



Microsoft Business Solutions Retail Management System Customer Solution Case Study

WOODHOUSE FAMILY CELLARS
Darighe • Dussek • Maghie
Kennedy Shah

Winery Uses Robust Solution to Broaden Customer Palette and Guide Business

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Retail

Customer Profile

Woodhouse Family Cellars of Woodinville, Washington, produces and sells four brands of hand-crafted boutique wines through wholesalers, distributors, restaurants, and its tasting room.

Business Situation

To capture customer preferences and purchase histories, owner Bijal Shah set stiff requirements for an all-encompassing, fully integrated, easy-to-use solution in the winery tasting room.

Solution

Customer-mining functions in Microsoft® Business Solutions Retail Management System and EVTRetail™ Customer Kiosk uncorked profitable new information and mixed well with other software.

Benefits

- Fast installation and learning
- Integrated customer registration
- Customer needs guide production
- Accurate, friendly inventory data
- Instant sales reports

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Bijal Shah, Owner, Woodhouse Family Cellars

When making plans to open a new tasting room in his winery’s headquarters, owner Bijal Shah knew exactly what he had to have. “It absolutely had to be easy to install and learn. It had to store vast amounts of customer information, be compatible with other software, and give me reports that make the facts I need jump out at me from the paper or the screen. Only hard facts let you run a smooth operation.”

Even Shah admits that was a lot to ask for. “When I began my search, I thought nothing had the capacity and ease I needed,” Shah says. Installed during a busy wine festival weekend, Microsoft® Business Solutions Retail Management System began instantly delivering results.

“Although it has been only running for a short time,” Shah says, “this system has given us a vastly improved ability to market to our most likely and profitable customers.”

“A retailer can’t run the business without this data. It lets you handle issues before they become problems.”

Bijal Shah, Owner, Woodhouse Family Cellars

Situation

Describing Bijal Shah as a wine lover is an understatement. As a seasoned fashion executive, Shah crisscrossed the globe, always incidentally searching out the finest regional wines. In 1998, Shah and his uncle, vintner Tom Campbell, began their own wine cellars in Woodinville, Washington, and produced 100 cases of a vintage Bordeaux-style wine they called Darighe, Celtic for “red.”

Darighe sold out in three months after its 2001 release. Since then, Woodhouse premier wines have become much sought after by many of the wine-savvy restaurants in the region, with sales growing to more than 4,000 cases per year.

assortment of accessories like wine openers and stemware.”

But as the company was growing, Shah and his six employees used one point-of-sale (POS) register up front and ran operations on a back-office computer. “We did checkouts by hand,” he says. “It was slow but we could manage—sort of. When we decided to open up a new tasting room, however, it was time for changes to be made.”

Knowing Customers’ Needs

Shah observes that the wineries he visited often had no record of their tasting room customers or related sales histories. But, as an executive, Shah had always depended on and nurtured such information. He saw the big picture of how it would be crucial to marketing, promotion, and even guiding production decisions. “Without customer data, how can you know what the public wants?” he says. “But we didn’t have the ability to efficiently gather and exploit such data. As we grew, it became impossible to remember which customer bought what wines, then which wines they bought for gifts.”

Shah tried keeping manual lists for each of his four labels, but that ate up executive time in administrative trivia. “Keeping decent records by hand at the point-of-sale was time-consuming and annoying to customers in line,” Shah says. “We gave up on that.”

But all this shaped very definite requirements for the retail management system he desired. “I wanted to register every customer, even every shopper, who entered the tasting room,” Shah says, “then record their interests in a detailed purchase history that could be cross-referenced using multiple criteria.”

Vital Operational Data

On top of this, Shah needed tighter data control over his business. “We wanted to



Kennedy, Sinead, and Bijal Shah with the winery’s offerings.

Today, Woodhouse Family Cellars produces four brands of premium boutique wine—Darighe, Hudson, Dussek, and Kennedy Shah—sold through wholesalers, distributors, specialty stores, fine restaurants, and its on-site retail tasting room. “We also sell an

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Bijal Shah, Owner, Woodhouse Family Cellars

manage the wine operations and production better," he says, "I wanted our winemakers to be able to scan the bar codes on barrels so we could always track where the fruit came from, when it was crushed, and all the other variables that make our wines exceptional. Our chief winemaker lives in Montana, so it was vital he be able to manage our operation remotely."

Woodhouse's quality control also needed tracking. "We earmark 50 of our 350 barrels weekly for lab testing to ensure that perfect sulfur dioxide levels would retard oxidation without being too high in sulfites," Shah says. "We needed a system to track this flawlessly."

System integration with outside software was a final requisite. "We wanted to install software specific to the wine industry, as well as QuickBooks Premier," Shah says. "The last thing I wanted was a management solution that wouldn't play well with others. Software incompatibility can waste all the time we were saving."

Solution

Shah's research revealed many retail solutions, but none seemed satisfactory. "They lacked ability to stretch their customer management system to fit our needs," he says. "We needed a lot more flexibility and business agility than they could offer. I didn't want a canned, inflexible solution. I needed software that was quick on its feet."

Finally, another winery referred Shah to Microsoft® Retail Management System. "After I described all I needed, the other owner immediately told me I needed Microsoft. I was introduced to EVT Solutions and they earned our trust and became our Microsoft partner."

