

Eagle Creek Has Efficient Warehouse Operations in the Bag

CASE STUDY

EAGLE CREEK. - For 30 years Eagle Creek has taken all that Mother Earth can give and given it right back. Durable duffels, comfortable backpacks, organized totes, and other products that you need before you even know you need them. Every single, solitary one has a lifetime guarantee. And now Eagle Creek products come with a guarantee on the speediest delivery available - to get your adventurous soul on its way.



Eagle Creek had managed to grow into one of the top manufacturers of quality adventure travel luggage and accessories in the US with largely manual and spreadsheet-based warehouse processes. But as the demands of Eagle Creek's specialty retail customers began to get more complex, including direct ship of Internet-based orders to customers and shipping by the case to their distribution centers and stores, Eagle Creek knew that to address those new requirements meant a new approach to distribution.

"Now we are dealing with Web customers who want their orders shipped in small quantities, ones and twos, and delivered the next day," recalls Jerry McAllister, distribution manager at the privately held company's Vista, California, distribution facility. "That changed the dynamics of how we approach distribution. I needed a warehouse management system to direct my guys to bulk storage put away, with an automated process."

The WMS system also needed a way to share that information with the rest of their warehouse associates to improve accuracy, and ensure that orders were processed quickly to meet customers rising expectations.

Eagle Creek selected Provia Software's ViaWare Warehouse Management System (WMS) and SPS (Small Parcel Shipping) software products, integrating them with their PointMan Enterprise Resource Planning system. This software combination optimizes Eagle Creek's supply chain and allows them to deliver products to retailers in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible.

Provia's ViaWare WMS offered the comfort of the backing and support of an established developer, he notes. "They've done a lot of large companies; they know what they're talking about. They've been around the block. It's like a 24-hour security blanket."

Hearty Hardware

Those same requirements extended to selection of the hardware that would enable the new warehouse management system to do its work. The company installed a Cisco 802.11b wireless network and wanted flexible RF computers to interact with the WMS via wireless connectivity. Eagle Creek thoroughly surveyed the market to find the right fit.

"We played with a lot of different handhelds and models and liked what we saw with LXE," says McAllister. "The others were bulkier, trigger-type units. That might work at a hardware store, but we wanted something that would attach to forklifts."

Eagle Creek selected LXE's MX3X, a Windows® CE .NET/Intel® XScale® based rugged portable computer that can be used in both handheld and vehicle-mounted configurations.



"You snap it off the forklift and it becomes a handheld, which we use for cycle counting," says McAllister. "Of all the brands we played with, the consensus with everyone - even with IS - was that LXE was the top of its league, and amazingly priced. It's a great value." Eagle Creek also uses the MX3Xs for put away, replenishment and picking, and to make inquiries to locate inventory.

That choice has been reinforced in the units' performance, McAllister says. In the year since the computers were deployed, the MX3Xs have delivered 100% reliability. "We haven't had one hiccup, and the guys love the way the screens look - there have been no complaints. It's a great tool to have."

Eagle Creek also deployed Zebra thermal printers -

LXE®

"warhorses," according to McAllister - that are used to generate UCC-128 shipping labels for orders moving to retail DCs, and UPS labels for direct customer orders, created via ViaWare SPS.

Results for the Long Haul

Eagle Creek spent time testing and improving the application, and used that opportunity to thoroughly understand and customize the application and refine warehouse processes, including installing material handling systems to simplify and streamline picking and shipping operations. That has significantly boosted productivity.



Though they used the LXE computers for a full year beforehand, Eagle Creek completed the installation process with a go-live of the Provia software in January 2006. Already, the company has seen increased accuracy, increased visibility to order status, decreased inventory, and the solution has helped Eagle Creek make smarter decisions about shipping. Automated receiving and shipping label compliance will allow the

manufacturer to expand its warehousing and distribution functionality to better serve customers.

The ViaWare system keeps Eagle Creek's host software up to date with overall inventory levels, while delivering the detailed order and inventory management visibility and control necessary to keep close tabs on distribution. Sales personnel are also able to access the system for available-to-promise inventory data to share with customers.

The solution not only helps Eagle Creek keep existing customers happy, but "we can go get some new customers now because of the turnaround time we can offer," says McAllister. "If you can serve the specialty markets you can serve anyone."



About LXE Inc. LXE Inc. improves supply chain performance by applying over 36 years' experience developing wireless products and solutions. From wireless computers, advanced auto-ID technologies, and wireless network infrastructure, to our award-winning customer support - LXE's easy-to-use products are as reliable as the people who install and support them.

Based in Norcross, Georgia, LXE also offers a full range of turnkey services, including radio integration, project and installation management, network design, technical support, and repair services. LXE is a wholly-owned subsidiary of EMS Technologies, Inc. (NASDAQ: ELMG), and has offices worldwide. For more information, visit www.lxe.com.