

Growth Follows Field Sales Automation

A phone-based field sales app has helped this eyewear company eliminate time-consuming paperwork and provide its sales reps with real-time inventory visibility.

Smaller companies that hope to expand their businesses can often leverage technology to give themselves a competitive edge. ZOL Eyewear has given its field sales representatives a real-time view of inventory using a hosted mobile sales application that has also eliminated back office

paperwork and provided new ways to help service their retail customers.

San Juan, Puerto Rico-based ZOL Eyewear designs and sells sunglasses, accessories, and backpacks through stores in Puerto Rico and in select markets on the United States mainland. Three years ago,

ZOL Eyewear president David Mesqueue decided to roll out a sales automation solution to streamline manual processes that required reps to record orders on a sales sheet, and then enter invoices manually into the company's QuickBooks back office accounting software.

Mesqueue's inspiration came from an industry trade show, where he noticed that some of his suppliers were using mobile technology for sales and ordering. "We'd come back from these shows, and one of our biggest suppliers used a manual ordering system. They never knew how much inventory they had," Mesqueue says. "Another supplier had this mobile system, and he was growing much faster than the other company. I realized I was receiving orders from the supplier with the mobile solution faster than from the other supplier. I said, 'That's the way to go.'"

While reading a local newspaper, Mesqueue saw an article about a Puerto Rican company called e-Nabler that not only provided real-time, wireless connectivity for field sales reps, but also integrated directly with QuickBooks. "Other companies

had devices that you had to put into a cradle to sync with the back office software," Mesqueue says. "e-Nabler offered a wireless solution, which was much more attractive." The e-Nabler eMobileSales solution is hosted, so ZOL Eyewear was able to save money by avoiding a costly on-premises installation. The company pays a monthly subscription fee, which Mesqueue found to be a much more attractive alternative.

Fast Access To Mobile Inventory Information

In Puerto Rico, ZOL Eyewear primarily sells merchandise through a DSD (direct store delivery) model. The mobile sales system is deployed on a combination of Windows Mobile-based phones and iPhones, and allows reps to input orders, accept credit card payments (via the eMobilePay application), and manage inventory in their trucks (where applicable) or check warehouse inventory.

ZOL Eyewear also sells some product through convenience stores on a consignment basis. In those instances, staff can use the phones to take inventory at each location, and then invoice the store owner for goods that have been sold. Sales are uploaded from the e-Nabler solution into ZOL's back office QuickBooks accounting system. "That allows us to keep track of each sale, and to maintain control over the inventory in each truck," Mesqueue says. "If the sales person sees he has no inventory on the truck, he won't offer the product."

Right now, the solution is being used by ZOL Eyewear's three sales reps in Puerto Rico, and by one employee in Las Vegas. In Las Vegas, the sales rep is taking orders and checking warehouse inventory on hand using the application. "This was very easy to use for the sales reps," Mesqueue says. "Many of our customers even commented on the solution, which made the salesmen happy because they got such a positive response."

"The mobile solution lets me focus less on paperwork and more on finding new directions for the business."

David Mesqueue, ZOL Eyewear

Mobile Sales App Provides Shorter Cash Cycle, Less Paperwork

According to Mesqueue, the mobile solution has helped reduce the paperwork load in the office, and helped him spend more time planning for growth. “The mobile solution lets me focus less on paperwork and more on finding new directions for the business,” Mesqueue says. He estimates he has saved at least 16 hours per week in data entry and paperwork, which adds up to nearly eight days per month. “We used to have to file all the signatures, and we’ve eliminated that operation,” Mesqueue adds. “If we needed to find an invoice for a customer, we’d have to go into storage to find it. Now we can just go online, enter the invoice number, and pull it up in a few seconds.”

By eliminating the manual sales process, all of the back office accounting work has been accelerated. “There’s no data entry, and no waiting,” Mesqueue says. “Some companies take ten days to close their sales. Now, when we get to the end of the month, I just launch some reports and we’re done.” Because sales reps can accept payment in the field,

they have also shortened the cash cycle for some customer accounts. “That is especially true of the smaller stores,” Mesqueue says. “That has helped us a bit in terms of receiving money faster from those customers.”

Mesqueue says ZOL Eyewear has been able to expand its convenience store business by making the consignment process easier to manage. “Before, we’d have to do a consignment sales sheet that had to be updated here in the office,” Mesqueue says. “This has helped us acquire more clients because the solution administrates the inventory. We can tell the owners that we’ll leave a display in their store, we have a system that keeps track of the inventory, and we just invoice them for what they sell. It gives us an edge when we’re trying to make a deal.”

All in all, Mesqueue thinks the new mobile sales solution will be a key part of expanding his business moving forward. With a real-time view of inventory, and an automated way to manage customer orders, he hopes to be able to begin selling in additional markets without adding to the administrative workload. ●



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