



ORDER MANAGEMENT CASE STUDY



Promotional products supplier saves costs and improves accuracy through Idea Custom Solutions order management services

"The Idea Custom Solutions Team is doing a great job and has been very consistent with meeting their daily productivity goals. Plus, they have been very receptive to taking on new challenges!"

—Director of Customer Services at leading promotional products supplier

The client is a leading supplier of custom imprinted promotional products, which it sells across the U.S. and Europe through a chain of distributors. The client's mission is to make top-quality, affordable products available, while continuously developing innovative new product lines. The company has a solid reputation of exemplary service and reliable delivery established over more than 50 years in the industry.

Challenges

In 2006, the client was incurring high costs in hiring and training for its in-house order management operation. Finding the right employees and retaining them was also hard. Sales in the promotional products industry are seasonal, adding to the difficulty in staffing.

The client has a diverse range of products all with different specifications that need to be understood by the order-taking personnel. This requires close attention to details and understanding of dealer requirements.

Another major challenge was receiving a large number of orders from dealers through various sources, including the website, email, telephone and fax, and managing them through a central application that also handled inventory, credit checks, shipping and invoicing functions.

Due to the crucial role of the application in enabling visibility across the supply chain, even small errors in order entry had severe effects on the overall operations. Moreover, confidentiality of data was of utmost importance. As a result, the client wanted to restrict integration of their system with external providers and would only allow very limited access.

Challenges

- High costs of the order management function, including costs of hiring and training
- Difficulty in staffing for peak seasons and sudden spikes in volume
- Managing orders effectively through a centralized system
- Enabling visibility across the supply chain
- Improving accuracy of order entry

Why Idea Custom Solutions

- Trained, experienced personnel
- Coverage of holidays, weekends and peak volumes
- 99.7% accuracy
- Structured processes
- State-of-the-art technology with no capital outlay

Results

- 800+ orders processed daily
- Accuracy levels of 99.7%
- Capacity during volume spikes
- Lower operating costs
- Increased efficiency in the order processing cycle



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"I want to thank the Idea Custom Solutions Team for the extra hours they worked on Saturday. What a wonderful job was accomplished and it was comforting this morning to see that we were caught up. Again thank you for the support and teamwork. We appreciate the quick reaction on such short notice."

—Director of Customer Services at leading promotional products supplier

The Idea Custom Solutions

The client partnered with Idea Custom Solutions to transform their order management process. The goals were to reduce the cost of operations and concentrate their internal personnel on the company's core competencies.

The Idea Custom Solutions team started with a thorough study of the client's processes and procedures. An effective solution was developed to address the challenges and help the client successfully turn over the function to the Idea Custom Solutions team and improve the operational efficiency of the order management process.

The Idea Custom Solutions IT Team also performed a comprehensive analysis of the client systems and its protocols to design the infrastructure needed to maintain security, while allowing the order entry team access to meet the requirements for speed and efficiency.

The order entry team started working on a small project and successfully proved its ability to perform, Idea Custom Solutions worked with the client as an extension of the internal team and trained in new products through online video conferencing and VOIP solutions.

Client Benefits

Some of the key advantages provided by Idea Custom Solutions include:

- Efficient order management
- Additional capacity to handle volumes during peak seasons
- Extra coverage for weekends in case of high volumes
- 24/7 IT support to ensure smooth functioning

Value Delivered

The relationship has grown over the last five years from a single product type with 100 orders per day to several product lines with more than 800 orders a day.

Idea Custom Solutions has enabled the client to free up internal resources to focus on the core business, reduce operating costs and increase efficiency.

Idea Custom Solutions is the premier global provider of high-volume graphic production and business services to promotional products, decorating, printing, sign, award and other companies and is an Affinity Express brand. AffinityX and Affinity Express are trademarks and sole property of Affinity Express, Inc.

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