

School Supplier Gives Technology Outsourcing an A+



Client: Becker's School Supplies

The Challenge: Support and grow distribution center and retail chain stores through state-of-the-art technology without spending a fortune.

The Solution:

- **MAS 200 Distribution Suite**
- **MAS 200 Point of Sale Professional**
- **AT&T Telecommunications**
- **CheckPoint Firewall**

George Becker, President, Becker's School Supplies:

"We decided that CompuData would become our IT Department. It was a good decision. The volume of our business transactions requires a lot of technical support. That, as well as growing into a multi-location entity, would justify establishing an IT Department. However, we find outsourcing our technology needs to be a better investment. Our expertise is in serving customers, not dealing with technology."

It's that time of year, again. Leaves are changing colors, children are sporting backpacks filled with fresh school supplies, and school bus flashers beam through the morning fog. These sights along with the soft autumn



breeze take each of us back to the time when we were young scholars. Ah, the memories...

George Becker gets to relive those memories almost every day. As president of Becker's School Supplies, George makes sure that his two distribution centers in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Deerfield Beach, Florida are stocked to meet the many demands of private and parochial schools. Becker's School Supplies provides numerous items such as art supplies, furniture, classroom accents, and everything in between.

"I love what I do," George said with a smile. "Being part of bettering a child's education is absolutely rewarding."

MOVING TO THE NEXT GRADE

Though Becker School Supplies has been in business for 75 years, it was just under a decade ago that the company decided to serve the public by adding retail stores. It was time to make Becker's dream of opening Parent / Teacher stores a reality.

"We were stepping into a new world," said George. "Going retail presented many time-consuming challenges. Though I looked forward to serving new customers through a new market segment, I did not want to spread myself

thin. I knew from the onset that I needed to develop a plan in which I could maximize efficiency and still concentrate on the core mission of providing quality school supplies."

George realized that in order to continue to facilitate his company's growth and maintain his core focus, he needed to upgrade the technology that had up to that point served Becker's School Supplies well. And so, in 1994 George called upon CompuData to transition the school supplier from a proprietary AS/400 server that powered a host of terminals to a more efficient and user friendly environment. The move enabled its employees to process information thoroughly, efficiently, and rapidly.

As part of the upgrade, CompuData installed MAS 90 to support Becker's distribution and retail needs, streamlining the accounting activity from each entity. This allowed Becker's controller to customize and quickly access reports and analyze activity from each of its locations.

OUTSOURCING: STAYING AT THE HEAD OF THE CLASS

The conversation was only the beginning of what would become a long-term partnership. Becker's School Supplies was growing rapidly, and so were its technology needs.

"After the initial conversion, we decided that CompuData would become our IT Department," said George. "It was a good decision. The volume of our business transactions requires a lot of technical support. That, as well as growing into a multi-location entity, would justify establishing an IT Department. However, we find outsourcing our technology needs to be a better investment. Our expertise is in serving customers, not dealing with technology. We wanted to keep it that way. Outsourcing allowed us to do that. In fact, outsourcing has paid for itself—I don't need to bother with training, staffing, and salaries and benefit issues that having even one IT employee would require."

George believes that the more Becker's School Supplies is able to concentrate on its core business, the more its customers will benefit.



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“Our dedication to customer service is what has kept us ahead of the class for 75 years,” said George. “Having CompuData as our outsourced technology partner has enabled us to keep that distinction as we continue to focus on our customers.”

GRADUATING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Becker’s School Supplies retail stores have quickly gained popularity. With each store opening, teachers from all types of schools—private, parochial, and public—poured in to purchase goods for their classrooms and projects. The growing home schooling community has also opened a new consumer market.

“Our retail stores account for 30% of our sales,” George revealed. “The technology that CompuData provided greatly contributed to our ability to grow into a ten-store retail chain in less than a decade.”

To help Becker’s School Supplies keep up with the speed of business, CompuData upgraded the company to the MAS 200 product. Becker’s now has secure point of sale technology (POS) and credit card processing as well as efficient Return Merchandise Authorization (RMA) capabilities. All transactions can be viewed in real time from the Philadelphia headquarters and reports are easily streamlined and accessed.

As business boomed, the ten stores quickly drew down warehouse inventory levels. While inventory was well-managed, some delays and redundant phone calls transpired as a result of rapid sales. But by upgrading to MAS 200, Becker’s is now able to instantly review real time inventory levels. And, with MAS 200, replenishment is practically automatic. This, in turn, keeps cash from being tied up in inventory.

“We know our inventory down to the last pencil,” George said.

GETTING TOP GRADES

The “buck” has not stopped there. Becker’s School Supplies has asked CompuData to provide solutions for its costly telecommunications needs. In response, CompuData integrated Becker’s voice and data systems and connected each of its locations through Business DSL and fractional T-1 lines. By switching to a

CompuData-negotiated telecommunications plan through AT&T, Becker’s first month’s telecommunication savings was \$2000.

To ensure absolute safety, each location is secured by Check Point, the premium Internet security firewall that integrates both network and application-level capabilities to deliver comprehensive attack protection and network security. In a world where Internet attacks are growing exponentially, George Becker has peace of mind knowing that his company enjoys the most robust protection available.

PREPARING FOR THE NEXT TEST

Becker’s School Supplies continues to grow. As its outsourced technology partner, CompuData provides the school supplier with not only current needs, but helps the company anticipate more growth.

“Presently we are integrating Best’s new Starship module which will allow us to seamlessly integrate picking, packing, and shipping activities while electronically tying that information back to inventory replenishment,” said George. “Furthermore, we will have the capability to track any package, anywhere at anytime.”

“Don’t let our size fool you,” said George. “After 75 years in business, Becker’s Schools Supplies is still a mom-and-pop shop. Thanks to CompuData, we still continue to operate that way, but with full enterprise power. That allows us to do what we do best — take care of our existing and future customers.”

Perhaps IT outsourcing is the answer you’ve been looking for in managing the technological needs for your growing company. Call your CompuData representative today to learn how this cost-efficient method could give you top of the line technological solutions while saving you thousands of dollars.

