

IBM and Butler Commerce Solutions help dinnerware importer improve productivity and customer service



Overview

The Challenge

Vietri, Inc., wanted to consolidate its information technology systems and eliminate manual record keeping without adding new employees or buying new hardware and software

The Solution

Freedom Series/ec21 from Butler Commerce Solutions, built on IBM DB2® for iSeries® and WebSphere Application Server in a Software as a Service (SaaS) model

The Benefit

Vietri reduced inventory and shipping costs and raised order accuracy

It wasn't a mom and pop operation but rather a mom and two daughters who founded Vietri, Inc.

On a trip to Italy in 1983, Lee Gravely and her daughters, Susan and Frances, were very much taken by the handcrafted dinnerware at their hotel. They went to the factory where it was made, loaded up a metal suitcase with samples and brought them back to the United States to sell.

From that improbable beginning, Vietri, based in Hillsborough, North Carolina, grew to become the largest importer of Italian handcrafted products for high-end specialty stores.

That first metal suitcase the family used to import merchandise soon became part of the Vietri legend. But until recently, the company inventory system was almost as antiquated.

Hodgepodge of antiquated IT pieces

As Clay Beck, Vietri controller, explained, "The PC-based systems we had weren't compatible, our ledger system was a hybrid and much of our record keeping was manual. In fact, if someone wanted to know the location of an item in the warehouse, the source of information was on large blue index cards. It wasn't the way to run a growing business.

"We couldn't afford a full-time IT staff member to maintain our systems -- let alone update them. We examined proposals from a few companies but the decision came down to the Software as a Service (SaaS) solution that Butler Commerce Solutions proposed. I knew their products were targeted toward our industry," Beck explained.

Butler Commerce Solutions, headquartered in Raleigh, North Carolina, is a wholesale distribution software developer and services company. It opened for business in 1985 and became an IBM Business Partner the following year.



"SaaS works for us.

Butler and IBM take care of everything."

Clay Beck,
controller,
Vietri, Inc.

The solution at Vietri is based on Butler Commerce Solutions' Freedom Series/ec21 using IBM DB2 for iSeries and WebSphere Application Server in a SaaS business model.

"The SaaS solution works for us," Beck said. "Butler and IBM take care of everything. As a result, we don't need an IT staff and we've been able to reduce the number of people associated with inventory and shipping. We've increased efficiency throughout the company. When you want information, you don't have to guess; it's all available.

"With Butler's help, we've added bar coding and it's made a big difference. There's less manual key entry of information because we scan everything in. Should a stock picker make a mistake, we know it immediately and can correct the error. We've also implemented weighing each of our offerings so when we fill a box we know if it's got the correct items."

Beck said that knowing IBM was involved in developing the solution meant "security became a non-issue for us."

IBM teaming 'valuable tool' for Butler Commerce

John Butler, president and chief executive officer of Butler Commerce Solutions, said, "I know that Vietri looked at some of our competitors, but I believe we offered two features that nobody else could — a Software as a Service solution and a fully integrated warehouse system."

Butler characterized his company's relationship with the IBM PartnerWorld® Industry Networks as

"a highly valuable tool." His company participates in the wholesale industry.

"We're a Premier IBM Business Partner. It's been very useful to us. We've conducted joint marketing campaigns — including online marketing -- with IBM and are using the IBM Innovation Centers to test new software that we're developing," Butler said. "We're also looking at bringing potential customers to the centers for demos."

Butler Commerce Solutions develops, markets and supports a line of wholesale distribution software for warehouse management, inventory control and supply chain management. It also provides its customers with installation, implementation, training and on-going support.

The relationship between Butler Commerce and IBM is an example of how IBM Business Partners can benefit from working with IBM to deliver SaaS solutions.

In addition to delivery assistance, IBM offers help with solution design and development. It provides a range of systems that give business partners the choice of technology, performance, scalability and operating systems. IBM offers its business partners' customers hosting services for applications and Web sites. But its SaaS offerings go much further to include managed services and applications services.

Learn more

To learn more about IBM SaaS, visit ibm.com/partnerworld/saas

To learn more about Butler Commerce Solutions, visit bcafreedom.com

To learn more about Vietri, visit vietri.com



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