



Overview

Country: United States

Industry: Import/export

Customer Profile

Headquartered near Boston and founded in 2000, the US Export Store imports, exports, and markets consumer products worldwide using a network of more than 250 distributors and affiliates.

Business Situation

With growth, the US Export Store needed a more efficient way of administering financial and customer management and to maintain competitiveness against larger and longer-established operations.

Solution

The US Export Store deployed an integrated and comprehensive solution based on Microsoft Office Small Business Accounting 2006 and other products in Microsoft Office Small Business Management Edition 2006.

Benefits

- Support of business growth
- Better customer communications
- Efficiency boost of 15 percent
- Ability to hire new staff
- Opening of new revenue stream

Import/Export Firm Boosts Efficiencies by Integrating Financial and Customer Data

“Small Business Accounting 2006 has helped us increase our administrative efficiency by 15 percent.”

Rick Jarvis, Chief Executive Officer, US Export Store

The US Export Store exports consumer products worldwide using a network of over 250 distributors and affiliates. For its first five years in business, the company managed financials through a manual bookkeeping system based on Microsoft® Office Excel® and the use of an off-site accountant. But with growth, the company needed a more efficient approach to managing its financials and business relationships. This challenge led the company to deploy an integrated solution for financial and customer management based on Microsoft Office Small Business Management Edition 2006, including Microsoft Small Business Accounting 2006 and Microsoft Outlook® 2003 with Business Contact Manager Update. This solution is helping the company to remain successful against larger and more established competitors and to expand its operations with a new retail storefront and wholesale showroom.

“Using Small Business Accounting 2006 helped us to grow our own business as well as that of the manufacturer and distributor involved.”

Rick Jarvis, Chief Executive Officer, US Export Store

Situation

Founded in 2000 and headquartered near Boston, the US Export Store imports, exports, and markets consumer products worldwide using a network of more than 250 distributors and affiliates. Through its Web site, participation in trade shows, and being a featured U.S. exporter on more than 20 U.S. Embassy Web sites, the company trades nearly 5,000 goods ranging from consumer products to fine arts to earth-moving equipment.

Facing its toughest business challenges from overseas companies that are typically larger or longer established, the US Export Store competes by minimizing costs and maximizing the level of service offered to customers. “By keeping costs low, we can work on a commission basis, which is essential in low-volume transactions,” says President and Chief Executive Officer Rick Jarvis. “And by keeping service levels high, we can maintain the solid relationships that are key to success in this business.”

With success comes growth, and with the company’s recent growth have come new challenges to remaining successful. After a few years spent cultivating a solid customer base, Jarvis recognized the need for a more efficient way of managing the company’s financials and customer communications. “We were maintaining our books in one set of documents and our customer quotes, orders, licensing, reporting, invoicing, and other correspondence in another, mostly hard copy. As a result, our records were kept pretty much all over the place,” he says. “This cost us time and money, because we often could not respond quickly enough to a potential customer’s request for information.”

Solution

So Jarvis considered a new approach to administering the business. At first, he considered QuickBooks, but changed his

mind after spending some time with the product during a formal training course. “QuickBooks took two days just to install and configure, so I figured it was going to be more trouble to learn and maintain than I wanted to put into it,” he says.

Having learned about the upcoming release of Microsoft® Office Small Business Management Edition 2006, including Microsoft Office Small Business Accounting 2006 and Microsoft Office Outlook® 2003 with Business Contact Manager Update, Jarvis decided to look closely at those products instead. He was already using Microsoft Office programs extensively at the time, including Microsoft Word for most documents, Microsoft Office Publisher 2003 for marketing materials, Microsoft Office FrontPage® 2003 for the company’s Web site, and Microsoft Office Outlook 2003 for e-mail. In addition, US Export Store Chief Financial Officer Mei Jarvis was highly familiar with Microsoft Excel® spreadsheet software, having used it for over 15 years to handle bookkeeping for US Export Store and other companies.

With the help of fellow enthusiasts of Small Business Accounting 2006 from the local Microsoft user group, Jarvis installed and configured the US Export Store’s Office solution. Today, the company uses Small Business Accounting 2006, an integrated component of Office Small Business Management Edition 2006, for everything from financial forecasting and bank-account monitoring to automatic generation of customer quotes, purchase orders, invoices, and payments.

“The Small Business Accounting 2006 Company Home Page gives me visibility into my whole business by providing me with up-to-date cash flow information, customer and vendor activity, order and invoice tracking, customized sales reports, financial

“This expansion was dependent on our working more efficiently as a business, because otherwise we couldn't have afforded to hire additional staff.”

Mei Jarvis, Chief Financial Officer, US Export Store

investment, operation forecasting, and more,” Jarvis reports. “It’s a one-stop shop for record-keeping and analysis.”

The company also relies heavily on Microsoft Outlook 2003 with Business Contact Manager Update, another integrated component of Office Small Business Management Edition 2006, to support and simplify contact management.

Benefits

To illustrate the benefits that the US Export Store is realizing as a result of Small Business Accounting 2006 and other products in the Office Small Business Management Edition 2006 suite, Jarvis points to a 35 percent growth rate since deployment. “By enhancing my insight into what customers are doing and enabling me to respond to them more effectively, the Small Business Accounting 2006 solution helped us to generate some of that growth, and is helping us to manage it,” he says.

