

IBM, DPS and Wine Management Systems lend high-tech assistance to age-old tradition of winemaking



Overview

The Challenge

Nicholson Ranch, a small, family-run winery in Sonoma Valley, California, wanted a cost-effective automated system to replace its handwritten records and Excel spreadsheets

The Solution

DPS and Wine Management Systems' Management Software Solution using IBM DB2® for iSeries® and IBM WebSphere® Express 5.1 in a Software as a Service business model

The Benefit

Real-time inventory control eliminates laborious manual effort that detracted from the company's winemaking business

Winemaking goes back untold centuries. For example, Noah, after surviving the flood described in the Book of Genesis, started a vineyard. But in his day, it was relatively easy.

Noah didn't have to comply with regulations mandated by the Alcohol Tax and Trade Bureau and the Bio Terrorism Act of 2002, nor did other winemakers use his facilities and want to keep track of their individual production.

While the basic principles of turning grapes into wine haven't changed that much, the business side of winemaking is much more complicated today — especially for a small winery like Nicholson Ranch, which is in the southern foothills of Sonoma Valley in California.

At the Nicholson family-run operations, it took a great deal of hand labor to track inventory, comply with government rules, compute

depreciation of wine barrels for income tax purposes and record wine produced from grapes provided by neighboring vintners in what is called Nicholson's "custom crush" business.

Experts in winemaking — not IT

"We're in the winemaking business — not the IT business," said Mike Smith, assistant winemaker at Nicholson Ranch. "We don't have an IT person on staff, so we were delighted to find an IT system that only requires us to use a secure Web browser to access all our data."

The Nicholson solution search led to Wine Management Systems, a San Rafael, California, company founded in 2006 to provide an affordable, easy-to-use automated production system for smaller wineries.



“Given IBM support of business partners and commitment to providing highly reliable platforms and tools, we can honestly say IBM has been a critical factor in our success.”

Dan Barrow,
chief executive officer,
DPS

Pat Oates, Wine Management Systems president, said, "We saw the needs of this market segment and conceived the vision and design of how to meet them. We validated the concept through hundreds of hours of client visits but didn't have the technical skills to realize the vision." For the solution infrastructure, detail design and programming, Oates turned to IBM Premier Business Partner DPS.

Headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana, DPS was able to match Wine Management Systems' winery knowledge with proven application development skills and experience with the Software as a Service business model. Oates said, "This brings the best possible solution to Nicholson Ranch and other small wineries – Wine Management Systems' industry-specific application knowledge on the front line to help solve business problems and DPS behind the scenes creating the solution tools and reliable hosting environment."

Smith said the solution is easy to learn. "We looked at alternatives but they're strictly for big operations that can afford to shell out in the neighborhood \$20,000, plus additional fees for employee training sessions and inevitable system upgrades," Smith explained. "Instead, we pay a moderate monthly fee and get everything we need."

The solution replaced an antiquated combination of hand-written diary entries in a notebook, Excel spreadsheets and a white board.

Confident because IBM technology underlies the system

The solution uses IBM WebSphere Express 5.1 and IBM DB2 for iSeries, and runs on IBM System i™. Smith

said he was well aware that the system was based on IBM offerings. "I have more confidence knowing IBM is behind the system rather than some startup that may not be around next year. IBM is an established world leader and innovator in IT," he said.

Long-time IBM partner realizes mutually beneficial relationship

Dan Barrow, chief executive officer of DPS, said his company uses IBM software to develop its solutions because "it is the most reliable to handle our applications." DPS depends on IBM System i "because it never breaks down, it never goes down," he said.

Software as a Service is "an excellent business model. Customers love it because they don't have to make big investments in IT," Barrow said. "Given IBM support of business partners and commitment to providing highly reliable platforms and tools, we can honestly say IBM has been a critical factor in our success," Barrow explained.

DPS, founded in 1972, has hundreds of customers in Canada, the Caribbean and the United States.

IBM offers extensive SaaS options

In addition to delivery assistance, IBM can provide 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/isv/saas

To learn more about DPS, visit dpslink.com

To learn more about Wine Management Systems, visit winmanagementsystems.com

To learn more about Nicholson Ranch, visit nicholsonranch.com



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