

In Quest of Excellence

Cedar's Mediterranean Foods



Empower Your Workforce

A Specialty Foods Company Spices Up its Bottom Line with Technology

Executive Summary

- A Growing Player in a hot segment of the Prepared Foods Market needed advanced I.T. infrastructure to effectively service demand.
- The New Technology had to work in a tough Route Accounting environment.
- The New Technology had to be operated nationwide by existing staff, and it had to feed an existing ERP System without a hitch
- Cedar's Mediterranean Foods started with their ERP Supplier and then broadened the search to AIDC Systems Integrators throughout North America.
- Quest Solution provided both the Hardware and Software to meet specifications.
- Quest also forged a close working relationship with their new customer that resulted in the formation of a long term trade partnership that will benefit both.
- The new Mobile Computing Workstations, installed in DSD vehicles across the country, were operated at specification by existing staff within the first week of use, on average.
- These Workstations were composed of a Motorola MC 70 Terminal with AT&T WAN, a Zebra QL420 Printer, and Via Route® software developed by Quest.
- Actual savings to Cedar's Foods exceeded initial estimates and quickly prompted talks on further technology upgrades in other areas of the business.

Read on for in-depth information on how Quest Solution and Cedar Mediterranean Foods partner for success!



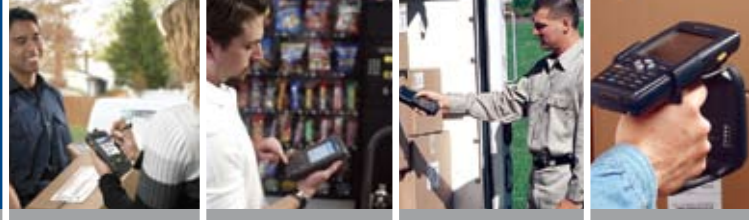
QuestSolution

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Growth Creates New Revenues and New Challenges



An Application Overview –

Even as a leader in the fast growing Mediterranean segment of the Prepared Foods industry, Cedar's Management knew they needed to do more. They realized that demand-sparked Year on Year revenue growth could not be sustained without also keeping up with production and distribution improvements. The twenty six year old firm had been aggressive in its investment in the business. In 2005 the company moved into a brand new, state of the art production and headquarters facility. Originally a regional supplier in the Northeast, Cedar's Mediterranean Foods had recently expanded its geographical reach from Coast to Coast.

Business Growth Means Technology Growth –

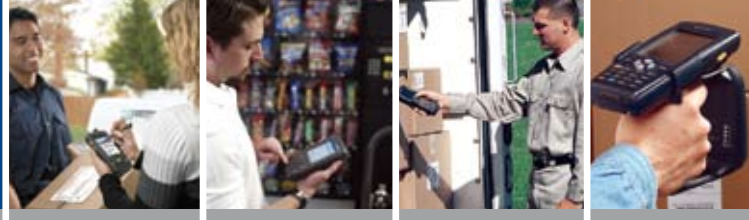
To keep up with demand, Cedar's Management had to do more. As business expanded so did the nationwide network of Route Delivery Vehicles bringing the company's Hommus and Taboule to market. This created an impossible strain on a Route Accounting System that had always been based on manual reports followed by key data entry. To solve this problem of both management and accounting information Cedar's Mediterranean Foods turned to the Auto ID and Data Collection industry.

Quest Solution Stands Out –

When they sought consultation and systems integration for a management solution to this Route Accounting problem Cedar's Mediterranean Foods cast a wide net. They spoke to companies across the AIDC industry and received proposals from a number of them. Two things about Quest Solution stood out to Cedar's during the selection process. Quest had the product set the food manufacturer needed to solve its problems and Quest was by far the most responsive bidder.

Quest proposed a mobile computing solution built around Motorola's MC 70 hand held terminal. They spec'd these rugged portables with the optional AT&T SIMM Card to give each truck in the field Wide Area Network (WAN) capability. This feature gave Cedar's the ability to collect delivery data as it was generated and without secondary key data entry.

Critically, the MC 70 also provided a hardware platform that permitted a DEX Upload at any stop on any Route that was equipped to take it. This feature let Cedar's comply with DEX requests they had from existing customers as well as to readily accept new ones, even if DEX was a requirement.



Since Cedar's Routes nationwide would be in transition from a paper based system, Quest also proposed Zebra's QL420 Mobile Printer to round out the equipment kit in each delivery vehicle. Nearly three quarters of all Cedar's Mediterranean Foods delivery vehicles were operated by independent contractors so hard copy records for those Route Sales Reps (RSR's) would be a feature of the process for quite some time.

Hardware is Important but Software is Critical –

Cedar's was able to benefit from Quest Solution's strong working relationship with manufacturers in the AIDC industry, like Motorola. What really set Quest apart, though, was their own proprietary software package: Via Route®. Because it was written in-house Quest engineers were able to easily adapt the output of their software to seamlessly front-end the existing ERP System used by their customer.

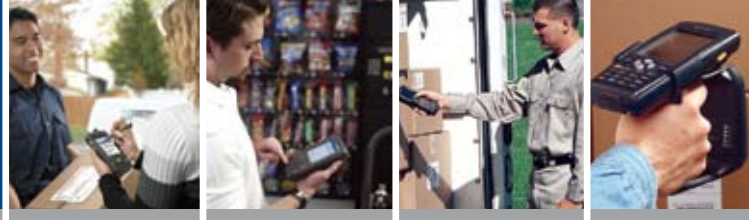
Cedar's Mediterranean Foods was considering a technology upgrade to make their life easier, not more difficult. Any Mobile Computing system proposed for their Direct Store Delivery fleet had to support the company's existing I.T. infrastructure on Day One. Since Quest controlled the Code it was able to deliver on that non-negotiable parameter of the deal.

