

Case Study: Blue Sky Napa Valley

NetBooks Helps Letter Press Printer Blue Sky Napa Valley Efficiently Manage Inventory and Production

Introduction

Bookkeeping, operational consulting, and graphic design don't sound like the typical menu of services for a single small business. But in 2003, Blue Sky Napa Valley was founded to offer exactly those capabilities to other small businesses across a range of industries including artisan foods, interior design, specialty contractors, and telecommunications.

The owner, Kelli, a bookkeeper with experience in all those industries and a degree in graphic design, saw that most small business owners were simply overwhelmed with the details of running their businesses—details that began in bookkeeping and spread throughout every area. She soon found herself customizing QuickBooks—the bookkeeping software of choice for many small businesses—to manage activities, such as inventory, production, and sales tracking, for which it was never intended. Kelli's clients were grateful, but this was not the business she had envisioned. So about three years after starting Blue Sky, Kelli decided to refocus the company to specialize in card design and printing. She bought a vintage, table-top letter press and the company was reborn.

Challenge

Of course, now Kelli faced many of the same problems that had frustrated her clients. Hers was no longer a primarily service-based business. There were production processes to manage and inventory to track. As the owner and sole employee, she was also the sales force and the accounting department.

Working with Excel to track the cost of goods and cobbling together a basic inventory system with QuickBooks, Kelli was never able to get an accurate, comprehensive picture of the company's operations and financials. For example, Kelli purchased large sheets of paper called "parent sheets," which she cut into smaller sizes for cards that were then packaged

NetBooks for your business

As Kelli and Blue Sky Napa Valley discovered, NetBooks is powerful, easy-to-use software that

- Runs production efficiently while calculating cost of goods down to the penny
- Manages customer relationships for profitability by keeping track of sales, open orders, billing requests, and outstanding invoices
- Delivers unparalleled flexibility with inventory by allowing for the assembly of items as they are sold, while retaining accurate inventory control
- Manages and executes marketing campaigns through tight integration with Vertical Response

"You don't want to pay taxes on inventory you don't have or that's over-valued."

for sale. To keep track of her production elements and finished goods, Kelli constantly had to do unit conversions with Excel. Ink posed an even bigger problem. She bought ink in 1 lb. tins, but a typical print run might only consume a few grams. So costing ink by the production run was nearly impossible—as was obtaining a true cost of goods. But with NetBooks, she could accurately track her production costs by the batch from start to finish.

Solution

In September 2006, Blue Sky switched to NetBooks—a complete, Web-based business management system. And in just the first few minutes of using NetBooks, Kelli knew she had found more than just a record-keeping program. NetBooks integrated all the company's important activities—production, inventory, shipping, and bookkeeping. It also featured sophisticated customer relationship management tools.

Kelli saw that its innovative production and inventory features alone would enable her to run the business the way she'd always wanted to: with tight control of production and production elements; a streamlined, easy-to-use inventory process; precise cost of goods calculation; and accurate sales capture with multiple pricing levels.

NetBooks can be accessed from any computer connected to the Internet, which meant she wouldn't need a complex network or a server. For the first time, she could get the information she needed from any location—on the road or in the office. It was also easy to share information with her CPA. Knowing that Blue Sky's data is always safe and backed up provided additional reassurance.

“For custom projects, I use the NetBooks batch process to capture the unique production aspects of wedding stationery. For my regular note card series, I use a manufacturing production run to produce card sets in quantity.”

“NetBooks lets me manage my operations and my customers in a way QuickBooks just can't.”