

Company Profile

Roland Corporation U.S., Los Angeles, CA
www.rolandus.com

Industry: Musical Instrument Manufacturing and Distribution

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

Shipping Volume: 1100+ parcels per day and 30 Bills of Lading per day

Number of Shipping Locations: One

Carriers: UPS, FedEx, Several LTL Carriers

ERP: IBS

“With the best iSeries shipping solution on the market, smart, professional, and proactive staff, and exceptional services and support after the sale, we not only got everything we needed, but also everything we wanted, with Varsity.”

—Chuck Wright, Vice President of Operations, Roland U.S.

Roland Hits a High Note with Varsity Solutions

If you've ever seen a live band, you have most likely heard—and heard of—Roland. Founded in 1972 in Japan, Roland is a world leader in the design, manufacture, and distribution of professional audio equipment, multimedia products, and music accessories. Roland Corporation U.S. (a subsidiary of Roland) manufactures and distributes electronic musical instruments including keyboards and synthesizers, guitar products, digital recording equipment, and other devices.

Roland U.S. is an industry leader with a sales volume of \$200 million and approximately 3,000 dealers throughout the U.S. With a requirement to ship over 1,100 parcel and 30 freight shipments a day and process about 135 transactions per hour. Roland U.S. needed a shipping solution that was fast, flexible, and stable.

The company had been using an iSeries-based shipping package to meet their core needs but their vendor announced plans to sunset their iSeries product in order to concentrate on their PC-based product.

Already realizing the benefits of integrating their iSeries shipping solution with their IBS iSeries-based ERP, Roland U.S. began looking for a new vendor to satisfy their shipping requirements.

“We were dedicated to the iSeries platform,” said Kim Wright, Operations Manager at Roland U.S. “We knew the iSeries was not only a work horse, but was very stable, easy to maintain, and could support the future growth of the company. Moving our shipping system to another platform would have cost us valuable time, money, and IT resources to reintegrate a new PC-based shipping solution with our iSeries-based ERP.”

Roland U.S. was also looking for a new solution that provided the flexibility to ship small parcel and Less-Than-Truckload (LTL) more efficiently and accurately, a technical support staff that was available 24 x 7 x

365, and most importantly, a company dedicated to the iSeries that would work with Roland not just as a vendor, but as a partner.

To top it all off, Roland U.S. was on an extremely tight timetable. Not only was their lease expiring on their previous shipping solution, but the company was about to attend their largest tradeshow of the year, which took 50 percent of the staff out of the office (including the Operations group) as well as provided several million dollars in orders. Roland U.S. had to have a solution that could be implemented quickly and was easy to learn and use so shipping staff could fulfill this bulk of orders in a timely way.

"We had quite a laundry list of requirements—and we were thorough in researching the iSeries shipping solutions on the market. I also asked my own industry contacts what solution they considered to have the best reputation out there. Varsity's name came up over and over again," said Kim.

At the annual IBS Users' Conference, Roland U.S. attended a Varsity presentation and was impressed by the capabilities of the ShipSoft solution set. They contacted Varsity and made a connection.

Soon after, the Roland U.S. team saw additional demos and capabilities of the toolset, then visited two high-volume Varsity client sites, both of which had complex shipping environments and were highly automated. "After working with our Varsity sales rep—who was exceptional—and seeing how the solutions were being used in production, there was no doubt in our minds that Varsity was the right choice," said Chuck Wright, Vice President of Operations at Roland U.S.

Two Varsity professional services staff worked onsite with Roland U.S. on the implementation. Said Kim, "They were awesome—they put so much time and effort into making sure our needs were met, and then some. One of the most impressive parts was that they understood the distribution side of the business and weren't just programmers, so they could add value and make suggestions to help us improve our processes further."

Because Roland U.S. had such a unique supply chain environment, the company required certain customizations to the system. For instance, Varsity combined the pack and ship process (typically two separate processes) so that picks are packed and shipped in one step with automated validation of item UPC, quantities, and serial numbers.

Additionally, Varsity and IBS—close technology partners for many years—worked together with the Roland U.S. team on the shipping/ERP interface to accommodate the mass of data being passed between the two systems. "We don't do just batch picks at night, we also print picks during the day," said Kim. "We have a pick consolidation process...in ASW that interfaces with ShipSelect...that determines the routing based on the aggregate weight of all the open picks. The system searches the data to 'see' if there are any other open picks that can be consolidated, then reselects the best carrier. That kind of highly developed level of automation is absolutely invaluable to us. It enables Roland U.S. to service our clients faster and more accurately, and that gives us the competitive edge."

"Varsity implemented the system, completed the customization we needed, and got our staff up and running—all within the tight deadlines we were under," stated Chuck. "Once the implementation was done, we literally shut down our previous system on a Friday evening and started shipping flawlessly with Varsity by 1:00 pm Saturday afternoon."

The positive results from the Varsity solutions were practically immediate.

The solution enabled the shipping department to reduce keystrokes by 50 percent for each transaction—with shipping staff literally touching the keyboard twice per transaction. And from there, Roland U.S. has seen an increase in their throughput of 15 to 20 percent. Also, through the Varsity system, the company has identified and taken advantage of opportunities to tighten shipping controls, which has resulted in reduced shipping errors.

Said Chuck, "Roland U.S. is an organization of dedicated people committed to creating and distributing superior products, and we want to build a family of partner providers that have a similar business philosophy. With the best iSeries shipping solution on the market, smart, professional, and proactive staff, and exceptional services and support after the sale, we not only got everything we needed, but also everything we wanted, with Varsity."