How Did It All Work Out?

Before the upgrade from Quest Solution, Cedar's Mediterranean Foods had received their hand written Proofs of Delivery primarily by mail. Given collection times, especially for the independent RSR's, and USPS delivery times from the West Coast, there was a minimum seven day lag between delivery and invoicing with the manual approach. By instituting automation the food supplier was able to advance its Cash Flow by seven days along with its product freshness. That, alone, was enough to justify the nationwide installation on both Dollar and Quality terms. But that was just the start of the list of benefits Cedar's received.

Eliminating Key Data Entry at their East Coast headquarters saved the company labor and it saved costly data errors. Employees were happy to have an onerous task removed from their daily routines. In addition, Cedar's risk of squandering a customer's good will by improperly billing them was reduced to Zero.

Because the Motorola MC 70 could be accessed from a standard P/C Cradle as well as through the WAN, Cedar's RSR's were able to make an orderly transition to the wireless world. There were even a few routes in far outlying or mountainous



geographies where the lack of cellular coverage made WAN access impossible. No problem. On those Exception Routes the data still came in electronically, it just arrived after a delay of a few hours until the day's deliveries were completed and the vehicle was back at the barn.

Cedar's Mediterranean Foods' CFO, Chris Gaudette, may have summed it up best when he said, "Pulling in our Cash Flow, alone, gave us a measurable financial benefit that dwarfed the cost of the installation. When you add to that the strong trade partnership that was forged between Cedar's and a capable new technology supplier, the project was an unparalleled win for our company."

Getting Into the Details

Some Specifics on the Cedar's Mediterranean Foods Application

During three years of substantial growth Cedar's Mediterranean Foods had come to rely on the Navision ERP System and the vendor that maintained it for them, Columbus IT. Cedar's Chris Gaudette is a Hands-On CFO. He had personally overseen the installation and customization of Navision. He worked hard to establish corporate process in line with the ERP System and to make minor modifications to get it fit at Cedar's Foods. By the time he was ready to consider automating his delivery vehicles there was no question that anything he acquired had to operate transparently with Navision.

Any upgrade to the Direct Store Delivery (DSD) vehicle fleet also had to pass muster with the RSR's who would use it on a daily basis. "The majority of our business is DSD," Gaudette explained. "And that percentage is growing." Cedar's Management knew that shipping direct to stores meant faster deliveries that would guarantee the company both product freshness and accelerated cash flow. In the rapid growth the company had enjoyed, however, it was natural that at the time of this upgrade virtually all of the vehicles were operated by independent contractors. These trucks were not owned by Cedar's but they did carry company signage and were largely used exclusively for deliveries of the company's Mediterranean specialties. All this made Ease of Operation and Field Reliability keys to the food processor's choice of systems.

Selecting the Right System Meant Selecting the Right Supplier

Cedar's Mediterranean Foods sought consultation and proposals on this project from a number of companies. Columbus IT even made one of the recommendations their



own customer followed up. At length there were concerns about the small size of one or two of the offerors and whether or not they could service a nationwide order if they received one. Then, too, there were larger systems integrators competing for the business but who lacked the in-house software capacity needed to modify their Route Accounting packages to interface transparently with Navision.

As a company, Quest Solution had everything that Cedar's needed. "In the end, though, it came down to responsiveness and customer service." Chris Gaudette emphasized. "Quest Account Manager Dan Pascucci was ready with the answers to any question and he transitioned easily into the role of Project Manager for his company once we began the development."

Quest had the right combination of Hardware and Software offerings. Quest had the nationwide reach to be able to effectively deliver on the project. "The final factor I'd point to," Gaudette continued. "Is that Quest wanted it more." The extra effort applied to this project by Quest Solution reflected the same aggressive Can-Do attitude that Chris Gaudette and his team at Cedar's Foods displayed. The two organizations were a fit for one another from the start.

Coming Through On the Partnership, Coming Through With the ROI

Because of the close working relationship that developed between the two companies the development process moved much more quickly than it might have. In fact, it was soon evident that extending the reach of Cedar's computer network to the cab of each of its DSD Vehicles would result in a windfall of added management control and accounting information. At that point the food company began the search for an internal Project Manager of its own. Midway through the development and test of the systems Linda Sweeney came aboard to fill that newly created role.

"Before I actually got to work with the Quest Team," Sweeney said. "I was a little worried that I'd be able to properly oversee and control a vendor that was so far into this kind of project." Those concerns quickly evaporated when she saw that everyone's objective was to get Cedar's Mediterranean Foods automated, and nothing else. "It was such a relief to see the professionalism being exhibited on all sides of this project. I was able to be effective almost as soon as I got started and now I'm completely able to manage the day to day data operations of our nationwide fleet." She went on.



Meeting ROI Expectations

Almost as soon as the Mobile Workstations began to be operational a number of the advantages of the technology began to be evident. Some of these benefits had been forecast and some had not. The Efficiency and Accuracy that's the objective of any automation project was there on day one. Some of the Cedar's RSR's might not have understood it all right away. They soon saw that by eliminating paperwork at every stop the drivers, themselves, were freed up to spend more time working with their customers, working on displays and returns, or even adding additional stops to their routes in a single shift.

Management was pleased that the RSR's no longer had to manually do the pricing of the goods. Automated downloads to the Motorola MC 70's meant fewer pricing errors in either direction and a greater flexibility for promotional pricing variations to a subset of the customer base.

"This system's impact on our Bottom Line, just from the seven or eight day advance of Cash Flow was enough by itself to justify the investment." Said CFO Chris Gaudette. Cedar's Foods also saw other advantages. Not least of these was the addition of a trusted new vendor that will be an asset to several future projects they have in mind. "I only wish we'd done it all sooner." Gaudette concluded.