



BAR CODE SYSTEM BOOSTS DISTRIBUTOR'S SALES FORCE EFFICIENCY

STEEL CITY PRODUCTS

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA



industry

DISTRIBUTION

applications

ROUTE ACCOUNTING

situation

Steel City Products distributes automotive accessories and pet supplies, and has approximately 90 employees.

critical issue

Steel City's sales force was very slow and inefficient while doing inventory at customer stores. Not only was the sales force slow in carrying out refill order decisions at each store, the order fulfillment process was cumbersome: often a week would pass between a store visit and the arrival of ordered items. Finally, orders were often incorrectly filled out, which added to overall inefficiency and customer frustration.

reasons

Steel City relied on a paper-based system, which included an 11-inch by 17-inch computer-printout order book carried by route accountants. Steel City distributes nearly 10,000 different items, so the sheer size of the order book encumbered the route accountants as they walked the aisles. Secondly, the system required the sales staff to perform many specific tasks, and a mistake in any procedure could foul-up the order. For example, when an item needed to be re-stocked, the sales representative would create a handwritten order, including the item number, SKU, and price found in the order book. Handwritten orders from the sales staff mailed to Steel City's Pittsburgh warehouse were entered into the host computer by data entry personnel. Thirdly, this home office data entry system was another source of delay and errors. Finally, order books were difficult to maintain; new products, pricing changes, or promotional schemes were introduced regularly, but new order books were updated only once every two months.

vision & capabilities

Steel City wanted an on-line, computerized data collection system in which route accountants would have access to all product and order history for each of the company's 10,000 items and multiple stores. Additionally, Steel City wanted technology that would be easy for the sales force to carry with them, as well as easy to use in stores. Finally, it was hoped that the new system would allow for faster delivery of ordered products, while reducing the number of mistakes due to human error.

intermec solution

Intermec partner Wengert Software Engineering of Pittsburgh, Penn., equipped each of Steel City's 25 route accountants with JANUS™ J2010 Hand Held Computers. Now, the sales force is able to place new orders in two ways: 1) scrolling for the correct item number off a "pick list" contained in the J2010; or 2) entering a known item name into the J2010. When they are able to access a standard phone jack, the sales rep simply plugs the J2010 into a phone jack and transmits the order information via phone lines to the company's IBM AS/400 host computer.

benefits

Order fulfillment times have been reduced from 7 days to 2 days. Route accountants are more efficient, and Steel City has been able to reduce the sales staff from 25 to 18. Route accountants are now better informed about new pricing changes and promotions. Finally, customer satisfaction has increased because Steel City has virtually eliminated incorrect order shipments.