

Producer's Dairy Decreased Annual Costs By Approximately \$55,000



featuring PrintPad Integrated Printing System
route accounting ■ ■ ■

Producer's Dairy is an independent dairy that has been in business for more than 75 years. The company supplies fresh dairy products that distribution personnel deliver directly to clients across the western United States. Imagine you are a grocer receiving a delivery of a Producer's Dairy product. What do you expect at the time of delivery? You certainly expect to be able to verify that your order is correct, pay for your order, and obtain a receipt.

Problem ■ ■ ■

Producer's Dairy operates from 10 locations throughout California, and has more than 2,500 customers. To be able to satisfy customer expectations, the company began using handheld computers and portable printers more than 10 years ago. The handheld Producer's was using was experiencing a failure rate of 8% to 10% per day, mostly due to the non-rugged nature of the devices. "These failures were causing us to waste valuable time while waiting days for a replacement," says Frank Sewill, director of administration at Producer's Dairy, "More importantly, the failures were causing customers to be dissatisfied because they were unable to pay or obtain a receipt at the point of sale."

Along with the aging handhelds, Producer's Dairy was using dot matrix 8 1/2 X 11 in. printers, which were mounted in the delivery trucks. The drivers had to go back and forth from the delivery site to the truck when printing an invoice or receipt. The printers the company used required 8 1/2-by-11 inch paper and a printer ribbon, which combined, ended up costing Producer's Dairy \$40,000 each year. Using an 8 1/2-by-11 inch piece of paper for an invoice with only one or two items was wasting expensive paper.

In January 2007, the company received notification that its current handheld model was being discontinued. The dairy used this as an opportunity to search for handheld and printer hardware that was more technologically advanced

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than their existing hardware. With more durable equipment they would experience fewer hardware failures and, in turn, maximize customer satisfaction. The first step in the search for a new route delivery solution was to speak with the company's long time Route Accounting software VAR, Ross Computer Systems, to get an idea of which products in the market would be compatible. Producer's Dairy was very satisfied with the performance of Ross' mobile route accounting software that they were using and wanted to keep that software with the addition of the more ruggedized hardware. "We also talked to other local dairies to gain insight into what they were using and how it was working for them," says Sewill.

Solution ■ ■ ■

Producer's Dairy chose the Motorola MC70 handheld mobile computers and Datamax-O'Neil PrintPADs (portable integrated printing systems) that were recommended by Ross. The handheld computers and printers are integrated via a wireless Bluetooth connection. Producer's Dairy chose the handheld because it has a large touch screen, yet is light and easy to carry. Most importantly, it is durable. The handheld was tested in rugged conditions to ensure it could survive being shaken and tumbled around in the large Producer's Dairy trucks. The printers that the company chose are thermal, which eliminates the need for 8 1/2-by-11 inch paper and printer ribbons. They are compact and portable, so the distribution personnel can carry the entire module into the store, have the customer sign on the screen, and immediately print a receipt. The invoice and electronic signature are automatically uploaded into the company's computer system.



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Producer's Dairy decided to order and distribute the solution in three batches to spread out cost, and currently eight of 10 branches have implemented the solution. Before distribution of each batch, the company sent a mass e-mail to the branch to announce the shipment of a single module for the distribution personnel to test. A week later, the company sent the remainder of the modules to that location and determined a date to switch over. "Since the handheld computer is a Windows-based system using the same software as before, the transition was easy," says Sewill. "As one branch received the solution, the others were calling and begging for it."

Results ■ ■ ■

As a result of the solution, the dairy is saving \$40,000 per year from the elimination of 8 1/2-by-11 inch paper and printer ribbons. The company is also saving around \$15,000 per year due to the elimination of the labor hours necessary to scan all of the receipts. Producer's Dairy expects payback on the route delivery solution in less than two years. The company is currently in the process of implementing the solution at the final two branches to complete the installation process.

When Producers Dairy wanted to update its route delivery system, the company turned to its longtime route accounting software VAR, Ross Computer Systems. Ross was founded in 1967 with a focus on host system applications, then developed its first handheld application in the mid 1980s, and currently offers a full suite of DSD (direct store delivery) route accounting applications. The fact that Ross focuses exclusively on the route accounting DSD industry has always been key in working with Producer's. "In Producer's case, our knowledge of the dairy industry has proven extremely valuable," says Darren Weiss, sales and marketing manager at Ross. Producer's Dairy has used Ross' host application, RAMS (route accounting and manufacturing system), and handheld application STORS (sales, tracking, ordering, route settlement) since 1990.

Last year, when it was time for Producers to choose a new handheld device, the dairy decided to go with a rugged Motorola unit running Ross' STORS software. When Frank Sewill, Director of Administration at Producers, spoke with Weiss to discuss a ruggedized route solution, Weiss immediately had products in mind. "I recommended the Motorola MC70 handheld with the Datamax-O'Neil PrintPAD", said Weiss. "The PrintPAD is our best selling mobile printer, accounting for a majority of our mobile printer sales for the past two years."

Ross integrates RAMS (or any other host application) and STORS through STORSLink, the company's communication application. Integration of the software allows the host and handheld applications to communicate so data can be transmitted between the two systems in real time throughout the day, or in batch mode at the end of the day. Looking forward, the integration between Ross' various DSD applications and the VAR's understanding of the route accounting industry will enable Producer's Dairy to easily add additional software applications as its business needs grow.