Shah says that, after explaining his needs to EVT President Robert Carney, "Robert

understood instantly. Then he defined and put together an easy and completely integrated umbrella solution." This included Microsoft Retail Management System and two EVT Solutions integrated retail solutions: EVTRetail™ Customer Registration Kiosk and EVTRetail Command Center. "This is a smooth-running team of software tools. They really empower us to gather more data for our customer databases."

Strong Client Database

Woodhouse Family Cellars went live with Microsoft Retail Management System over the weekend of December 1, 2004—the busy St. Nicholas Day winery festival in Woodinville. "We had to hurry to get it up and running," says Shah, "but with several hundred people going through all the tasting rooms at nearby wineries, we had to have it fully operational and bug free."

The system was an instant success. "The deployment went smoothly and customers loved it," Shah says. "They registered for news of our events, to get on the mailing list for new releases, and for favorable spots on our allocations. And our staff really liked getting rid of the cumbersome tasks of writing customer demographics."

Instant Reports Prevent Problems

Along with a thorough knowledge of customer preferences and history, Shah now knows exactly what he has on hand, and can better predict what he will need in the future. "Now we can push a button and see, for example, who our Darighe customers are," he says. "We immediately know how much we have of each wine, so we can allocate new production to our earliest customers first."

Shah found the sales and central files reports of Microsoft Retail Management to be vital, too. "I now have all the information I need in real time—number of people signed up, monthly, weekly, and daily sales by wine, and

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Bijal Shah, Owner, Woodhouse Family Cellars

what amounts of stocks we go through,” he says. “A retailer can’t run the business without this data. It lets you handle issues before they become problems.”

Benefits

Shah is more than delighted with the way his business is running, thanks to the Microsoft and EVTRetail solution. “Microsoft Retail Management System has been fabulous,” he says. “Everything I asked for has been delivered. And the product upgrades keep expanding its usefulness. Soon we will be able to make notes on a PDA in the wine cellar that will show up instantly on the server. Even huge wineries don’t have this kind of instant visibility and control!”

Smooth Operation

Customers immediately noticed the improvement at the point of sale. “It took about five minutes to add custom buttons to our checkout screen for the four items we sell most,” says Shah. “Now, selling one of these popular items takes about two seconds, literally. Everything else has been phased over to automation and bar codes. This is saving us huge blocks of time!”

The easy compatibility of EVTRetail Kiosk—a multimedia, customer-facing computer residing in the tasting room—with Microsoft Retail Management System enables the winery to advertise its company background and specific wines. New customers and shoppers use the kiosk to sign up for targeted or broad mailings while they sample wines.

The resulting customer information has already bolstered marketing efforts. “Through increased customer registration and purchase histories, we simply sell smarter to the people who buy the most from us,” Shah says. “We know who our best customers are and what they like. Shouldn’t we work harder to please that segment?”

His quality control needs are met. “Tracking a barrel’s history and its chemical makeup with this system is important.”

Bottom Line: Customer Relations

Shah is unequivocal about the biggest benefit of Microsoft Retail Management System. “Since the quality of our wines is a given,” he says, “customer relations becomes the next most vital part of our business. We have to assess customers’ needs and fulfill them promptly. Just as important, the customer has to know he or she is appreciated. They have to feel as important as we know they are. Tracking their individual preferences adds that personal touch. They know they are more than just a sales tally to us.”

Shah speaks highly of his Microsoft Certified Partner EVT Solutions. “Whenever we have a problem or question, they respond immediately and with the exact right fix,” he says. “Their offices even have a demo center, which demonstrates how well their product mix will serve your needs. It’s obvious they care as much about their customers as we do about ours, so we are very comfortable with their underlying motivations.”

“Overall,” Shah adds, “I am delighted with this Microsoft-based combination of tools. Its flexibility and seamless integration has exceeded our expectations in every way. Thanks to our Microsoft and EVT solution,” Shah says, “we are having a vintage year!”

For More Information

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For more information about Woodhouse Family Cellars products and services, call (425) 527-0608 or visit the Web site at: www.woodhousefamilycellars.com

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Microsoft Business Solutions Retail Management System

Microsoft Business Solutions Retail Management System offers a complete store automation solution for small and medium-sized retailers, streamlining point-of-sale (POS), customer service, and store inventory management, and providing real-time access to key business metrics. Microsoft Retail Management System is a comprehensive solution for single-store and multi-store retailers that empowers independent proprietors, store managers, and cashiers through affordable and easy-to-use automation. Microsoft Retail Management System has the flexibility and scalability to grow with a retailer's business. It works with the Microsoft Office System, Microsoft Windows® Small Business Server, and leading financial applications to provide end-to-end support from the cash register to the back office.

For more information about Microsoft Retail Management System, go to: www.microsoft.com/pos

Software and Services

- Products
 - Microsoft Office 2003 Professional
 - Microsoft Windows XP Professional
- Solutions
 - Microsoft Business Solutions Retail Management System

Third-Party Software

- Intuit QuickBooks Professional

Hardware

- Pioneer Pxi Series 15-inch POS all-in-one terminal with integrated magnetic stripe reader
- Epson TM-T88III receipt printer
- Symbol Technologies LS 2208 handheld scanners
- Logic Controls 3900 line display
- APG Series 10 cash drawer
- VeriFone PIN pad

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