Almost everybody in military resale understands just how sophisticated today’s state-of-the-art grocery supply chains have become, but maybe not quite as obvious is just how committed so many of the people working behind the scenes are to doing their best to ensure the products military patrons need or want arrive at their intended destinations in a timely manner, and in the most efficient way possible.

According to Ed Brunot, SpartanNash executive vice president and president of MDV, SpartanNash is the fifth largest food distributor in the country, serving 2,100 independent retailers, and “the company brings added value to the table,” when it comes to tailoring services and support in a cost-effective and efficient manner to fit the unique needs of the military resale system.

Brunot, a former Army captain, said the transformational Nash Finch/Spartan Stores merger in November 2013 has created an approximately $8-billion business. “We have the size, scope, and scale to drive efficiencies and reinvest across all our distribution channels,” he said. “As the industry leader in food distribution to U.S. military commissaries and exchanges, MDV SpartanNash distinguishes itself with its complete, transparent and proven distribution network, which is specifically designed to service the military resale community.”

RESALE CHALLENGES

Brunot acknowledges that numerous hurdles face military resale distribution in the year ahead. “Clearly, budget uncertainty with the Department of Defense (DoD) budget and the military resale system is a challenge,” he noted. “We also recognize that this industry operates with razor-thin margins, and in order to preserve the military benefit for our military heroes, we must drive efficiencies with our seamless, integrated supply chain.”

In addition, Brunot said that driver shortages across the logistics world have also begun to affect the distribution community. “As the average age of drivers creeps north of 50 years, leading to an industry shortage of 35,000 drivers, we have mobilized our transportation team to better utilize our fleet across the SpartanNash family to assist our customers with solutions that drive cost efficiencies,” he said.

WORLDWIDE REACH

Brunot said the company hopes to surmount these challenges with its seamless supply chain network that includes a total of seven military-only distribution centers located in Landover, Md.; Columbus, Ga.; Pensacola, Fla.; San Antonio, Texas; Oklahoma City, Okla.; and Landover, Md.

Photos: SpartanNash

“Habitat Veterans Build” … a group of volunteers from SpartanNash subsidiaries in the greater Grand Rapids, Mich., area volunteered their time and talents to help in the building of the ninth home the company has sponsored for Habitat for Humanity of Kent County.
Okla.; Bloomington, Ind.; and Norfolk, Va., “and they are equipped with the latest technology for warehouse operations including a state-of-the-art radio frequency — EXE warehouse management system (WMS) — coupled with an integrated Vocollect voice-directed picking system and engineered labor standards.”

Specifically, the distribution center in Norfolk, Va. “is strategically located in close proximity to Norfolk ports, making our MDV Norfolk location the last port of call to Europe to increase optimal shelf life,” he noted. “We have invested over $330 million in our infrastructure in the last four years, including adding chill in our Landover, Md., distribution center to extend distribution to New England.”

The executive said that the MDV fleet of more than 150 tractors and 543 trailers are equipped with CADEC on-board systems, which provide constant GPS unit tracking, two-way message dispatching, and maintenance of all DOT required information.

“Through our strategic partnership with Coastal Pacific Food Distributors (CPFD), we can reach any military installation in the world, and currently have over 60 partners that use our network for worldwide distribution of their military needs,” Brunot told E and C News. “MDV and CPFD have culturally similar approaches to the military business.”

There are several other facets of the business that MDV SpartanNash offers its customers that Brunot believes sets his company apart.

“Our integrated wholesale distribution and military supply chain have jointly managed disaster recovery (DR) back-up systems,” he said. “We have fully transparent business units, providing our customers with access to real-time sales and service details, from summary to complete granularity.”

SUPPORTING INDUSTRY, SERVICEMEMBERS

Brunot noted that SpartanNash also has a program relating to preferential hiring practices for veterans, and continues support for National Guardsmen/reservists and their families, which has been very successful, as the company received the Patriot Award in May 2014 for its support of these groups.

“A nother differentiator is the level of military expertise on the SpartanNash MDV team,” Brunot said. “Past board members have been honored with the American Logistics Association’s (A.L.A.) Lifetime Achievement award for their contributions within the military resale industry. Furthermore, with our business being ‘military-centric,’ it is in our best interest to support the military resale industry and work for its continued existence.”

Brunot said the SpartanNash MDV team strives to remain at the forefront of the industry by “having a continuous presence on the A.L.A. National Board of Directors — ‘I just came off the board as chairman emeritus,’ he noted — and many company associates participate on the Commissary Council, Exchange Council and local A.L.A. chapter boards. MDV also ‘supports and advocates for’ A.L.A.’s ‘Save our Benefit’ organization, Brunot added.

For Brunot, MDV SpartanNash’s cultural commitment to support of the broader military community is reflective of its logistical support to military resale, and is shared by employees across the company. “MDV exists to serve the armed service heroes and their families whether at home or abroad,” he explained. “In addition to the company’s commitment to hiring veterans, the SpartanNash Foundation supports patriotic initiatives in the communities it serves.”

Commitment and Support

From headquarters to distribution center to the trucker driving the final mile for Norfolk, Va.-based MDV SpartanNash, the motivation to serve the military community is highly intrinsic. Many of the company’s employees are veterans or have a military family connection, and it shows in their work on and off the clock.

MDV SpartanNash and the SpartanNash Foundation provide financial and volunteer support for several organizations, including:

- **Honor and Remember**, a Virginia-based nonprofit dedicated to recognizing military members lost in the line of duty;
- **Vetshouse**, a nonprofit organization serving homeless veterans in Hampton Roads, Va.;
- **Fisher House**, a network of homes located at major military and VA medical centers or hospitals where military and veterans’ families can stay at no cost while loved ones receive treatment; and,
- **Warriors at Ease**, a nonprofit group of certified instructors nationwide who bring the healing power of yoga and meditation to military heroes affected by combat-stress, PTSD and trauma.

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