products. Originally, each vendor arranged the transportation for the products at their facility. As Blue Ridge Product Solutions' business grew, so did the complexity of their supply chain. Like many fast-growing organizations, Blue Ridge Product Solutions required new, scalable supply chain processes to keep pace with its continued success.

#### **EVOLVING SUPPLY CHAIN IS KEY TO GROWTH**

Blue Ridge Product Solutions worked with different brokers, forwarders, and drayage companies for each of their manufacturing vendors. Within a few years, their volume increased approximately 400%. This growth made it nearly impossible for existing staff to maintain clear visibility to all shipments statuses—especially when vendors in China made their own shipping arrangements. As processes became more inconsistent, supply chain costs rose and transit times became more unpredictable.

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Additionally, the company changed warehouses to accommodate their increased volume—a move that came with standardized workflows and required an updated supply chain strategy. The team at Blue Ridge Product Solutions saw that if unaddressed, their ongoing supply chain inefficiencies could hamper company growth.

To combat this risk, James Addison, president of Blue Ridge Product Solutions, set out to find a global third party logistics provider (3PL). One that could add efficiency and effortlessly meet their many shipping needs.

### **A MULTI-FACETED SOLUTION**

Blue Ridge Product Solutions needed to collaborate with an experienced provider to standardize their shipments, improve supply chain visibility, and maintain compliance with their new warehouse’s requirements. They tested several large companies, but ultimately chose C.H. Robinson.

According to Addison, “C.H. Robinson was the most responsive to our needs, large enough to have reliable capacity for us, and the only provider to offer us a consistent price from one month to the next.”

### **STANDARDIZED SHIPMENTS**

One of the first things Blue Ridge Product Solutions learned about working with C.H. Robinson was the responsiveness of its people. C.H. Robinson’s account manager coordinates shipping between the Blue Ridge Product Solutions offices in Ningbo and Guangzhou and their vendors.

“C.H. Robinson’s got a good network of people. They’re responsive and can handle planning, preparation, even booking our shipments,” explained Addison. “We still maintain control and approval over bookings as needed, but our account manager is always really quick to coordinate everything.”

By taking control of shipping across vendors, the company can now consolidate shipments in China before transporting them to the United States. C.H. Robinson has helped them establish set sailing schedules to add a level of consistency and predictability to their supply chain.

### **CLEAR VISIBILITY**

When they started to consolidate products in Ningbo prior to shipping, the need for transparency reached an all-time high. The Blue Ridge Product

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Solutions team needed to know which shipments were being consolidated and where they were in transit to address customer queries. To this end, the team turned to C.H. Robinson’s proprietary transportation management system, Navisphere®, for fast, accurate shipping information.

Because Navisphere is a single global platform, all shipment information is up to date and available in one place. Beyond shipment data, Navisphere’s account payable function also provides Blue Ridge Product Solutions with easy access to freight invoices.

At a higher level, C.H. Robinson representatives provide visibility directly to the team at Blue Ridge Product Solutions. “I don’t really have to reach out to our C.H. Robinson representative. He’s always available, brings great ideas to the table, and keeps the ball moving when we’re changing processes,” explained Addison. As part of the connectivity between the companies, regular business reviews—both in person and over the phone—help ensure both teams are continuously improving.

#### **WAREHOUSE COMPLIANCE**

Establishing consolidated shipments and sailing schedules made it relatively simple to set delivery appointments as required by the warehouse.

Through C.H. Robinson, Blue Ridge Product Solutions engaged a core group of responsive drayage providers that could meet their reporting guidelines. These carriers work with Blue Ridge Product Solutions often, so they know how to request a delivery window directly from the warehouse administrator, freeing up valuable time for Blue Ridge Product Solutions’ employees.

#### **ONGOING RESULTS CONTINUE TO GROW**

“Everything just works nicely. When we do have to address an issue or make a small adjustment, we can do it very quickly, thanks to being able to communicate so well with C.H. Robinson’s people,” said Addison.

Collaborating with C.H. Robinson enabled Blue Ridge Product Solutions to make strategic supply chain decisions that have cut ocean freight costs by 15 percent and reduced transit time by three days. The increased speed

to market helps the organization meet customer demand and timelines—despite the short lead times typical in online sales. In addition, the company has drastically reduced administrative time required to manage shipments. Even though their ocean freight capacity has grown by 400 percent, one Blue Ridge Product Solution employee now spends less time managing 200 ocean containers a month than she did when they imported only 40 containers a month. She now has time to focus on other strategic areas of the business thanks to stronger processes and clear visibility to shipments.



C.H. Robinson hopes to collaborate with Blue Ridge Product Solutions to create an even more effective warehousing strategy by increasing storage capabilities in China to reduce high inventory carrying costs in the United States. Working out the details about how to accomplish the shift will be a joint effort between the two organizations. “With C.H. Robinson it’s just easier to plan everything well in advance,” said Addison, “Everything runs like clockwork.”

To learn more about C.H. Robinson, watch [our video](#), visit [our website](#), call 800-323-7587, or email [solutions@chrobinson.com](mailto:solutions@chrobinson.com).