Case Study:

Freelin-Wade solves major business process challenges with new enterprise labeling solution

Errors and costly customer returns cut by 50%

Solution: TEKLYNX CENTRAL
Industry: Manufacturing
Partner: Efficient Business Integrators

TEKLYNX
Barcode Better

Background

As one of North America's largest independent manufacturers of plastic tubing, Freelin-Wade has more than 4,000 stock items and infinite custom products that require proper labeling. In order to keep production and shipping running smoothly as the company grew, a new labeling system was necessary.

Freelin-Wade's existing system, which was based on Scanco's Label Xpert program tied to MAS 500, had an interface that confused the end users. The system also had an installation process that, with 15 task-specific label stations throughout the production area, taxed the time and resources of the IT department.

Without the ability to customize the interface, users were wasting time searching for the correct label in a list of hundreds. "A lack of a preview function resulted in almost 20% of labels being misprinted per day. Mislabeled products were returned to the company even though the shipped orders were accurate, causing customer dissatisfaction and additional expense to the company.

Freelin-Wade's IT department also suffered through tedious maintenance projects. If a label template was used by multiple departments, the team had to manually create and hardcode copies of the template to each printer – up to 15 times per label. Installations and upgrades also had to be handled on an individual-workstation basis. Stability issues increased the amount of time the team was spending keeping the legacy system functioning properly.

"We needed a system that we could count on, that was easier to use and that supported our company's goals," says Calvin Hansen, IT Manager at Freelin-Wade. "We went in search of a system that would rise to the challenges of a growing manufacturer."

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Challenges

✔ Existing end user interface was confusing – it was not easy for workers to select the correct label, resulting in high error rates and increased customer returns

✔ Deployment was challenging it took a long time for IT to install and maintain the system

✔ No integration between their label design/printing software and their existing business systems

Results

✔ 50% reduction in labeling errors, resulting in an equal decrease in expensive customer returns

✔ Centralized system management has led to faster installation, upgrades, and label definition for each work station

✔ Seamless integration with their Sage ERP MAS 500 system to automate label creation

Solution

As Freelin-Wade began researching a new system, they quickly ruled out key competitors. The competitor software didn't have a simple SQL database backend for disaster recovery, didn't offer customization for departmental workstations, and didn't offer features Freelin-Wade was seeking to reinforce their lean manufacturing initiatives.

"Our team researched and evaluated several solutions, but found pretty quickly that TEKLYNX CENTRAL was the best fit," says Hansen. The TEKLYNX team listened to what we needed and worked to make certain their solution addressed each of our issues."

An integrated enterprise labeling software solution, TEKLYNX CENTRAL combines the proven technology of TEKLYNX barcode label design, printing, and label tracking and approval software into a single solution that exceeded Freelin-Wade's original goals. With a single point of contact at TEKLYNX, implementation was a smooth, quick process. After installation, necessary training time was minimal as well; after two 90-minute training sessions, a new employee was already creating and publishing labels on his own.

TEKLYNX CENTRAL is a browser-based, integrated enterprise label management system that combines the proven technology of TEKLYNX label design, printing and tracking software into a single solution that allows companies to centrally manage their entire labeling process.

Results

With TEKLYNX CENTRAL, each department only sees the labels that are specific to them Hansen states, "I can customize the user experience specific to my industry, to exactly what I do and how my production floor runs." The flexibility offered by the system allows Hansen to name each station in a way that's intuitive to the workers, using nomenclature for departments and functions that is familiar to staff. Defined business processes can be enforced at every level, and the system restricts access to only the printers, labels, and tasks needed for a user to perform their job.

TEKLYNX CENTRAL's label previews helped cut costly customer returns by 50%. The label preview reinforces a key tenet of lean manufacturing - visualization. The visual cue helps users make the right choice, and average daily label waste has dropped form 20% to less than 1%. The solution also provides centralized creation, logging, and organizing of labels, allowing users to track label versions. This maintains a verification hierarchy and ensures labels are approved before being used by end users.

"Since implementing TEKLYNX CENTRAL, accuracy has significantly increased. So far, we've reduced the number of labeling errors by at least 50% and that's only the beginning. We continue to discover the many advantages TEKLYNX CENTRAL provides."

- Calvin Hansen, IT Manager

The system's structure is built on a common database (SQL), which offers the additional benefit of simplified disaster recovery. The database is easy to back up and replicate in the case of an outage or loss of data.

Hansen is already looking forward into ways that TEKLYNX CENTRAL can make additional improvements to Freelin-Wade's business processes. Hansen said, "TEKLYNX CENTRAL integrates processes that allow for growth and the advanced software capabilities enable us to plan our business five - even 10 – years ahead. I couldn't do that before our collaboration with TEKLYNX."

Ultimately, Hansen would like to automate the label printing process using the capabilities offered by TEKLYNX CENTRAL. The solution can recognize a file that is saved to a specific directory by Sage ERP MAS 500, create a label using the data in that file, and print the label on a specific printer. By automating the entire process, the risk of mis-keying or selecting the wrong label is entirely eliminated. Freelin-Wade can leverage the features of TEKLYNX CENTRAL to automate what's currently manual, and his team will only need to reformat the file generated by MAS 500 so they can be accurately read by the software.

Together, Freelin-Wade, Efficient Business Integrators and TEKLYNX have created a path for future growth in the business' manufacturing process. TEKLYNX off-the-shelf solution offered greater functionality and easier maintenance than their custom-built legacy solution and was the clear choice over other products in the market. With TEKLYNX CENTRAL, Freelin-Wade can be confident in the stability and future success of their labeling solution.

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> - Calvin Hansen, IT Manager