

Case study

Synq Solutions

PathGuide's Warehouse Management System and Intermec Hardware Takes Synq Solutions to Next Level



Marketing Organization Utilizes PathGuide's Latitude WMS, and Intermec Mobile Computers Leading to Growth in Order Volume and Customer Satisfaction

Synq Solutions is an end-to-end provider of Merchandising, Training and Marketing Solutions for some of the most recognized and respected brands in the world. The company leverages innovative technology throughout its printing, fulfillment and distribution operations to lower costs, increase agility, and improve performance. Annually, Synq ships over three million unique orders, containing over 40 million items, to thousands of locations worldwide. Synq's East and West coast facilities, combined with its ability to deliver personalized and localized messaging, uniquely positions the company to deliver ongoing value to its clients.

Synq hasn't always been able to easily handle such a large order volume. However, in 2004 it decided to leverage a technology-driven approach to take the company and its revenues to the next level. To automate all of its processes, Synq turned to PathGuide Technologies' Latitude Warehouse Management System (WMS). Latitude enabled Synq to expand its volume literally overnight by automating much of the fulfillment process alongside Intermec hardware. This not only increased efficiency, but also gave employees and customers real-time access and visibility to the status of orders. In

short, Latitude enabled Synq Solutions to simultaneously grow both its order volume and its customer satisfaction.

"Without leveraging new technology and specifically PathGuide's Latitude WMS, I am confident that Synq would not have made such rapid progress to industry leadership," said Mike Snyder, CEO at Synq Solutions. "Before Latitude, we were limited in how many orders we could process because, simply put, people-power can only handle so much volume. Most importantly, the value we provide our customers has increased along with our customer satisfaction."

Latitude is a software suite that automates warehousing and distribution to provide real-time online information about inventory. It automates all operations from receiving and order picking, to manifesting and truck route/stop management. Latitude integrates seamlessly with major ERP business systems such as Microsoft Dynamics, Activant, Infor, J.D. Edwards and Oracle.

With rugged, mobile hardware, Latitude was able to provide Synq an additional business advantage. Latitude drives Synq's 52 Intermec handheld RF Terminals and



over 40 barcode label printers – ensuring information seamlessly flows across the Synq network. Specifically, Synq utilizes Intermec's CK30 mobile computers, enabling real-time data collection and distribution through the Latitude WMS.

Since implementing Latitude and Intermec hardware in 2004, Synq Solutions has seen dramatic and concrete improvements in its warehouse operations. In addition, Synq Solutions is positioned to efficiently and effectively expand the business. Synq Solutions has achieved the following results:

- Increased efficiency so that Synq has the ability to handle five to ten times the number of orders with the same physical resources
- An estimated cost-savings of hundreds of thousands of dollars a year
- On-time performance of 99.9 percent

People-Power Not So Powerful

Before installing Latitude, workers had to manually view each item and then manually enter each product into a database, wasting valuable time. Finding a product's location was also an inefficient undertaking that involved looking up a product's ID number and then finding its location using an excel spreadsheet.

"We did an outstanding job supporting our customers but it was an extremely tedious task in order to find a single item," said Mark Taylor, Process Engineer at Synq Solutions. "You can imagine the strain it put on our physical resources. That translated into an enormous amount of money being wasted on employees that could be performing other tasks, not to mention lost revenue opportunities because we simply couldn't scale fast enough to handle new projects."

As part of Synq's business, the company queues projects for printing and shipping based on priority. With so much inventory coming and going, there was no way Synq could keep up with the increasing number of orders – and their status – manually.

"Because people managed almost every warehouse procedure, our manual effort was extensive and at times not effective nor efficient," added Taylor. "For example, if an employee mis-keyed a number, that mistake would ultimately trickle down through the entire process. When company processes and manual efforts have the potential to end up affecting customer

satisfaction, that's a clear danger zone that needs to be fixed immediately."

A Hybrid Approach To Promotional Orders

Promotional orders are the bread and butter of Synq's business. Those promotional orders and the associated BOMs (bill of materials) are handled through a manual picking, kitting and packaging process. Synq keeps the process simple, distinct and efficient so that as needed it has the ability to readily increase staff on demand through temporary labor. At times throughout the year, Synq has spikes in demand that call for shipping unique kitted orders to over 23,000 locations in a three day period.

"Without Latitude, we had to either manually reconcile the promotional and normal inventory before cycle counting, or buy hundreds of handheld scanners and train the temporary staff on how to maintain inventory integrity," said Taylor. "Frankly, there's no way we could afford to buy the scanners and constantly train temporary staff, which left us with a manual inventory count – until we talked with PathGuide."

Working together, PathGuide and Synq devised a hybrid manual and automated approach that allowed Latitude to maintain system and inventory integrity for both manually picking for promotional orders and picking normal sales orders. This auto fulfillment for promotional orders manages the inventory that's brought to the line in a live environment, using the order as a reference when systematically removing the requested item quantity from a separate "promotional bin." As each promotional bin is replenished throughout a project, the inventory is being picked as part of the auto fulfillment. By incorporating the "promotional" picking into an automated process, inventory is relieved on a real-time basis.

