



Omniciel Opens The Beer Market With DSD Solutions

featuring microFlash 4T thermal portable printers with wireless Bluetooth
direct store delivery for the beer market ■■■

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-Jan Lessard
Founder, Omniciel

When it comes to DSD solutions for beer producers in Quebec, Omniciel has cornered the market. The company secured system design, installation, and ongoing support with Labatts, Molson-Coors, and Sleemans. In addition, Omniciel sells solutions and support to multiple DSD vendors in other markets, such as dairy vendors. Founded in 1967 by Jan Lessard, 90% of Omniciel’s customers are food and beverage distributors.

Problem ■■■

While Omniciel doesn’t specifically target breweries for new business, the successful implementation at Labatts attracted the attention of other regional distributors. Quebec is the only province in Canada where beer is sold in convenience and grocery stores. Elsewhere in Canada, the law requires that beer must be purchased in beer-specific stores, eliminating the need for DSD solutions. Ontario is close to adopting convenience and grocery store beer sales, and the other provinces typically follow along shortly thereafter. When the law changes in the other provinces (proposed in all), the potential for these route solutions could increase fivefold.

Labatts was the first beer producer to purchase Omniciel’s complete DSD solution, which included a RoadManager back end system, Road Partner handheld software, and the Omnicom communication software. Intermec 740 handhelds with Datamax-O’Neil 8i printers were customized for hands-free printing, including development of a custom cradle to allow drivers to carry both units.

Solution ■■■

The Molson-Coors project was rather large, a \$2,200,000 (Canadian) sale that included 325 routes across Quebec. The customer had chosen a different handheld computer than Omniciel had used previously, from DAP. “Rugged handheld units used to be too big and heavy for drivers to use, but the DAP ce3240 was very light [just under 16 ounces] with great processing speed,” said Lessard. Molson also requested that Omniciel use the Datamax-O’Neil 4T mobile printer with Bluetooth, a Windows-compatible device that generates a

ourich- wide printout. It activates when it receives a data signal, and hibernates when not in use.

Molson was the first customer to use the Datamax-O’Neil 4T with Bluetooth in DSD. Omniciel used a printer with a built in cradle for previous installations, but the DAP 3240 did not fit that design, so they went with a wireless printer and carrying case.

“We won the sale based on our driver and user training, the ease of operating the solution, and our communications software,” said Lessard. The handhelds have to communicate to the back end system and Omniciel’s offline synchronization reduces the time of communication. “While the information transfer using our competitor’s solution took one minute on average, ours only requires 15 seconds. With 300 routes to synchronize each morning, that was important to Labatts,” added Lessard.

The difficulty Omniciel faced securing the implementation deal with Molson-Coors was not technical, but competitive. “Molson is very competitive with the other beer vendors and, to prevent information sharing, the company rarely uses the same suppliers. In this case, they were impressed with our references in the industry and saw the benefit our solution could provide them,” said Lessard. Omniciel completed the implementation in March, 2006. The Molson-Coors (Quebec) Looks To Omniciel For New Solution project was simplified by Omniciel’s extensive business experience with the other beer DSD solutions. When Molson Canada wanted to renew its invoicing tools in its DSD operation in the Province of Quebec, Omniciel was selected.



datamax • o'neil
right by our customers.

Results ■ ■ ■

Omniciel provided an integrated solution to Molson, including DAP CE3240 handheld computers, Datamax-O'Neil 4T 4-inch thermal printers, wireless Bluetooth for the handheld and printer, and Omniciel Route Partner and Route Manager software.

"We were thrilled by the performance and dedication of Omniciel with this project," said

Pierre Berthiaume, distribution principal director at Molson Canada. "The dedication demonstrated by Omniciel in testing and deploying the new technology was outstanding, specifically with 32 delivery sites converted and 540 employees trained in less than 6 weeks.

With only two companies providing DSD solutions in Montreal, one in the Maritimes, and another in Ontario, you get to know the competitors and have to continually assess their capabilities and systems. A software maintenance agreement option allows customers' drivers to call Omniciel's toll free line 24-hours a day for program support. If they have a problem at 4:00 a.m. (not an unusual time for



DSD employees to work), drivers can call to get their systems up and running. This support option allows customers to eliminate redundant costs. For example, Dannon (dairy operations) eliminated two tech support employees in Montreal when it switched from another provider to the Omniciel DSD solution with a service contract.

ONE SOFTWARE PACKAGE WITH CUSTOM SETTINGS OFFERS FLEXIBILITY TO CUSTOMERS

The Omniciel DSD solution is one standard package with more than 2,500 options and parameters built in. While the

same software is installed with each customer, the settings are changed to fit their particular needs. "Although our competitors have a core software package, they have to add options their customers want, which creates an orphan solution for each implementation. Our customers know they can change parameters at any time with minimal effort using a dashboard themselves, or with our help," added Lessard. Customers can also pilot varying parameters on a couple of route solutions before deploying changes to the entire fleet.

The software allows drivers to perform in store competitive product surveys or complete truck inspection reports. When customers begin using Omniciel's solution, they typically perform only sales and delivery (invoice, inventory) functions. Should they decide to do a survey (such as the number of competitive products in stock or how much inventory there is of each), they can have two or three drivers test it. Truck inspection reports occur in the same fashion. Customers can change variables between routes, such as weekly inspections on trucks over 100,000 miles and bi-weekly on those under that mileage.

OMNICIEL SOLUTION STREAMLINES THE DSD PROCESS

At each store, the drivers deliver the order of beer and pick up the returns, including empties and damaged product. They key in the returned units with the handheld computer, scanning by individual piece or inputting quantities. After the drivers ensure a delivery is complete, they finish the transaction and print an invoice.

Normally drivers enter the store with a dolly (manual or motorized) along with the handheld and printer case. Unlike older printers, the Datamax-O'Neil 4T units are not fixed in the truck. Drivers complete and print the final invoice in the store before heading to their next stop to repeat the process.