

CASE STUDY **M & B PRODUCTS Inc.**



INTERLINK'S WAREHOUSE LINK SOLUTION

The WMS evaluation process was led by Daniel McClellan, Shipping Manager for M&B Products, Inc. and Hank Harrah, a consultant to M&B Products, Inc. The initial process involved assessing all processes and procedures to determine where improvements were needed and how to achieve these goals. M&B's requirements included interfacing smoothly with the existing accounting solution on the IBM iSeries platform. WMS companies were approached for demos, webinars and evaluations then narrowed to three contenders and finally Interlink Technologies was selected as the vendor of choice.

Interlink's WMS, **WHS_e-LINK[®]** (Warehouse Link), utilizes wireless RF (Radio Frequency) terminals and desktop applications. Interlink assisted M&B during the hardware selection process. A thorough review of M&B's operations concluded that all of the terminals had to withstand a variety of temperature changes; ranging from the blast freezer area to Florida's hot and humid temperatures. It was determined that the best solution for M&B was Psion's cold temperature hand-held terminals with Cisco WiFi backbone, covering the warehouse, coolers, freezers and production area. Barcoding the locations in the warehouse was another pre-planning process that needed to be in place before the system went "live."

Interlink uses "Train the Trainer" process which M&B felt was critical to the success. McClellan stated, "It takes committed employees, managers and supervisors. To ensure the commitment, we talked about it for a long time and showed our people what they would be using. We planned to take baby steps instead of hitting them all at once with everything." Interlink was on site at M&B for training and prepared trainers for the questions the users might ask. Since warehouse operations include refrigeration and sub-zero blast freezer environments, M&B realized the harsh freezer conditions might make training more frustrating so the initial training was done in the milder refrigerator. M&B started with a small area so everyone would get experience on core functionality. "Some people are uncomfortable with technology. We had to

take the fear away. Warehouse Link is very consistent so once they realized that there were a lot of intuitive functions, the fear was gone and it became second nature to them," stated McClellan. "Interlink has provided exemplary customer service. Well, more than customer service. They bought into this project as much as we did," said Harrah.

"Warehouse Link allows mixed locations so we always know where the product is located and how much is on hand."

— **Daniel McClellan**
M&B Products, Inc.
Shipping Manager

RESULTS

M&B was looking for a "Bullet Proof" solution that would ensure:

1. Customers were getting properly dated product
2. They were shipping the oldest product first
3. They were using real, live, actual inventory information of what was on hand to manage inventory levels

"The ability to have accurate, live inventory so that we know what we might be short tomorrow, allows us to adjust production runs to fulfill customer orders when they need it and reduce our inventory overhead costs. Before Interlink, this wasn't an option," stated McClellan. "Today, we know we are shipping the oldest product first. We no longer automatically issue credits because a customer says they received old product. We are able to trace the product back, show lot numbers, expiration dates and shipping details which have virtually eliminated customer requests for credits," said McClellan.

Another important benefit achieved by implementing Warehouse Link WMS is efficient space utilization. Prior to implementing Warehouse Link, M&B used outside storage to allow enough space for separating juice flavors and to provide adequate freezing time. Warehouse Link reduced the need for extra storage space and allowed M&B to move to the Just-In-Time inventory process. M&B was able to install a blast freezer so that the product comes straight from production, into the blast freezer and 10-12 hours later it is in freezer storage. "These processes could

not have been achieved without Warehouse Link," said McClellan. "We can now keep our entire outside storage inventory on site. We have all but eliminated outside storage." M&B is saving money not only on outside storage costs, but they have also reduced the cost of hauling product back and forth. Efficient use of space has also improved productivity by 15-25%. Warehouse Link provides complete visibility of where the product is located and configurable business rules allow flexibility for space management. Before Warehouse Link, time was wasted looking for open locations. "We were unable to mix product for fear of forgetting where the product was putaway. Warehouse Link allows mixed locations so we always know where the product is located and how much is on hand," said McClellan.

Another time saving feature is cycle count. M&B uses the cycle count feature to confirm physical inventory counts, which makes the process a lot faster. Warehouse Link knows what should be on hand, tells the worker what is on hand and the count is confirmed.

FUTURE

The initial implementation of Warehouse Link encompassed all warehouse management functions for finished goods. The second phase to be completed will incorporate the raw material tracking. Beyond that, future plans for M&B will include tracking replacement machine parts inventory.

CUSTOMER PROFILE

M&B Products, Inc. is a premier supplier of juice and milk related products to the food service industry including schools, nursing homes, hospitals and prisons. M&B is located in Tampa, Florida and was founded in 1987 with one customer and one truck. Their dedication to continuous improvement has grown the business into a distribution network throughout 33 states. M&B is a USDA Continuous Inspected juice processing plant and a state licensed and inspected fluid milk processing plant. M&B is recognized as environmentally friendly by having the smallest carbon footprint of any school milk delivery system in the U.S. Dale McClellan, owner of M&B Products, was named "2012 Florida Farmer of the Year" and "2012 Southeastern Farmer of the Year."

BEFORE INTERLINK

M&B's warehouse operations used a paper driven system that could not offer real-time information and therefore forecasting decisions were based on best guesses and hoping that product would be available. The lack of real-time knowledge did not allow efficient use of space and required M&B to use additional outside storage with limited knowledge of what was actually in outside storage. Physical inventory was performed every month. It was a very time consuming process that did not yield real-time or accurate numbers. As the business grew, the paper system was unable to provide a guarantee that oldest product shipped first.



Warehouse Link software provides real-time solutions!

