Exploding Growth Required New Technology

By Don Rathe, President of Rathe Associates

Forty years ago, Rathe Associates was started by my father, Roy. Over the years we went through several accounting software packages, one custom and several off-the-shelf. With all of these solutions, we had to learn to live with "the way they do business." That wasn't the case with DDI System.

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Fortunately for us, we've achieved an explosive level of growth over the last 8-10 years with 3 generations of family leading the way. Unfortunately, our QuickBooks software couldn't keep up. We added QB Activate to sync with the standard QuickBooks in an attempt to support our business operations but still, it didn't meet our growing needs.

When we decided to make a change, we began asking around and researching software alternatives. Our goals were to become a more paperless company, integrate and streamline our business operations, and increase the accuracy of our inventory and purchasing. We were led to DDI System through several recommendations.

After a demonstration and a few conversations with DDI, we quickly saw how perfectly their **inform** solution fit our needs! We made the conscious decision to go-live at the beginning of our busy season – this was not a decision made lightly due to the potential ramifications if something were to go wrong. However, since our current QuickBooks software could not do what we needed, we felt it was a risk worth taking.

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Seamless Transition

DDI System's customer care team was on site for a week during pre-implementation. They transferred our data, set up a training system, and answered all of our questions and concerns. They were able to put our entire team at ease and prepare us for the upcoming software switch. A few weeks later, they returned, transferred our current date and we went live.

I was very impressed at how seamless the transition turned out to be! The intuitive nature of **inform** created a simple switch with a short learning curve. Our team was up and running within a couple days. Jumping in during the 'heat of the battle' wasn't easy but with DDI's knowledgeable experts in our corner, expectations were exceeded and it turned out to be the best decision we could have made.

Quick Return on Investment

Since going live, we have initiated more and more of **inform**'s in-depth tools and streamlined processes. A paperless workflow, transparent inventory and purchasing, and comprehensive customer service features are revolutionizing our business.

Previously, we were a paper heavy company. We have now advanced towards the paperless environment we were aiming for. Our old work flow required 3 to 4 copies of each sales order. Now, only 1 copy is needed for the warehouse. We easily scan and attach other documents within **inform** as needed. These documents can be quickly emailed to our customers with just a couple clicks. We have realized significant time and cost savings with this new capability savings thousands of dollars per year and keeping with our "Greener" initiative.

Inventory and purchasing are far better than before. Now, I know what's on my shelf! With our old software systems, inventory counts were so inaccurate that my team would need to physically walk out to the warehouse to verify if we had stock on hand. It has been incredible to eliminate this need and simply look up our inventory. Purchase forecasting is automated and our buys are more accurate than ever based on

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customer habits. We've even begun to utilize the kitting functions to better support customer needs.

DDI's **inform** has also improved our overall customer service. Being a manufacturer's rep, we sell numerous product lines. **Inform** easily identifies all products with customer-specific pricing, something we didn't have before. The ability to email customer quotes, sales orders and invoices has also made a difference in manual processes and customer response times. Even our newest employee can use the system to instantly provide customer **inform**ation and make the sale.

Running the Business "Our Way"

Overall, the entire Rathe Associates team could not be happier. We have quickly streamlined our operations and increased profitability. We are able to pro-actively serve our customers with greater efficiency. As time goes on we look forward to incorporating the many sales and marketing tools we have not yet begun to use. In DDI System's **inform** software we have finally found the integrated solution that will grow with us and allow us "to run the business our way".

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