Company Profile
Allen-Edmonds Shoe Corporation, Port Washington, WI
www.allenedmonds.com

Industry: Shoe Manufacturing

Varsity Products: ShipSoft-Parcel™, ShipSoft-Freight™, ShipSelect™, ShipTalk™, ShipAudit™

Shipping Volume: 900-1,500 parcels per day; 15 Bills of Lading per day

Number of Shipping Locations: Four

Carriers: UPS, FedEx

ERP: Apparel Business Systems (ABS), HarrisData

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—Dave Barber, Director of Information Technology

Allen-Edmonds Finds a Shoe-in with Varsity ShipSoft

Allen-Edmonds manufactures and markets fine handcrafted men's footwear. Through the company's Woodlore division, they also manufacture aromatic cedar products for shoe, apparel, and accessory storage and care. Allen-Edmonds ships between 900 to 1,500 parcels a day from four distribution centers to company-owned retail stores, e-commerce customers, and the showrooms of elite retailers around the world. Each pair of shoes and every product is backed by the company's unwavering commitment to complete customer satisfaction.

Delivering this level of service requires exceptional operational processes. Allen-Edmonds realized they had reached the upper limits of their shipping system's capabilities. Their PC-based system topped out at 900 packages a day and contributed to an inefficient shipping process where shipping specialists were required to manually verify package contents and type shipping labels. This process was slow and error prone, taking an average of about five minutes per order. At that rate, the warehouse had a tendency to get backed-up on high volume shipping days. In addition, without an interface to the company's iSeries-based ERP system, ABS, they were unable to obtain real-time package status.

Allen-Edmonds recognized they were missing an opportunity to leverage their IBM iSeries investment. The company's Information Technology department defined the criteria for a new shipping system. First, it had to take advantage of the power of their iSeries and to integrate seamlessly with their ABS system. Second, it needed to share information across departments and distribution centers and provide access to real-time shipment status. Third, the software had to support international shipments and a shipping volume ten times their current levels. And finally, the solution had to support multiple carriers, as well as offer rate shopping between those carriers.

When Allen-Edmonds saw Varsity software, they realized it satisfied all their requirements. "We watched a live demonstration of Varsity products and were sold," notes Dave Barber, Director of Information Technology. "The software's flexible design allowed us to build a customized ABS interface—and Varsity also had a pre-built interface into HarrisData that we could utilize. With this kind of integration, our Customer Service department had access to real-time shipping status and a more fluid shipping process."

Jason Charapata, Manager of Information Technology for Allen-Edmonds, said, "We found it very straightforward to build our own hooks into ABS. Our users don't even see the ShipSoft-Parcel screens."

Varsity's flexibility also allowed Allen-Edmonds to leverage the ABS interface customization and apply it to the Woodlore division's ERP/shipping interface needs. This allowed Woodlore to significantly streamline their shipping process—scaling back on carrier specific webforms and even on the hardware and equipment used for shipping.

Additionally, the software enables the company to customize screens based on employee suggestions. This helped to optimize shipping processes and foster employee endorsement of the new system. The Customer Service team is pleased with the up-to-the-minute shipment status information provided by ShipTalk with Track and Trace for UPS and FedEx. With direct access to the Host Access systems, customer service representatives can instantly resolve shipment status inquiries. "Visibility in the shipping process is better. Before, we couldn't see shipping status or tracking information. Now we can; it's extremely helpful and valuable to get that information," said Charapata. With ShipSoft-Parcel, Allen-Edmonds has reduced processing time, improved customer satisfaction, improved shipping accuracy, and increased employee satisfaction.

"ShipSoft-Parcel changed the way we ship to a one-step process," notes Charapata. "One person scans the product's UPC code to verify it against the pick ticket, packs the product, prints the label, and the package is out. It now takes less than one minute per order." When it comes to international orders, the improvements are even greater. ShipSoft-Parcel automatically prints all of the required documents including the commercial invoice, NAFTA Certificate of Origin, and thermal air waybill. Charapata found that one of the greatest benefits of Varsity solutions is peace-of-mind. "We know that every order will go out the day it is received, and it will be accurate."

Allen-Edmonds is looking to further take advantage of Varsity's international module to include LTL shipments destined for Europe, and Varsity is working with the company to address this need.

"ShipSoft-Parcel will generate European-origin labels, which will help us save a lot of time and cost for international shipping. This ability is going to be invaluable to us and to our global customers," said Barber.

A Varsity customer since 2000, Allen-Edmonds anticipates a long-term partnership. "Varsity is a key solution for our business—it's an integral part of what we do in the shipping area—and we're confident that Varsity will grow with us," says Barber. "The system can easily handle 5,000 packages a day if we need it to. It is nice to know that Varsity will be there when we need them."