

Ziyad Brothers Importing

Solution Overview

Industry

Wholesale Food

Scenario

In the past, Ziyad Brothers spent tens of thousands of dollars each year maintaining custom accounting software yet was dissatisfied with its archaic user interface and lack of impromptu reporting.

Solution

Microsoft Business Solutions gives Ziyad Brothers flexibility in handling custom orders, and enables them to view information in any way that they want.

Benefit

The company saves a considerable amount of money by eliminating the need to maintain its own software. At the same time, management reporting is greatly improved enabling them to make better decisions.

Software Used

Microsoft Business Solutions
Solomon
Financial Series
Distribution Series
Order Management
Microsoft Internet Information Server
Microsoft SQL Server
Windows 2000 Server

Demographic Information

Number of Employees: 85
Number of Sites: 1
Number of Users: 12
Migrated from: custom accounting software
Transaction Volume: 2400 orders per month

***Ziyad Brothers Importing®*, a major food wholesaler, has eliminated the high cost of maintaining custom software by implementing Solomon from Microsoft Business Solutions®. With relatively minor customization, the new software tracks millions of potential pricing permutations, handling the company's complicated pricing issues even better than the custom software. The switch has nearly eliminated software maintenance expenses because the customizations don't have to be modified to install software upgrades.**

Ziyad Brothers Importing began as a small retail outlet on the south side of Chicago, specializing in hard to find Middle Eastern food products as well as the first pita bread bakery in Chicago. The company currently distributes to 46 states and six countries. Ziyad is now branching out beyond the ethnic-only market to mainstream supermarkets.

Business Challenge

Pricing in the food wholesaling business is based on a complicated system of quantity-based discounts, matching prices, and negotiations with individual customers. In the past, Ziyad Brothers felt that the only way to accurately price its products was to develop custom software that embedded these various pricing options directly in the code. The disadvantage of this approach is that the company was forced, first of all, to develop the code from scratch, and second to continually upgrade it, for example, to take account of changes in tax law or to provide new reports for users. Ziyad Brothers found that the cost of maintaining the custom code ran about 25% of the initial development cost on an annual basis.

As the custom software grew older, managers became increasingly frustrated about being locked into an older environment that was difficult for users that were used to modern Windows applications. Managers also felt that it was quite difficult to get information out of the program. Even the smallest changes to reports required getting a programmer involved so managers were often forced to manually input information into a spreadsheet and manipulate it into the format they needed.

Solution

Microsoft Platform Enables Easy Customizations

Recently, Nasseem Ziyad, General Manager of the company, evaluated all of the leading midmarket business software and determined that Solomon offered several significant advantages that made it easier to customize than other software. The program is written in Microsoft Visual Basic® language and architected so that customizations are created on a level that is separate from the core program. This means that users can implement upgrades without having to make any changes to the customizations. "We tested Solomon along with several other comparable programs and came to the conclusion that it best met our needs," Ziyad said. The company contracted with Omnios LLC, a Microsoft Business Solutions Partner based in Buffalo Grove, Illinois, to provide the customization as well as installation, data conversion and training services. "Omnios did a

“Moving from custom to packaged software made it possible to turn over the maintenance task to Solomon and Omnios. This approach is much less expensive than building our own. All in all, our new business software gives us all the power we need to grow to the next level and beyond at a very reasonable price.”

Nassem Ziyad
General Manager
Ziyad Brothers Importing

great job getting us up and running on Solomon with a minimum of aggravation,” Ziyad said.

Solomon’s Flexibility Increases Profit

The customization to Solomon Order Management created by Omnios determines the pricing based on the quantity and the discount schedule that has been negotiated with the particular customer. The pricing can be overridden either by a regional sale schedule or by individual item pricing that is again negotiated with the customer. Solomon also provides the ability to change prices of an item for all customers or a specified group of customers automatically, such as when the cost of the item suddenly rises. Each time an order is entered, the Solomon indicates the last price that the customer paid for that item so the sales rep can easily check it. After the order is entered, Solomon prints an order confirmation that is faxed to the customer so that they can sign off on the product, pricing, and quantity. This practice, which was implemented at the same time as the new software, has saved the company a considerable amount of money by reducing the number of returns. “All in all, Solomon has very nicely duplicated the features of our custom software and even provided us with a few advantages,” Ziyad said.

Detailed Reports Create Opportunities

The biggest difference between the new and the old software is the more advanced user interface and reporting features that makes it much easier to obtain information from it. “With Solomon we can create custom reports on the fly using the FRx report writer,” Ziyad said. “For example, I can check our sales region-by-region, customer-by-customer and item-by item, to see where our increases and losses are. I can easily limit the report to particular customers, particular regions or particular items in a matter of seconds. Now we can easily spot trends such as this cookie has dropped off for a certain customer but they are doing very well with a certain cheese. Based on this type of feedback we have improved our distribution strategy by encouraging our distributors to focus on items that they are good at selling and in some cases offering exclusivity as an incentive. In the past, we didn’t have the information we needed to make these kind of decisions.”

Benefits

Tracking Inventory and Saving Time

Ziyad said that the company also creates reports that save time by recalculating minimum order quantities and calling out just the items that are below the suggested minimums. “In the past, we had to work with a huge report that listed the quantity in stock of every item,” he said. “Someone had to go through it item by item and figure out which ones need to be ordered. It was almost impossible not to miss items so we often ran out of products and lost sales. The new report automatically calculates the minimum order quantities based on formulas that we define that even take sales spikes into account and then compares this value to what we have in stock. It has reduced the amount of time needed to perform the ordering process from two or three weeks to two or three days per month. This report and the others are far superior to what we had in the past, because the person who is using the numbers

can tweak them as he goes so the reports continually evolve towards providing better information for decision-making.”

“Using the Solomon application is much less expensive than building our own software,” Ziyad said. “I also appreciate the fact that Solomon has many capabilities that we haven’t used yet, but expect to in the future. For example, we are planning to divide our business into several divisions and will use Solomon Multi-Company features to manage each division as a separate profit center, while only having to maintain one database.”

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

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