



AppFinity eTrade-Show System Resolves Recurring Trade Show Challenges for Jenkins Enterprises

Trade show visitors impressed with sales reps' ability to process orders and answer all questions using state-of-the-art hand-held technology.

Jenkins Enterprises (www.jenkins-enterprises.com) is a designer, importer and wholesale distributor of gifts, souvenirs and licensed collegiate merchandise. Founded in 1976, Jenkins Enterprises has grown from a small family-owned business to a nationally recognized leader in the industry with headquarters in North Little Rock, Arkansas and a permanent showroom in Atlanta, Georgia. The company employs 45 full-time workers and eight independent sales representatives.

Trade Show Challenges Bog Down Sales Process in the Booth. Opportunities Missed to Attract New Customers

When Jenkins Enterprises participates in a trade show, the company seeks to attain a healthy balance between generating sales and cultivating new customers. Until recently, achieving both of these objectives had been difficult due to the company's reliance on manual processes that made it time-consuming to write up orders and impossible to access customer or product information for a customer in the booth. The unfortunate after-effect of these inefficiencies was the loss of customers who didn't have the time to wait around for a sales rep to talk to them.

Jenkins Enterprises president Steve Jenkins detailed a few of the issues he and his sales reps were facing on-site. "The process of taking orders from customers was labor-intensive – we had to physically pick up an item, identify the stock number from the label, and then hand-write that information on the order form with pricing, description and quantity. If a customer wanted a long list of items, you can imagine just how long it took to fill out the order. Since visitors only have a limited amount of time in booth, we were losing sales and new customers because we were too busy writing and detailing orders."

"We had a couple of other challenges as well," added Jenkins. "When customers found an item they wanted, they might ask if the product was in stock. Since we had no remote access to our current inventory, it was difficult to answer that question right away. We often had to phone into the office to find out and this drawn-out process was frustrating to our customers and our salespeople. Similarly, we didn't have data on-hand to determine any special pricing arrangements or other customer-specific details and we'd have to make another call to the office for that information."

Time to Go Mobile – AppFinity and Tamlin Present the Right Solution

Steve Jenkins and his management team knew that their sales reps needed to spend more time communicating with customers and less time manually filling out orders and calling the office. After seeing other companies using hand-held devices that enabled them to obtain customer, pricing and inventory information right on the spot, it was clear that mobile technology would be the best solution. A new system also had to be configured in a way that they could access whatever data they needed when there was no Internet connection – in offline mode, so to speak.

With the company's successful implementation of a fully integrated AccountMate SQL accounting system and AppFinity Software WebStore e-commerce application, Jenkins was confident that an equally effective solution could be devised for trade shows. He turned to long-time AccountMate Business Partner, Tamlin Software (www.tamlinsoftware.com) for assistance. Tamlin president and CEO, Linda Bryan, contacted AppFinity Software founder Dennis Lo (also co-founder of AccountMate Software) and began working to deliver a trade show solution that could be customized to fit Jenkins' precise requirements.

The AppFinity team, (with input from Bryan and Jenkins) came up with a new product, the **eTrade-Show** system, which consists of an eTrade-Show laptop server, a wireless router and Motorola/Symbol MC-50 WiFi-capable Pocket PCs with built-on barcode scanners. Here's how the system works: Using a hand-held device, a sales rep enters a new customer's information or accesses an existing customer in the system, then scans each item's barcode and enters the order quantity. When all items have been scanned, the sales rep enters the customer's payment and shipping information and the order is completed and saved. In less than a minute, customers have a printed copy of the order and are on their way. Trade show orders can be uploaded to the AppFinity WebStore at a later time and the company's administrator can approve each order, making it a sales order in AccountMate SQL.

The Trade Show Administrator program installed on the laptop server also enables sales reps to quote prices, view items and existing customers and add new customer information during the trade show. Detailed inventory information such as on-hand and available quantities, price and item descriptions and even individual customer pricing is instantly available.

eTrade-Show System Boosts Sales and Customer Contact at Recent Trade Show

“By the time our customized eTrade-Show add-on and Motorola hand-held devices were delivered, we had only three days to learn the system prior to the trade show,” claimed Jenkins. “However, the system was so easy to learn and use that we were able to make good use of its time-saving features as soon as we arrived. In fact, once we started using the system in the booth, it felt as if we had been using it for years. It's very intuitive and it saved time and frustration for both our sales reps and our customers.”

“It's amazing how much confidence you can instill in your customers when you can process their orders in no time and have instant access to any customer or product information you need. When we employed the system at a recent trade show, the ordering process went so smoothly, I don't think we missed a single customer. Now, when our customers leave the booth, they have precise, professional-looking sales orders that include all of the item details that they will need.

Many of our visitors actually told us how impressed they were with the professional, high-tech way we conducted our business at the trade show,” continued Jenkins.

“There are other systems out there that offer remote access to information using hand-held devices, but due to our past experience with the folks at AppFinity and Tamlin, we knew that we would get the right solution and that we would get it quickly. They have taken the time to get to know us and our business processes, plus they have the expertise to come up with answers we need. We’re so pleased with the results from the eTrade-Show system, we’re now working to modify it so we can use it so we can take orders when we walk our customers through our show room or warehouse,” concluded Jenkins.

About AppFinity Software

AppFinity Software Corporation (San Francisco, California) is dedicated to the design, implementation and support of e-commerce solutions that leverage existing technology investments and minimize ongoing IT costs. AppFinity solutions are fully customizable and can integrate with most existing commercial Web sites and today’s most popular accounting software systems to deliver complete business solutions that enable companies to focus on their goals without exhausting precious resources on unnecessary IT expenditures. AppFinity is driven by a relentless quest to provide an extraordinary level of customer service that is peerless in today’s fast-paced, high-stress business environment. To learn more about AppFinity Software, visit www.appfinity.com

About Tamlin Software

Tamlin Software Developers, Inc. is a systems integrator providing ERP, Shop Floor Control, MRP and Enterprise Optimization solutions to small and mid-range manufacturers, food processors and distributors. Tamlin provides solutions for distribution, accounting and e-commerce through the award-winning systems developed by AccountMate Software Corporation. Tamlin has also developed a number of its own solutions for the small- to mid-size business market, including Manufacturing Conductor, Food Manufacturing Conductor and MC Scheduler. Tamlin offers an extensive array of services, including consulting for manufacturing companies, software implementation, IT staffing and custom software development. To learn more about Tamlin Software, visit www.tamlinsoftware.com