

CASE STUDY

Dover Saddlery

Powers Online Growth and Expansion

Industry

Retail

Challenge

Support rapid expansion from one physical store to an extensive online operation while identifying new retail opportunities

Results

- Scaled successfully from one retail operation to 31 stores producing \$120M in revenue
- Supported more than 30,000 SKUs and related ordering processes with a small IT staff
- Gained ability to roll out ongoing updates to all stores within hours without impacting production time

Products

- Rocket® mvBase DBMS

Application

- Database Management

Company

Headquartered in Littleton, Massachusetts, Dover Saddlery specializes in equestrian products, outfitting both horse and rider for any level of competition and riding. Dover Saddlery was founded in 1975 by competitive equestrians who had been members of the United States Equestrian Team Foundation's 3-day event team. Since then, Dover has expanded its retail presence through a combination of new store rollouts and acquisitions in multiple states. Today, the retailer operates a catalog and online business to serve riders across the country.

Challenge

In the early 2000s, Dover began rolling out new stores and acquired existing tack shops, ultimately expanding their presence to 31 stores in 19 states. Today, more than 50% of the business comes from physical stores while the balance is divided between online catalog orders and call-center purchases. All stores run a heavily customized retail solution (TOPS) that forms the foundation of the order fulfillment system. To appeal to a wide range of customers, Dover Saddlery maintains approximately 30,000 SKUs, primarily apparel and equipment — often with multiple sizes and color choices — in a 65G database. Much of the higher end merchandise is physically located in the stores although Dover also guarantees in-stock items will be delivered to customers within a few days.

To support its rapid growth, Dover required a robust application database platform that could drive its expansion into different geographies. The company also needed a platform that was flexible enough to support its complex inventory and shipping processes across the stores as well as drive online operations.

Solution

Coming from a retail background, the Dover founders had used the Rocket® mvBase application in previous operations. mvBase is an embedded multi-dimensional database management system that powers thousands of ERP and other retail applications worldwide. They recognize



applications worldwide. The founders recognized that the combination of flexible design and high performance would provide the platform they required to grow quickly with a minimal IT footprint. In fact, despite the retailer's quadrupling in size since 2000, the IT team today stands at five professionals and for much of the company's growth hovered at one or two IT employees.

Results

Explains Rich Sueltenfuss, the IT Director who oversaw much of Dover's expansion over the last decade, "the software just works...it never goes down and it makes it easy to support the needs of our different stores and businesses without having a big IT team."

Maintaining an inventory for the broadest customer selection is critical at Dover but becomes complicated at times. The Rocket mvBase platform is ideally suited to handle complex data with its "table-within-a-table" structure. Because of the different color and size offerings, a single item can often explode out to 60 or more 13-digit SKUs. Thanks to variable-length record fields, the IT team isn't restricted to character limits—making it easy to maintain a variety of customer choices and SKUs.

Tracking demand and associated inventory on a daily basis requires constant collaboration with the physical stores and warehouse. Located at the Littleton headquarters, the IT team maintains ongoing communications with the stores. A batch process feeds data to the back-end for inventory management and orders are uploaded to the main system every hour where 85-90% are processed automatically.

The Rocket MultiValue environments align to the way people—not just developers—think and learn. This attribute makes implementing changes, such as seasonal promotions, easy. For example, the database facilitated applying automatic promotional discounts for Black Friday sales by enabling IT staff to simply type in the item number, discount and date range. Promotions automatically aged out and could be easily changed without any recoding.

Notes Sueltenfuss, "Rocket MV is designed to be embedded into retail and other applications, reducing the need for database administration and making life easier for non-technical users. The platform is so stable and reliable that we've been able to run lean and mean from an IT standpoint while focusing on giving customers more relevant and customized marketing offers."


Dover Saddlery prides itself on offering a consistent buying experience whether it's online, the physical stores or via a catalog order into the call center. In the future, Dover will continue to focus on the needs of its customers while exploring new product lines.

“ *The software just works...it never goes down, and it makes it easy to support the needs of our different stores and businesses without having a big IT team.* ”

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