



Wholesaler Links Business Workflow Manager Has More Time to Introduce Innovations That Fuel Growth

By Jane Glasser

Most days, Shady Youssef felt like he was moving backwards instead of forward. As IT Manager for Tamer Industries of Dekwaneh, Lebanon, Youssef was trying to keep the company's technology foundation functional, so the company could keep up with its rapid growth. Tamer Industries is a 150-person wholesaler that distributes cosmetics and fragrances throughout the Middle East. The company is part of Tamer Holdings, a diversified manufacturer and marketer of cosmetics, toys, office furniture, dental equipment, and dental implants.

All four Tamer Holdings companies used the same antiquated, COBOL-based accounting software, which had become a major stumbling block to business growth. Without a user-friendly interface, the software drove every manager who needed business reports to the IT department for assistance. As Tamer Industries grew, requests for reports escalated from weekly or monthly to daily.

"I was receiving calls all day—'I need this, I need that'—my life was one constant interruption," Youssef explains. "I could not do any work. I didn't have time to deal with emergencies such as network problems, or even routine tasks, such as software upgrades. And forget about researching and introducing new technologies that could help the company grow."

Creating a report involved exporting data from the accounting software to another program, such as the Microsoft® Office Excel® spreadsheet software, for formatting and analysis—a time-consuming, five-step process. "As the

company grew, our managers wanted more reports, but they did not have the expertise to create them," Youssef says. "They all ended up in my doorway."

Also, the old accounting software was full of bugs, making it unreliable. "I was always afraid of losing data, because the system failed so frequently," Youssef says. "I had to back up data several times a day just so I could sleep at night."

And sleep was in short supply. The business was growing rapidly, putting stress on the accounting system and on Youssef. "Something had to give," he says. "The same problems were piling up at the other Tamer Holdings companies, and my counterparts and I were in constant fire drill mode. I was not very happy at work, and my family was not very happy with me."

New Software to the Rescue

Tamer's accounting and IT departments realized at about the same time that the accounting system had become a barrier to growth, rather than an enabler. When they met to discuss options, they immediately considered Microsoft Dynamics™ GP. "Our accounting director was familiar with Microsoft Dynamics GP from a previous job, and many companies in Lebanon use it," Youssef says. "Microsoft has a good reputation here. There are many small, local companies selling financial software, but they are often not around tomorrow to support you. Microsoft is behind



Tamer Industries is a wholesale distributor of cosmetics and fragrances. The company is located in Dekwaneh, Lebanon, and distributes products across the Middle East.

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—Shady Youssef, IT Manager, Tamer Industries

Microsoft Dynamics GP, and that brings huge trust.”

Tamer Industries brought in Information Management Solutions (IMS), a local Microsoft Certified Partner, to install Microsoft Dynamics GP and help with user training. The rollout at Tamer Industries took just two months, and IMS implemented the software at the three other Tamer Holdings companies shortly thereafter. “The user interface is very familiar to our employees, because it’s the same as that of the other Microsoft Office programs they use every day for e-mail messaging, word processing, and spreadsheets,” Youssef says.

Integrated Workflow

One of the characteristics that Tamer Industries likes best about the new software is its ability to integrate workflow across the company. For example, when an item is sold, the sale is reflected in the picking, packing, inventory, invoicing, accounts payable, and other areas of the software. Plus, the software assigns each employee his or her next step in the workflow, leaving nothing to chance and eliminating much of the human error that used to hamper efficiency.

“We were originally looking just for new accounting software, but this system integrates every area of our business,” Youssef says. “Employees have instant access to a huge amount of information that helps them do their jobs more efficiently and improves customer service.” For example, Tamer can now list far more information on its invoices, including customer credit limits and account expiration dates, which help both the accounting staff and customers.

“At every stage of the sales and fulfillment process, employees can see what they need to do,” Youssef says. “There’s even a reminder feature in the product, to help workers keep track of to-do items. Having this workflow has given our business structure and velocity that we didn’t have before.”

Time Gains from Automated Reporting

Virtually any employee can generate reports today, without help from Youssef or the accounting department. Microsoft Dynamics GP includes multiple levels of security control, which Youssef can set (and change) from his desktop computer. The software also integrates smoothly with Office Excel, which managers often use to analyze data.

“Users are self-sufficient now in their reporting; that’s huge for me,” Youssef says. “I have more time to focus on network stability issues and other daily needs. Mostly, I have time to roll out new capabilities such as the Manufacturing Series modules for Microsoft Dynamics GP. We’re also working to synchronize Microsoft Dynamics GP to handheld devices used by our sales force. This will let them record orders into their handheld devices and eliminate paper from the ordering process.”

Less Downtime, More Peace of Mind

Last but not least, the new software foundation has dramatically reduced system downtime and, as a result, increased Youssef’s peace of mind. “Our downtime has been reduced by 100 percent—I just don’t worry about it any more,” he says. “I rest easier knowing that our data is well protected and our core business system is running reliably. My family notices the difference in how relaxed I am!”

For more information about Tamer Industries, call +961-1-694-000 or visit the Web site at: www.tamerholding.com.

For more information about Information Management Solutions, visit: www.ims.com.lb.

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