

Flint Trading Makes Its Mark with TRAVERSE

Flint Trading manufactures and distributes preformed thermoplastic traffic and safety markings for roadways. The company, located in Thomasville, NC, was founded in 1987 and has over 100 employees. Products include retroreflective pavement markings such as lines, arrows, and markings for bike lanes, decorative crosswalks, handicap areas, yield lines and storm drains. Their products are seen on highways across the country as well as parking lots of major commercial and industrial centers.

Flint Trading uses TRAVERSE software from Open Systems, Inc. to run their business; the 34-user system was purchased from Open Systems partner Stateside Data, Inc. in Greensboro, NC. They use TRAVERSE to handle accounting, distribution and manufacturing functions, but are especially pleased with Mobile Warehouse. The application runs on a Pocket PC-compatible handheld device and is used on the warehouse floor to record the receipt and shipment of products and to track inventory movement.

All sales orders at Flint Trading are picked with the handheld devices. They also use the TRAVERSE Warehouse Management application to do lot tracking of finished goods and to track bins and containers, ensuring that all movement of inventory throughout the warehouse is accounted for.

Flint Trading IT Specialist Craig Smith elaborates, "As products come off the final assembly line, they are scanned in and that data is fed into the Receive Production function of Warehouse Management; that finished good is then in inventory, available to sell and ship. Then, we use Mobile Warehouse to move the items from the production facility to the distribution area, and they get shipped from there." According to Smith, all lot numbers were previously recorded by hand. "There was no bin or container control to speak of." TRAVERSE has been a tremendous time saver by bringing these processes together.

Flint Trading is ISO 9001:2000 certified, meaning that they have been independently audited and certified to be in conformance with a set of manufacturing and quality requirements set forth by the International Organization for Standardization. The lot numbers they track are based on the raw materials created in the company's plant, and ISO requires them to track the lot numbers to the customers who received those shipments. "We used to do all of that on paper and key the data into spreadsheets," says Smith. "You had to dig through the spreadsheets to find that information." Flint Trading now saves a great deal of time by using the TRAVERSE Inventory and Warehouse Management applications to track the lot numbers.

Smith has found other ways to save time through automation. "When you are both a manufacturer and a distributor, you have to be able to show that you move finished goods from the manufacturing area to a staging area before they're moved to your warehouse," he says. "The flexibility of TRAVERSE allows me to run a report through Crystal Reports that takes that warehouse management history and shows us what was moved off of our packing line to staging each day. That report was done manually before."



The preformed thermoplastic used in Flint Trading products is mixed in kettles, with lot numbers that are an encoding of the kettle identification code plus a date string. Smith uses some productivity reports to extract dates from the lot number to see, for example, that a certain item may have been in inventory for an extended period. "It's really handy for us to be able to retrieve that information," he says.

70% of Flint Trading's products are made to order, but their top 200 items are stocked and maintained. "There is always the issue of whether or not we need to make something," says Smith. "Using the open sales orders and stock availability, we've written reports that tell Operations Administration how to determine what they need to have the factory make. We have blanket work orders for all of our products, and we just tell our production department to release production on certain items. Being able to take the stock availability and the open orders, I can run reports that tell operations admin., 'Yes, we have this item, but we still need to make more to fulfill these orders.' TRAVERGE gives us timely information on what we have on hand. As a result, the timeliness of orders and inventory accuracy has really improved. We know this level of accuracy didn't exist before TRAVERGE. We're able to capture a good number of errors that have slipped through the cracks in the past, and it's given us a level of accuracy that just wasn't possible before."

The final piece to Flint Trading's operation is the use of SalesCTRL™, a customer relationship management solution from Open Systems partner Advanced Concepts, Inc. in Milwaukee. SalesCTRL gives remote sales reps current information on their accounts, and provides a window to TRAVERGE data. Transactions are synchronized at a field level on a nightly basis, and they have also created a synchronization process that provides the sales reps with specific customer data; information that is appropriate for each particular sales rep and their region, not the entire database. When the sales reps use SalesCTRL, they simply click on a hotlink to see a customer's open invoices, sales history, etc. from the last data synchronization.

One of the next steps for Flint Trading is to implement TRAVERGE Info-Alert, a powerful business tool that monitors business data and provides automated alerts when various business conditions are met. "Our controller's eyes lit up when she saw everything that Info-Alert can do!" says Smith. "We'll be using it heavily for tracking collections and for meeting some of the ISO requirements. For instance, for certain products, there is a requirement that when we sell to a customer, they must receive a copy of the MSDS (material safety data sheet)." The form contains data regarding the properties of a particular substance and is an important component of workplace safety. "We can set up an alert that will identify first-time purchases by our customers, and we can generate an email notice that an MSDS .pdf for that product needs to be emailed to that customer," says Smith. "There are just an unbelievable number of things people here want to use Info-Alert for. It's limitless!"

Craig Smith and Jeff Rodd.
Flint Trading IT Specialists



4301 Dean Lakes Boulevard, Shakopee, MN 55379
1-800-328-2276 www.osas.com