

Managing Information Key To Success

Information management is a key factor to the success of any business. And, as businesses grow, the amount and complexity of information that needs to be managed increases. While a small 'mom and pop' type of independent home improvement retailer might be able to get by doing everything manually, mid-size to large businesses will need to upgrade their systems in order to stay competitive.

Enter OGC Inc.'s point of sale (POS) system. OGC, a software development and hardware installation and maintenance company, has developed a high perfor-

mance POS system designed for hardware and building supply dealers.

"A good POS system is going to allow you better management of your business," says sales representative Sylvie Désormeau. "It lets you know where you are and where you should go. Ultimately, benefits include better customer service, minimized administration, just-in-time stock replacement, and the opportunity for detailed analysis and research."

OGC's software is an integrated system that manages all aspects of the store including POS, special orders, inventory control, pricing, purchasing and receiving, and

accounting. It can also do payroll, track employee transactions, analyze sales, and more. The system can be used for one or more locations.

SPECIAL ORDERS

"The beauty of the OGC system is that it is designed mainly for hardware and building supply dealers. They have particular needs that differ from other retailers."

Building supply dealers, for example, have many special orders. The OGC system has a special order feature that makes it easy for any staff member – from the supervisor to the part-timer – to go through all the steps necessary to make sure the order is successful right through to the transmission of the order to the supplier. It includes a follow-up step which will "give the customer exactly what he wants, including good customer service."

The special order feature allows unlimited description of items, cost entry confirmation, identification of supplier, purchase order and receiving information on the item, a variety of controls per customer, and alerts to deposits required and delivery date.

These features provide better tracking of sales orders. It is possible to connect estimating packages for faster and easier follow-up on quotations and, eventually, sales orders.

INVENTORY MANAGEMENT

Inventory management is another key consideration for retailers. It is a discipline that encompasses the principles, concepts, and techniques for determining what to order, when to order, and how much to order. The right amount of inventory is a balance between what is required to serve the customers and what is financially practical to stock.

Many small business owners fail to appreciate fully the true costs of carrying excess inventory. This cost includes not only direct costs of storage, insurance, and taxes, but also the cost of money tied up in inventory. This becomes more important as the business grows. Retailers need to be aware of more than just how much inven-



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tory to stock. They must also:

- ◆ maintain a wide assortment of stock while not spreading the high-turnover items too thin
- ◆ increase inventory turnover and keep stock low without sacrificing service
- ◆ obtain lower prices via volume purchases without ending up with slow-moving inventory
- ◆ have an adequate inventory on hand without getting stuck with obsolete items

Since the OGC software manages the business at every touch point, inventory can be controlled and managed much simpler and faster. Bar coding and labeling become powerful tools to handle stock and POS. Clients can produce reports based on an unlimited number of variables. How fast does a certain promotional item sell and what days do they sell the quickest? Does a product sell better based on where it is located in the store? At what price does an item sell best? What brands sell better when merchandised beside a competitor?

Features of inventory management include complete product definitions; regular, promotional, and list pricing; unlimited number of locations; unlimited number of logical codes (cross references); product lists; price lists; capability to update many items at once; and product ranking modules. Clients can create reports by location, category, supplier, best sellers, or units.

One of the benefits of this technology is that it provides a true database versus other systems that may save databases as files. This makes information quick and easy to search and navigate and provides clients with detailed reports on any aspect of their business.

Data manipulation can also be performed through spreadsheet programs. This is particularly important for maintenance of large quantities of product.

Purchases can be generated based on inventory levels (available, min, max), product status, and product ranking. Purchase orders can be created from buying group catalogues or generated from special orders at POS. The system offers a display of sales and purchase history, back orders control, and EDI (electronic data interchange). If a supplier does not have EDI, the system will automatically fax orders as needed.

ACCOUNTING AND PAYROLL

Since the system is fully integrated, retailers can use it to do their accounting and payroll. Features include accounts payable, accounts receivable, general ledger and financial reports, and payroll.

The accounts payable feature offers automatic calculation of invoice due dates and prompt-payment discount dates. Both it and the accounts receivable features are fully

automated and integrated with the general ledger module. In fact, the general ledger is completely integrated into all modules of the software.

The payroll function offers hourly or salaried; weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly; check printing or bank deposit; record of employment; and legal forms required.

KNOW WHAT YOU NEED

Désormeau says the first key to successful information management is to know what you need. "You need to analyze why it would be important to have a system. Is it because you have so many special orders that you have to find a way to manage

fear of technology. "Don't worry," says Désormeau. "Think of when you get a new cell phone. At first you wonder how to enter the numbers and what the green button is for. But, you can still make calls. You can learn the features as you go. Soon, you realize you know more than you think."

OGC provides onsite and/or classroom training to suit the client and offers full hardware and software support over extended business hours. The software is set up to be user-friendly with most transactions following a chronological progression not so different from the way it would be done manually or on another system. It also has a help function just as personal computer applications do.



The OGC system is a turnkey information management solution that can be used immediately. However, it can also be tweaked or modified to suit the individual needs of each client.

them? Is it because you don't know where you're at with your inventory? Where could your business use improvements?"

She says it is important to discuss those needs with a representative to learn how a system can deal with them. "Most people don't realize the capabilities of such a system. Once they know what it can do, their list of what they need and want usually grows significantly."

Retailers considering upgrading their information management systems may be afraid to take the next step because of the

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In fact, the company uses the latest technology – wireless capabilities, networking (WAN/LAN), Internet connectivity, ODBC standard connectivity (report generation), LINUX, and Informix. The technology allows for future integration of new options and provides stability and security as needed. □