Timely Communications for Satisfied Customers

For example, Jarvis tells of how the company used the functionality of the Small Business Accounting 2006 Company Home Page, and the integration of Small Business Accounting 2006 with Outlook 2003 with Business Contact Manager Update, to win and support a new distributor in Romania.

“After our initial correspondence, which included the processing of their application, they approved a purchase order by e-mail, and Outlook with Business Contact Manager Update linked this e-mail and order to their application and our earlier correspondence,” Jarvis explains. “After we shipped the product, with one mouse click we generated and e-mailed an invoice through the connection with Small Business Accounting 2006. Later, we were informed by the bank, also via e-mail linked into Outlook, that the

distributor had paid the invoice through a wire transfer. This enabled us to invoice the manufacturer for our commission right away.”

Jarvis points out that all the documentation and correspondence related to the new distributor and its order was available for viewing and access through the Small Business Accounting 2006 Company Home Page and the integration of that product with Outlook 2003 with Business Contact Manager Update.

“This made it very easy for us to maintain thorough and timely communications with the distributor, which impressed them so much they have placed further orders for the original product and for new ones as well,” Jarvis says. “Using Small Business Accounting 2006 helped us to grow our own business as well as that of the manufacturer and distributor involved.”

Jarvis says that Small Business Accounting 2006 and other products in the Office Small Business Management Edition suite not only are helping the US Export Store to maintain more thorough and timely communications with customers, but also are making the process significantly more efficient.

“I estimate that Small Business Accounting 2006 has helped us increase our administrative efficiency by 15 percent,” Jarvis reports. “This helps us maintain the low overhead that keeps us ahead of the competition. It also helps us to handle more sales in less time, which this year resulted in our meeting sales quota for one manufacturer six months early.”

Newfound Administrative Efficiency

For the US Export Store, as for any small business, administrative efficiency also is opening the door to expansion. For example, Jarvis says that seeking new business opportunities by analyzing archived e-mail

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Rick Jarvis, Chief Executive Officer, US Export Store

messages “didn’t make sense” when he had to perform such analyses by hand.

“But now, with the capabilities of Outlook 2003 with Business Contact Manager Update for automatically analyzing such e-mails, I envision gaining a number of opportunities with distributors we once corresponded with,” Jarvis adds. “Moreover, because of the comprehensive integration between Outlook 2003 with Business Contact Manager and Small Business Accounting 2006, I have all the financial information about our company that a distributor might want to know before agreeing to do business with us. This leads directly to new business opportunities.”

Jarvis expects even more opportunities to be generated through the company’s planned opening of a retail storefront and wholesale showroom. According to Mei Jarvis, “This expansion was dependent on our working more efficiently as a business, because otherwise we couldn’t have afforded to hire additional staff.”

Rick Jarvis concurs. “It’s the administrative savings we’ve enjoyed from using Small Business Accounting 2006 that we’ll apply directly toward the hiring of someone to staff the showroom,” he adds. “At that point, we’ll use the ADP payroll-processing and online-banking functionality integrated with Small Business Accounting 2006 to simplify payroll for the new employee, and for any other employees we might add when the time comes.”

In other developments afforded by Office Small Business Management Edition 2006, Jarvis says the company will implement hourly billing for its consulting services, such as market research for U.S. firms seeking overseas opportunities. “When this work required overseas travel, we historically billed by the day, but we have figured that hourly billing would be more beneficial for the

manufacturers and US Export Store alike,” he explains. “By supporting hourly reporting and billing directly from Outlook, Small Business Accounting 2006 will help us to move toward this approach.”

“Head to Head with QuickBooks”

Considering the current expansion of the US Export Store and envisioning future expansion, Jarvis is particularly pleased with his decision to deploy Small Business Accounting 2006 instead of QuickBooks.

“For businesses like ours, Small Business Accounting 2006 easily goes head to head with QuickBooks in terms of usability,” Jarvis says. “Anyone with a basic understanding of accounts receivable/accounts payable and working with vendors and customers can benefit from Small Business Accounting 2006—starting at the very beginning. It took me two days to set up QuickBooks, but with the help of the Small Business Accounting 2006 Startup Wizard, I had that product installed and fully configured in just 20 minutes.”

But it’s not usability alone that favors Small Business Accounting 2006 over QuickBooks, Jarvis adds.

“It’s the overall functionality afforded by the comprehensive and seamless integration of Small Business Accounting 2006 with the rest of Office Small Business Management Edition 2006 and the Microsoft Office System toolset,” Jarvis says. “It’s the business insight we gain by being able to see all the financial activities of the business and analyze the opportunities, right there on the Company Home Page—so we know not only where we are but also where we’ve been and where we’re going. It’s also the amazing support we enjoy from participating in the Microsoft user groups, enabling us to use the programs to build our own success and the success of our customers as well.”

For More Information

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For more information about U.S. Export Store products and services, call 508-872-1973 or visit the Web site at: <http://www.unitedstatesexportstore.com>

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Software and Services

- Products
 - Microsoft Office Small Business Management Edition 2006
 - Microsoft Windows XP Professional

Hardware

- Unbranded desktop computer based on Intel Celeron 567MHz
- Toshiba 1415 S-105

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