



Company Profile

Kawasaki Motors Corp, U.S.A., Irvine, CA

<http://www.kawasaki.com/>

Industry: Power Sports Distributor (Original Equipment Manufacturer)

Varsity Products: ShipSoft-Parcel™, ShipSoft-Freight™, ShipTalk™, ShipPack™, ShipAudit™, ShipSelect™, FreightAudit™

Shipping Volume: 6,000 parcels per day

Number of Shipping Locations: Three

Carriers: UPS, FedEx

ERP: In-house ERP / IBM Mainframe

“From the beginning we’ve said performance is key—performance before anything else. We got that with Varsity. And like many large companies, we’ve had special needs. Varsity has listened to those needs and has supported our business objectives and processes—without question.”

—Paul Jollineau, Senior Manager of Parts Operations

Kawasaki Drives Improved Performance with Varsity’s Integrated Shipping Solutions

In 1966, Kawasaki launched its business into the U.S. motorcycle industry. Since then, the company has expanded worldwide into the manufacture and distribution of ATVs, motorcycles, utility vehicles, watercraft, and power products as well as the manufacture of engines for industrial equipment makers. According to Kawasaki, the secret of their global success “is in designing and manufacturing products that offer balanced performance, high quality, reliability, and excellent fit and finish.”

With three shipping locations throughout the U.S., Kawasaki dispatches in excess of 6,000 parts and accessories shipments per day. But their PC-based shipping system didn’t have the performance necessary to handle this volume. Additionally, while their PC-based shipping system was satisfactory for one location, the additional two locations posed a problem. “The architecture of the system didn’t enable the response time and throughput speed we needed,” said Paul Jollineau, Senior Manager of Parts Operations at Kawasaki, “and when we tried to modify the system to meet our demands, the package just couldn’t cut it.”

Kim Donaldson, Parts Business Administrator added, “The system was fine as a stand-alone, out of the box solution, but we needed a lot more.”

Additionally, like many large companies, Kawasaki had begun a shift, directing departments that once had stand alone software to switch to solutions that would integrate within the business for a more efficient and streamlined workflow. With all these factors, the Kawasaki Operations department knew that it was time for a change. Because of the scale of integration, Kawasaki’s IT group lead the initial research of shipping solutions, with the aid of the Operations group. “Ops could define what we wanted, but if it didn’t work from the technical side, it was futile,” said Jollineau.

Armed with a list of requirements that included improved throughput speed, accessible and thorough customer support and documentation, integration with their other systems, LTL and HAZMAT shipping capabilities, and product and company stability, Kawasaki's IT group did their due diligence. They selected a short list of vendors including Varsity's multi-carrier shipping solution for the IBM iSeries.

"That's the first time we even considered moving off the PC," said Ev Tapia, Operations Systems Administrator. "For throughput and networking, we decided the iSeries platform was the way to go. Our Varsity sales rep gave us a demo and GAP analysis to compare Kawasaki's processes versus Varsity's capabilities. Then, two of our staff went on Varsity customer site visits. We'd hoped to get solid support and services from Varsity, but we were cautious going in considering our experience with our previous vendor. When we talked with Varsity customers, it was apparent that the technical support we needed was definitely there."

After a rigorous selection process, Kawasaki chose Varsity products for their stability, support, speed, and a host of other powerful capabilities.

Integration, installation, and testing have been conducted by Varsity Professional Services engineers. Says Donaldson, "They're wonderful; Kawasaki has very specific processes and we've required several mods—Varsity was there to handle them."

Additionally, Varsity Professional Services developed a cross-platform interface to enable Kawasaki's data to flow between their iSeries platform and IBM mainframe.

"Varsity's efficient data stream allows us to properly utilize our T1 line. It was maddening when we would try and close up at the end of the day. Often, we would wait a minute plus just to get a label printed. Now we have the ability to seamlessly transfer data between our systems, and the increases in productivity are obvious," said Jollineau. Kawasaki has seen measurable results with consistent throughput and double the processing speed.

In addition, with Varsity, Kawasaki can now pack and ship at the same workstation. Something that was impossible in their previous environment. "We knew that Varsity had this capability and piloted it at one of our shipping locations," said Donaldson, "but once the other distribution centers found out about this capability, they drove and accelerated the change on their side—they were so excited."

"From the beginning we've said performance is key—performance before anything else. We got that with Varsity," concluded Jollineau. "And like many large companies, we've had special needs. Varsity has listened to those needs and has supported our business objectives and processes—without question."