

Off-price retailer modernizes legacy ticketing system for a faster time-to-market

Case Study

Industry: Apparel and garment
Solution: NiceLabel LMS

Challenges

- Homegrown ticketing system costly to maintain
- IT-heavy system where tags had to be hard-coded
- No support for international languages and currency
- Inability to print multiple batches simultaneously

Solution

- NiceLabel Label Management System
- Label designer for creating tags
- Application builder for building data management & printing applications
- Document management system for security & QC
- Web printing system deploys applications to end-users
- Integration system prepares print jobs and issues them to printers

Benefits

- Significantly reduced IT costs
- Eliminated unplanned downtime
- Empowered business users & increased agility
- Faster time-to-market & increased sales

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Background

This international retailer operates in the competitive space of off-price apparel and home fashions. In their quest to deliver high-quality goods to consumers at low prices, they have set a goal of "no downtime" in their processing of inventory. Goods must move quickly in and out of their warehouses, as they don't want to store inventory for any extended period of time. They turnover all inventory in 55 days; far below their competitors' average of 85 days. To meet the goal of "no downtime", their processing time has to be minimal. Every second, or fraction of a second, they can save can give them the advantage they need.

Distribution centers play key role

This retailer has over 18,000 vendors in over 100 countries. They have 25 distribution centers that receive goods, define where the goods will go and the price level each good will have. They then print the tags and labels in data centers at each distribution center, tag the goods and dispatch them to their various store locations, almost 4,000 worldwide. This is where their turnover goals come into play. They don't want inventory to stay in the distribution center, but strive to process all goods and have them out to the stores as quickly as possible.

The distribution centers also handle pre-ticketing, where the tags for all of the goods are printed, bundled and then shipped to the various vendors, who then place the tags on the products. In some countries, the retailer also uses external printing offices for printing pre-tickets, which are then sent to their vendors.

Challenges

One of the main obstacles this retailer had in achieving its time-to-market goals was a legacy ticketing system. The system's print client could only handle one print job at a time. Multi-tasking within the system wasn't possible, meaning the operator had to wait until the print job was finished before initiating another print job. The system was home-grown, yet the people who had developed the system were no longer with the company, which made maintaining and updating the system next to impossible.

Legacy system not optimized for international markets

As the retailer expanded, the system had to be adapted and modified to meet the needs of different markets. However, the system lacked basic features the company needed to make these modifications. For example, there was no visual label designer for designing the tags. Staff had to code the tags using printer-specific command language. Their existing printers didn't support Unicode, and they had difficulty printing different types of currency and languages.

Ticketing system is business-critical

As the ticketing system is this retailer's second-most critical business system, they could no longer make do with a legacy system. They decided to modernize their legacy ticketing system by producing a global, unified solution for ticketing.



Solution

To accomplish their goals, the retailer implemented NiceLabel's Label Management System (LMS Enterprise). They use the LMS' built-in label designer to create the 100 ticket/tag templates they use in their European operations. Using the built-in application builder, the retailer built a data management application and the printing application user interface. They use the web printing system to deploy these applications to end users, and the integration system to prepare the print jobs and issue them to the printers. The applications, label templates and master data are synchronized to distribution centers using NiceLabel's built-in change and transport system.

Many retailers come to us and wonder if we can handle their ticket volume. Things need to move so quickly, they don't want a system that will slow their distribution center down. It was very satisfying to see how we were able to come in, integrate with their existing IT infrastructure and printers, in order to deliver the printing speed they required.

Bogdan Trcek, NiceLabel Professional Services Group.

One system to work with all printers

The NiceLabel LMS works with all of the retailer's existing 270 printers, including high throughput industrial laser printers and thermal transfer printers for printing in their DCs and warehouses.

The built-in integration system keeps up with a high volume of print requests from multiple clients. Thousands of tickets can be printed in a batch. Several printers are served in each location and a single printer prints as fast as 80 tags/tickets per second.

Each distribution center prints an average of 800,000 tickets per day during high season, and total ticket production is 7.2 billion tickets per year.

Benefits

New system significantly reduces IT burden

After implementing NiceLabel's LMS, the retailer now has one unified ticketing solution that it can implement for all of its chains worldwide. The system's centralized management makes it easier to distribute application and label template updates throughout the organization. The LMS' "configure, don't code" approach to application building, integration and printing reduces the need for internal development resources. Operators can use print interfaces specifically designed for their needs, meaning they can work more efficiently.

Thanks to the easy-to-use label designer, the IT department no longer has to code every change or new tag. This work can be completed by business users, who can make the changes faster, and at a lower cost. The built-in label designer also offers support for international characters. NiceLabel was also able to optimize the ticket application process by providing support for ticket dispenser printers.

Faster processing time leads to a competitive advantage

Thanks to NiceLabel's LMS, the off-price retailer was able to achieve its goal of "no downtime" when processing inventory. The retailer can design or change tickets and tags faster and at a lower "internal" cost than with their home-grown system. Thanks to the support for fast printing speeds and the ability to run several print jobs simultaneously, they can process more items in each warehouse every day and get products to market more quickly.

This translates into lower IT costs, a faster time-to-market and, in the end, increased sales.

Future plans for expansion

The NiceLabel LMS will be implemented in five distribution centers in Europe by the end of 2018. The second phase of the implementation, which includes another 1000 ticket/tag templates and the retailer's 20 other distribution centers, is planned for 2019.



This project is an excellent example of how we help our customers. We try to design systems that overlay nicely with existing processes. In this case, we took an in-house, custom-developed system, reproduced it with our system, and made it better. Now they have a system that is faster and easier to maintain than their custom-built legacy system.

Bogdan Trcek, NiceLabel Professional Services Group.

To learn more about NiceLabel's solutions for the retail industry visit

www.nicelabel.com/retail



About NiceLabel

Established in 1993, NiceLabel is a leading global developer of label design software and label management systems that help companies of all sizes improve the quality, speed and efficiency of their labeling, while reducing cost.

With the help of our label management systems, organizations are able to digitally transform their entire label printing and production process. The result is a leaner, more agile operation that enables companies to respond more quickly to changing market conditions and requirements, get products to market faster and compete more effectively in the sectors where they do business.

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