Smith Paints refines the formula for success with TRAVERSE

Smith Paint Products was formed in 1929, providing paint for central Pennsylvania long before giant home improvement stores existed. Over 80 years later, Smith Paints is still going strong, and now specializes in a wide array of formulas for all kinds of covering applications. They now focus on manufacturing and distributing environmentally friendly coatings for just about every imaginable use, both industrial and artistic. Smith Paints' products are used by contractors and craftsmen alike, and have been used everywhere from award-winning taxidermy displays to the refurbished brick streets of Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington D.C.

Chuck Brunner, Jr., the third generation co-owner of the company, explains Smith Paints' secret to long-term success in a world of big-box retailers. "The secret to our longevity is agility," says Brunner. "We're in tune with the markets that we service, rather than a behemoth that has a bunch of R&D and red tape. If we need to make a change in a formula, we don't need to go through a hundred people to make that change. We are able to do that on the fly, and are able to give them a quality product."

Now employing around 20 people in five major warehouse locations, Smith Paints is a stable and agile company that has the power to respond to their customers' needs. In the last decade, however, Smith Paints found that agility being hampered by off-the-shelf business software that refused to grow as their company, formulas, and warehousing needs expanded. In typical Smith Paints fashion, Brunner set to work to make the changes necessary for success.

A flexible company replaces inflexible software

In 2005, in spite of resourceful use and memory expansions, Smith Paints had stretched the abilities of their out-of-the-box software responsible for their accounting and the management of their specialized formulations. "We were losing the ability to reference our information," says Brunner. "Therefore, our financial statements started to become off. Billing would sometimes lose an invoice on us. These are things that you just do NOT want to hear."

To help fix their problems, Brunner got in touch with Jason Groff, Michael Groff, and Mike Bailey of Technology Solutions Associates. "With regard to Technology Solutions... they're exceptional," says Brunner. "They're a rare breed in the fact that they understand the minutia, but can also relay a broader understanding. Jason can get really, really deep into the minutia with you, but he can also pull back and give you the 30,000 foot view."

With the help of Technology Solutions, Smith Paints started evaluating alternatives that would satisfy a growing manufacturer. After evaluating a number of possible software packages—including specialty applications specifically for the paint industry—Smith Paints chose to install and implement TRAVERSE business and accounting software from Open Systems, Inc.

TRAVERSE delivers a full palette of options

Immediately upon implementation, Brunner was struck by the variety of ways that TRAVERSE stores and delivers critical business data. "There's a bunch of different ways to get to information, which is great," says Brunner. "Having too many options I don't think is ever a problem. All of the sudden, when you start to get your arms around it, you realize what this tool is that you have as opposed to what the tool we used before."

Just like Smith Paints, TRAVERSE uses stability and flexibility to help its users. This has provided Smith Paints with a path to manage their complex formulations and inventory, all while answering the myriad needs of a growing company. "I can manipulate the TRAVERSE software so that it can accommodate almost anything I want to do," says Brunner.

Smith takes advantage of TRAVERSE to modernize further

Having a flexible software solution has also inspired Brunner to further modernize the day-to-day operations at Smith Paints. "At this point, I am arguably still in the 1970s where I'm taking visual inventory," laughs Brunner. Smith Paints plans to close the loop between purchasing and inventory with TRAVERSE's full integration between applications. "We've been able to create our formulas in TRAVERSE, and then the plan is to create work orders to track our formulations in order to depreciate."

Brunner also looks forward to implementing mobile warehouse capabilities in TRAVERSE to reduce the input necessary right off the truck. "I have a laptop with a scanner, that I'm actually going to be scanning raw materials as they come in and saying, 'Okay, this is what has been received, this is the billing that has been given to us,'" says Brunner. "I'll be literally closing the entire circle of this process, having that raw material deducted by Bill of Materials through a work order, and then having that completed and put into inventory."

The future is automated

By putting a premium on the needs of their customers, Smith Paints has survived, thrived, and grown their business into a unique set of niches. Taking advantage of TRAVERSE's stability has allowed Chuck and his crew to concentrate on the important tasks of making their clients happy. The ability to use TRAVERSE to further improve and automate their processes from top to bottom opens up new possibilities for the long-successful company. "We can utilize TRAVERSE to implement our processes to be all automated," says Brunner of the future possibilities. "And that's the goal of any business, right?"

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