"Now when the promotional project is complete, the job of cycle counting the remaining inventory is quick and smooth," said Taylor. "This allows us to rapidly get the remaining inventory back into their primary normal daily bins to support sales orders."

Automation And Integration

After recognizing that a complete overhaul was needed in order to automate all of its warehouse processes, Synq began evaluating WMS solutions in 2003.

"We visited a number of sites with various WMS providers solutions," said Taylor. "We found that Latitude was the only solution that actually 'walked the walk' when it came to performance."

The key to Synq's search was not only a system that displayed a full automation suite, but also one that could integrate with its current ERP system, Microsoft Dynamics GP (formerly Microsoft Great Plains).

"Our ERP solution worked for us so we weren't willing to switch ERPs just to get a good WMS. Not only did we get a best-in-breed solution with Latitude, but we also got a company willing to help us integrate the product with Microsoft Dynamics. It's that willingness to be flexible that really set PathGuide apart from the pack," said Taylor.

Taylor also noted that PathGuide's personal approach was an added bonus. "Integrating the two platforms was a daunting task, but PathGuide worked with us day and night to ensure it was a successful project. Now I can call on PathGuide at any time and I even know most of the tech support personnel on a first name basis, a rarity with today's outsourcing."

Customers Can Easily Check Order Status

With Latitude, Synq suddenly saw an opportunity to scale to new heights.

"Virtually overnight, we knew exactly where a product was in our warehouse or on the assembly line without a person having to evaluate inventory," said Taylor. "We could instantaneously find a product quantity or status of an order at any of our locations by a click of a button."

Latitude also gave customers and Synq's client-facing employees real-time access to vital information.

"It wasn't just operations employees, but program managers and customers that could find live information for sales inventory and order status on the Web through Latitude. Now customers could access exactly when a product arrived at our warehouse, when an item was printed, when the order was shipped, and when it was expected to arrive. They could also make real-time requests and order alterations."

Besides streamlining processes, Taylor said Latitude increased Synq's bottom line. "By minimizing the amount of people-power needed to manually enter and retrieve product information, we saw a return on the initial investment in less than six months and an ongoing annual return of more than 100 percent."

Switching to an automated inventory process enabled Synq to be much more efficient with its time, resulting in more orders processed. For example, with Latitude, Synq could receive an order for multiple items at 3pm, and custom print, pack and ship the order in the same day.

Picking Latitude Revolutionizes a Business

Today, Synq Solutions is recognized as the leader in the variable on demand print and fulfillment marketplace. With

millions of shipments coming and going from its facilities every year Synq has the volume, capabilities and technology in place to remain the leader. The company isn't shy about pointing to PathGuide as one of the main reasons for their rise to industry leadership.

"There is absolutely no way we could have scaled our business and supported the world-class clients we have without PathGuide and Latitude. We have seen tens of millions of dollars in added revenue over the last four years as a direct result of having the technology in place."

In the future, Taylor says Synq will utilize more Latitude capabilities in order to continue growing its bottom line. This includes using the new capability in Latitude version 9.0. This functionality enables users to

easily create reports and charts on-demand to gain insight into warehouse performance and employee productivity.

"The great thing is, as we continue to grow, we know Latitude can grow with us."

About PathGuide Technologies

PathGuide Technologies, Inc., a privately held company founded in 1989, is a leading provider of warehouse management solutions for small to midsized wholesalers and industrial distributors across North America. PathGuide's software and services help suppliers increase productivity and order accuracy, improve customer service and lower labor costs, ultimately driving greater profitability. To learn how distributors of all sizes can benefit from improved warehouse management, visit www.pathguide.com.

North America

Corporate Headquarters

6001 36th Avenue West
Everett, Washington 98203
Phone: (425) 348-2600
Fax: (425) 355-9551

North Latin America Headquarters Office

Mexico
Phone: +52 55 52-41-48-00
Fax: +52 55 52-11-81-21

South Latin America Headquarters Office

Brazil
Phone: +55 11 5502.6770
Fax: +55 11 5502.6780

Europe/Middle East & Africa Headquarters Office

Reading, United Kingdom
Phone: +44 118 923 0800
Fax: +44 118 923 0801

Asia Pacific Headquarters Office

Singapore
Phone: +65 6303 2100
Fax: +65 6303 2199

Internet

www.intermec.com
Worldwide Locations:
www.intermec.com/locations

Sales

Toll Free NA: (800) 934-3163
Toll in NA: (425) 348-2726
Freephone ROW:
00 800 4488 8844
Toll ROW: +44 134 435 0296

OEM Sales

Phone: (425) 348-2762

Media Sales

Phone: (513) 874-5882

Customer Service and Support

Toll Free NA: (800) 755-5505
Toll in NA: (425) 356-1799

Copyright © 2009 Intermec Technologies Corporation. All rights reserved. Intermec is a registered trademark of Intermec Technologies Corporation. PathGuide is a registered trademark of PathGuide Technologies Inc. in the United States. Synq and Synq Solutions are registered trademarks of Synq Solutions, Inc. in the United States. Printed in the U.S.A. 611982-01A 07/09

In a continuing effort to improve our products, Intermec Technologies Corporation reserves the right to change specifications and features without prior notice.

