



Drive Route Sales Revenue Growth With Additional Technologies

featuring microFlash 4T thermal portable printers with wireless Bluetooth route accounting and direct store delivery ■ ■ ■

“We chose the Datamax-O’Neil 4t thermal mobile printers to give the route drivers print capabilities in the store, reducing the travel back and forth to the truck that’s required with the larger immobile units.”

-Bob Montana
Summary Systems

Integrator Summary Systems didn’t set out to develop and implement a route accounting and DSD (direct store delivery) solution for Natural Ovens when the specialty bakery’s executives first contacted the company. So how did Summary Systems end up with the sale and an eight-year relationship supporting the system? “While soliciting them for our other applications, Natural Ovens indicated the need for a handheld route accounting system,” said Bob Montana, president of Summary Systems.

Problem ■ ■ ■

The integrator was experienced with fleet onboard computers, GPS (global positioning systems), and wireless communication applications, but had not yet developed a route accounting solution. Summary Systems was encouraged by the challenge of adding a new technology to its portfolio and assembled the hardware and software that Natural Ovens requested. The solution required a lot of customization, and the interface with the accounting system was exceptionally complex. However, Summary Systems was able to design a suitable system and ultimately secured the sale.

Natural Ovens makes high-end breads with ingredients such as omega threes and other nutrients, targeted to very health conscious customers. Located in Manitowok, WI, the bakery delivers its products to grocery stores in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Illinois. Because the bread contains fewer preservatives than traditional varieties, it has a relatively short shelf life. Therefore, Natural Ovens can only make deliveries within a certain radius from its one central bakery. The route sales drivers stock shelves in supermarkets and, before the solution was implemented, were counting inventory, ordering, preparing invoices, and manually issuing credits. Each driver had to calculate the proper amount of bread to leave at each stop by anticipating the sales of up to 30 items. “The company doesn’t want a lot of stale product being returned or a shortage of the bread customers want to buy. Ideally, Natural Ovens wants some of each product left on a store’s shelf when drivers make each visit,” said Montana. “ZAPs [zero available products] could signify a lost sale, so getting



the proper allocation on each store’s shelves is critical to meeting the bakery’s sales objectives.”

To improve the inventory and stale removal process, Natural Ovens wanted automated systems and processes with templates of how much bread to leave on the shelves at each store. Many route sales companies tell drivers exactly what to leave, but with Natural Ovens’ breads’ relatively short shelf life, that wasn’t very practical. The drivers are responsible for ordering product for their entire route each day, which can be a challenge with fluctuations in sales at each store and by season. It took training and experience for a driver to properly allocate the bread varieties among each day’s accounts without running out of the best-selling product before the last stop. Natural Ovens wanted the drivers to have access to the current truck inventory at any time in order to distribute the product lines and reduce the amount of stale bread and ZAPs.

Solution ■ ■ ■

With the new application, Natural Ovens’ 100 route drivers enter and track their truck and store shelf inventory with Two Technologies Jett. The handheld software gives them a template outlining the amount of each type of bread to leave at each stop based on the entire route, so the product allocation maximizes sales and minimizes the out-of-date items. The driver still decides whether to accept or decline the computer’s recommended order — the application is merely a tool to guide the choices. The inventory and order



datamax • o’neil
right by our customers.

software had to be configured to maintain a running inventory and account history to properly calculate the quantity of each bread variety to leave.

Results ■ ■ ■

Summary Systems deviated from selecting the full page (8 ½ inch x 11 inch) printers found in most route accounting systems for its solution. “We chose the Datamax-O’Neil 4t thermal mobile printers to give the route drivers print capabilities in the store, reducing the travel back and forth to the truck that’s required with the larger immobile units,” said Montana. The 4-inch printer was relatively new when the Natural Oven solution was designed, but most units remain in operation after seven years of route use. The durability, flexibility, and print quality of the 4t have kept it as the printer of choice for Natural Ovens. “The Datamax-O’Neil units print out route information at the start of each shift, individual invoices for each delivery, and final reports at the end of the day, so they get quite a workout,” said Montana.



Summary Systems also designed a belt-mount for the printer and a holder/charger for the back of the truck when the drivers assemble their deliveries.

Custom Software Allows Natural Ovens To Meet Their System Goals

Summary Systems assured the sale with its AAS (route accounting automation system) software. RAAS integrates with companies’ existing accounting systems to streamline billing and accounts receivables. It also allows Natural Ovens managers to run sales reports by product and customer to help the drivers manage bakery order quantities. Each supervisor can create transactions (changes) that automatically update the corporate accounting system using RAAS. Inversely, the corporate system can update RAAS and each handheld computer when a change is input.

“We created additional tools for Natural Ovens, allowing its route supervisors to analyze how drivers are utilizing the inventory and delivery information,” said Montana. A route supervisor report tool charts the ZAPs that occur at each account. Since some drivers don’t come into the office to synch their data, Summary Systems added cellular and landline communications capabilities to the solution.

Drivers that do come in transmit their data (inventory, billing information) with a cradle (docking station). At the start of the day, the devices receive route information changes and order reconciliation (orders versus the product that was available in inventory). Other RAAS features include full invoice editing, flexible product pricing, custom invoice formatting, detailed sales histories, vehicle tracking, and DEX (in store data exchange). With the new system in place, Natural Ovens was able to improve daily product inventory tracking for production schedules and provide tools for reducing levels of stale bread removed from each account. Summary Systems continues to expand the capabilities of the RAAS solution with additional implementations and pilot projects using GPS and multiple wireless communication options.