

CASE STUDY

Vermont Teddy Bear Co.

Improved Customer Service and Response Time



Industry

Manufacturing

Challenge

Faced with dramatic growth, increasing sales volume, and fluctuating seasonal demand, the company needed to update its data management systems to improve customer service

Results

- Customized solutions to meet customer needs and reduce call center response time
- Updated applications without rebuilding the database or writing new code
- Updated the database without additional costs or downtime

Products

- Rocket® U2

Application

- Database Management

Company

The Vermont Teddy Bear Company (VTBC) is the largest handcrafter of teddy bear toys in North America. Headquartered in Shelburne, Vermont, VTBC began nearly 30 years ago with a single product called a BearGram®, a customized teddy bear delivered with a personalized greeting card and candy treat. Today, in addition to teddy bears, the company also sells sleepwear and direct-from-grower flowers and plants by phone, catalog, and online across three distinct brands: Vermont Teddy Bear, PajamaGram, and Calyx Flowers.

Challenge

A continually expanding product line and combined volume across multiple divisions helped VTBC achieve growth of more than \$50 million in sales. Because its sales were closely tied to gifting holidays, the company experienced peak periods when orders per day grew exponentially from several hundred to more than 47,000. During these periods, it was not unusual for the company to ship more than 60,000 packages in one day. VTBC staffing fluctuated with sales, expanding from a range of 150 to 180 year-round employees to as many as 1,000 during the peak months of December, February, and May.

Vermont Teddy Bear recognized that in order to keep pace with constantly changing demands and respond effectively to customers, it was essential to change the way it managed data. In 1994, VTBC engaged IT partner Circle Commerce (formerly Avexxis) to help manage the company's information processing needs. Circle Commerce principal Frank Hanshaw recalled from his organization's early days of working with VTBC, "They were originally using an outbound telemarketing system rife with issues. They just wanted to handle the large blast of orders as the deadline approached, get them out on a timely basis, and manage customer service and shipping."

Solution

Circle Commerce worked with VTBC to provide Rocket® U2 database management tools for processing a wide range of information in ways that helped the company



better serve its customers. Rocket U2 tools are designed to power mission-critical applications with low ownership cost, little to no downtime, and a small hardware footprint. The tools' flexible, proven technologies ensure reliable data management performance to keep small to medium enterprise applications running on desktops, web, and mobile platforms in thousands of organizations.

Results

After the Rocket U2 implementation, online orders for VTBC products integrated with information for order processing, the call center, inventory management, taxation, payment processing, and order fulfillment, significantly reducing manual interactions and streamlining the process. The U2 architecture helped enable the thousands of modifications needed to produce the robust system operating today. According to Hanshaw at Circle Commerce. "We couldn't do what we do without this MultiValue database solution. It's great for developers. There are a lot of nicely written pieces I can use without having to create new code."

Explained John Bramley, Vice President of Application Platforms, Rocket Software, "U2's dynamic file definitions allow our partners to continually provide updates to their applications without the need to rebuild the database. They can add fields and extend the length of the fields without the associated cost and downtime required by other databases. This helps partners like Circle Commerce customize and continually adapt their solutions to quickly meet customers' needs."

Bob Stetzel, VTBC Vice President of Information and Ecommerce Technology, also had praise for the IT system itself. As a former database administrator of products based on Informix and Oracle technologies, Stetzel said the Linux based solution was highly stable, and more than met his company's considerable needs. "For speed, performance, and size of a database running on a mid-size, mid-tier system, it performs very well. For example, response time for our call center is fantastic." According to Stetzel, Rocket technology played a vital role in helping his company manage its growth, and brought significant value to the table. "They're a long-term partner," he said of Rocket. "They continue to earn that relationship by continually evolving the software, and by being very responsive."

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Bob Stetzel
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