

Restaurant Equippers



Restaurant Equipment Dealer Achieves 99+ Percent Accuracy With WMS From HighJump Software

Restaurant Equippers Profile

Restaurant Equippers is one of the largest food service equipment and supply dealers in the U.S. The company's 6,000+ SKUs comprise everything from silverware to freezers—even the kitchen sink. Founded in 1966 and headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, the company distinguishes itself from the competition through low prices, strong customer service and an always-in-stock policy. The company sells products through its store, catalog and Web site.

Restaurant Equippers operates with a people-first management philosophy: create a good environment and people will excel at their jobs. "People should be improved with every interaction they have with management," said Roger Wadsworth, chief operating officer of Restaurant Equippers. "We have many of the same warehouse employees today that we did five years ago because we value the individual."

Challenge

Solid growth at Restaurant Equippers translated into increasingly higher volumes. After several moves to larger warehouses,

the company needed to find an automated way of managing its supply chain. Restaurant Equippers had been using a distribution management system for 15 years. "The system had good transaction processing, but when it came to reporting, queries and analytical processing—forget it!" Wadsworth said. "We were using paper pick tickets and had an error rate of 7 percent. Accuracy was our number one issue. You don't have to go to business school to figure out that's not a good long-term strategy for running your business." Restaurant Equippers also struggled with the high dollar and time cost of processing returns. "If you ship the wrong item to a customer, how do you put a dollar amount on what's been lost?" Wadsworth said.

Wadsworth initially questioned whether a company the size of Restaurant Equippers could afford a best-of-breed warehouse management system (WMS). This was because the company was enjoying a surge in demand for products yet struggled with the complexities of shipping varied orders on time and accurately. Additional priorities for Wadsworth included easy integration with existing business systems and pulling off an implementation that didn't halt distribution.

Solution

Restaurant Equippers began searching for a WMS in the summer of 1999. The plan was to time the implementation to coincide with a 50 percent increase in warehouse space planned for January 2000. After evaluating several vendors, Restaurant Equippers selected HighJump Software in October 1999.

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Wadsworth was impressed with HighJump Software as a company and the ability of its HighJump™ Warehouse Advantage solution to report on warehouse activities. Vendor viability and long-term relationship potential were also factors. “We thought HighJump Software would be around tomorrow and was a leader in the industry. Over the years, HighJump Software has stayed ahead of the curve with its R&D investment,” he said. Wadsworth recalls that in addition to a flexible and robust system, he based his purchase decision on a good fit with the HighJump Software team. “It’s not just about dollars all the time, it’s about people. We could see ourselves working with HighJump Software for years to come. We couldn’t see that with other vendors,” he said.

The implementation went smoothly. “We met the goal with no showstoppers,” Wadsworth said. Soon after, Restaurant Equippers standardized all of its technology components on Microsoft SQL® Servers and integrated HighJump Warehouse Advantage with its new Microsoft® Business Solutions-Great Plains® software.

Now, HighJump Warehouse Advantage automates the entire operation—from receiving and put-away to picking, packing and shipping. Great Plains sends orders to HighJump Warehouse Advantage, where they are optimized and distributed to workers via RF devices. After HighJump Warehouse Advantage verifies successful completion of the pick/pack/ship process, the system notifies Great Plains that the order is complete. “The flexibility of the system allows us to make changes to orders up to

the moment they ship,” Wadsworth said. HighJump Warehouse Advantage’s load audit function verifies final contents, and then Great Plains converts the order to an invoice to help ensure customers receive and are billed for exactly what they requested. Along the way, Restaurant Equippers uses HighJump Warehouse Advantage to create and track serialized labels for large equipment items to help with warranty issues and recalls.

Restaurant Equippers uses the HighJump management visibility solution to generate employee and company performance metrics. Wadsworth feels that it is essential to give feedback to help people improve in their daily activities. “Most people look at how business processes occur. That’s only half the picture. Management tools are the other half—what information is available for feedback.” Wadsworth also uses the system’s reporting capabilities. “It’s important to get historical metrics to plan for future growth. You can increase staff if you see orders will be growing, or if they’re not getting out the door on time.”

In 2004, Restaurant Equippers implemented the HighJump wave planning solution to achieve further efficiencies. The solution groups and assigns orders based on common profiles (i.e., item size or shipping method) to streamline picking. Because all HighJump applications share a common execution platform, core database and Web user interface, adding the wave planning solution was seamless for Restaurant Equippers. User training was minimized and the solutions share real-time data.

Results

“There is no way we would have this kind of efficiency without HighJump Warehouse Advantage,” Wadsworth said. “Shipping accuracy is now above 99 percent. Now our customers have confidence that what they order is what they’ll receive.” Restaurant Equippers has also been able to condense its previously 24-hour operations into a single,

daytime shift. Labor efficiencies have been evident since implementation, especially after the addition of wave planning. “Efficiency gains have been unbelievable,” Wadsworth said. “We cut our picking time by two-thirds.”

“The real payoff of the HighJump system isn’t just that you can run your distribution center better. It’s that you have a wealth of information you can use to better your whole business. Sometimes the biggest payoffs are in areas you can’t measure,” Wadsworth said, adding that it’s not always about clobbering the competition. “Companies win because they do just a little better. Work a little smarter. It’s that simple. HighJump Warehouse Advantage helps us do that.”

Since the solutions reside on a common platform, Restaurant Equippers has been able to keep in step with newer HighJump features by upgrading its system. Wadsworth and his team have upgraded HighJump Warehouse Advantage twice. “We completed the first upgrade over lunch. The second was even easier because we upgraded to new servers at the same time.”

Future Plans

Wadsworth is looking to improve the packing and shipping process through the HighJump cartonization solution. This solution will help Restaurant Equippers optimize the container packing process and reduce costs.

“I think the future of our industry is in large, national players, and less small, city-based players,” Wadsworth said. “Our strategy for growth is to expand the number of retail units. People want to see things in person before they buy. Our store is successful, and we need to repeat this model. HighJump Warehouse Advantage can support this strategy.”

