



BLACKMAN
PLUMBING/HEATING/COOLING SUPPLIES

Company Profile

Blackman Plumbing, Bellport, NY
www.blackman.com

Industry: HVAC/Plumbing

Varsity Products: ShipSoft Parcel

Shipping Volume: 1000 parcels a week

Number of Shipping Locations: 20

Carriers: UPS

ERP: Mincron

Varsity Logistics helps Blackman keep pace with an ever changing shipping carrier landscape, and implements integrated system shipping in 60 days!

Company Background

Back in 1921, Sam Blackman opened a small plumbing supply shop in Brooklyn with the promise of offering the best products for the best prices, with a firm commitment to the trade. Today, Blackman has grown into one of the nation's largest family-owned and managed suppliers of plumbing, heating, industrial, waterworks and HVAC equipment. With 24 fully-stocked branches and showrooms located throughout the metropolitan New York area, Blackman has become a convenient, reliable resource for today's building and remodeling professionals.

Business Goals

The company's goals include being the most convenient, reliable resource for today's building and remodeling professionals.

Challenges

Over the years, Blackman Plumbing has experienced significant growth. As the industry shifts and the customers become more demanding, companies of all sizes struggle to keep up. This was the case for Blackman Plumbing who was consistently growing and adding new branches.

Another issue facing the company was the manual effort that went into moving shipping data from the carrier provided software solution to the back office ERP software solution (Mincron). The two solutions were on different hardware platforms, adding yet another level of complexity to the issue.

Solution Requirements

With a team coordinated by Stephen Davanzo, Warehouse Manager, and consisting of both Operational and IT staff, they proceeded to identify and define their key functional requirements, taking into consideration how to work within the current IBM platform infrastructure. To accommodate their infrastructure requirements, Blackman needed the solution to reside directly on the IBM System i server, making the shipping information, in real time, available to all users in the organization, not just those in the warehouse.

The company also needed to implement the solution in all of their 20 branches and be able to add new shipping stations, as new branches were added.

Selection Process

With the solution requirements clearly defined and identified, the Blackman team that had been assembled began their search for a shipping solution that would fit their needs at both the application level and the infrastructure level. Initially, Blackman researched what other companies who use the Mincron ERP solution deploy for an integrated shipping solution, and scoured the internet for IBM System i ISVs that developed a System i-based shipping solution. The company also spoke to their hardware contacts at IBM, and it became clear that Varsity was a well known and highly respected ISV within the IBM community of business partners.

Stephen explains “Four sets of criteria were weighted by the team at Blackman Plumbing: functionality, usability, support and price. From a functionality standpoint, the Varsity shipping software addressed all of the company’s requirements with little need for customization, and ranked very high in ease of use. In discussions with the Varsity customer references we spoke to, the support team received high marks, and finally the Varsity solution came in well within our budget.”

Implementation

From planning to execution, the Varsity Logistics professional services team worked in partnership with the Blackman team to execute a full solution implementation within 60 days of the start of the project. Roberto Ansaloni, Varsity Logistics’ Director of Professional Services, states, “We have a talented staff of experienced and dedicated people, who are 100 percent focused on our customer success.”

Results and Benefits

As Blackman continues to grow, the Varsity Logistic shipping solutions are flexible enough to grow with the company. With the ability to “plug in” carrier kits as the market changes and add freight carriers to their shipping strategy, Blackman can avoid costly changes in their response.

Stephen adds, “Our shipping department has seen considerable positive results from the ShipSoft Parcel implementation. Operations have been greatly streamlined, and we can handle our wide variety of shipments.”

For any company that prides itself on providing accurate and timely delivery, customer service must rest at its core and continually reevaluate procedures and implement process improvements to reduce errors and reel in costs. This is the trademark of an

industry leader and a characteristic shared by Varsity Logistics. Overall, Varsity Logistics has equipped Blackman to run an efficient shipping operation with easy access to all of the shipping data it needs for the entire organization.