

US ARMY RECRUITING COMMAND

Solution Overview

Industry

Armed Forces

Scenario

With the previous accounting system, orders had to be laboriously entered one at a time by hand, requiring excessive manpower. Recruiting offices faxed and e-mailed orders without knowing if the items were in stock or if they had enough points to fulfill their order.

Company Profile

The USAREC is responsible for recruiting quality young women and men to serve in the Army and Army Reserve. The USAREC headquarters, located at Fort Knox, Kentucky, provides the command, control, and staff support to the recruiting force.

Software Used

Microsoft Great Plains eEnterprise
 Financials
 Distribution
 E-commerce
 Microsoft SQL Server

Benefit

Automating the order process has made it possible for two full-time staff members to be redeployed to other activities. Service to recruiting offices has been improved because they know before-hand if items are in stock, can order at any time of the day, and can get the status of their order over the Web at any time.

Demographic Information

Number of Employees: Over 11,000
 Migrated from: MAC accounting software
 Number of Sites: 3400
 Number of Users: 7
 Transaction Volume: 30,000 orders per month

Implementation of an e-commerce ordering system saves the United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) well over 400 hours per month while improving customer service. Microsoft Business Solutions saves 100 hours generating reports, and orders placed over the Web automatically flow to pick tickets at the warehouse saving 300 plus hours.

Although they are part of government rather than private industry, the USAREC faces challenges similar to any organization that takes orders for and delivers millions of products every month. The USAREC provides brochures, hats, shirts and other specialty items used by recruiting offices around the world. Each office earns credits by meeting their recruiting goals and the number of credits they have earned determines how much merchandise they are eligible to order. The USAREC has to provide up-to-date product information to Army and Navy recruiters around the world, promptly record orders and ensure they are accurately fulfilled. In the past, the USAREC mailed out catalogs to each recruiting office to let them know what items were available. In the past, there was no way for the offices to know whether the items they wanted to order were in stock or exactly how many points they had available with which to order items. The result was that both headquarters and recruiting office personnel had to get involved in the back and forth needed to resolve these orders, such as by finding a suitable replacement that was in stock for items that were not available. Now, with eEnterprise business software the entire process has been automated, saving time and providing recruitment offices with stock and point status before they order.

Reporting was also a major headache for the headquarters staff in the past. The two people that entered orders were also responsible for tracking the credits earned by the 3,400 offices in their recruiting efforts. Approximately 30,000 orders were received every month, which could consist of up to 1,500 items per office per month, for a total of over 5,000,000 items per month. They used a large Excel spreadsheet and each month entered credits earned and spent. This took a great deal of time and raised the potential for errors and disagreements. The only way that one of these offices could determine how many credits they had available was to call the USAREC staff. Generating reports needed to manage the entire process, such as items ordered by various offices or items in stock was also a manual process that took about 100 hours per month.

Automating Processes with the Web

The USAREC considered a number of different alternatives in automating the ordering process and selected A Technology Advantage (ATA), Louisville, Kentucky, to implement eEnterprise business software. ATA used templates provided by Microsoft Business Solutions that link to Microsoft Site Server e-commerce software to provide a Web site that allows recruiting offices to order merchandise online. Links between the site and eEnterprise Sales Order Processing provide visitors with visibility to inventory

“The new business system has dramatically improved the efficiency of the ordering process. Service to recruiting offices has been improved because they know before-hand if items are in stock, can order at any time of the day and can get the status of their order over the Web at any time.”

Dave Clapper
Director, Logistics Support Center
United States Army Recruiting
Command

availability. The recruiting offices can easily see on-line what is in stock, and make an alternate selection if their first choice is not available.

Once they finalize their order, it automatically moves through eEnterprise to the fulfillment module which prints out a pick ticket in the warehouse for immediate shipment. The customer receives an immediate confirmation notice with a link that they can use later to track the status of the order. ATA customized the system to accept a bar code number that is created when the item is packaged and is scanned by the driver that picks up the package. A tracking number is assigned and an email is automatically sent with a link to the courier's Web site to track the item.

Time Savings and Accuracy Improvements

The need to manually type in orders, check for the availability of inventory, track the points earned by each office and deliver the orders to the warehouse has been eliminated. Headquarters no longer has to create and distribute catalogs and the offices no longer need to maintain the latest versions. eEnterprise is configured so that day-to-day maintenance, such as adding and removing items from the catalog, can be performed by non-technical people. Recruiters save the time that they previously spent ordering items that weren't in stock, or that they hadn't earned enough credits to pay for. By the same token, orders move through the system much more quickly – the vast majority of orders are now shipped on the same day they are received. Accessibility to the ordering process has been greatly improved, especially for recruiters located in overseas offices in different time zones. Orders are now coming in at all hours of the day and night as well as on weekends. Recruiters can also more easily track the status of their orders at any time.

Additional time-savings come from the elimination of the need to manually generate reports. Reporting now takes place in real-time - reports include every order and shipment that has been completed at the time when the report is produced. In addition, ATA took advantage of eEnterprise "business alerts" functionality to generate an email automatically to purchasing staff members whenever an item reaches a pre-determined minimum level as determined with in eEnterprise Inventory Management. Another important improvement is that the accuracy of every aspect of the system has been improved. Problems that sometimes occurred in the past when wrong items or quantities were shipped to recruiting offices have been nearly eliminated by the automation of the ordering process. "Handling tens of thousands of orders with our old system was an enormous manual task," Clapper concluded. "Automating the process with eEnterprise saves hundreds of hours per month, nearly eliminates errors and helps us keep much closer track of the true demand for our products."

For more information about Microsoft Business Solutions, visit www.greatplains.com

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