



## The Company

Wist Business Supply & Equipment has been serving Arizona businesses since 1955 and is the largest independently owned office supply company in the Southwest. Wist offers over 40,000 products including general office supplies, office furniture and janitorial supplies. Additionally, Wist's ability to accommodate individual, custom orders and free next-day delivery is at the core of the company's success.

### Industry

Wholesale Distribution, Durable Goods

### Requirements

Distribution, Warehouse Management, Inventory Management, Automated Purchasing

## The Solution

Office supply companies face stiff competition and realize that on-time, next-day delivery is imperative to survival. Distributors of any size require accurate inventory data to function effectively, but when the company is a large office supplier offering a selection of approximately 50,000 items, this becomes a non-negotiable requirement. The challenges of maintaining inventory levels, tracking sales and commissions, and providing guaranteed in-stock, next-day delivery are difficult. As such, an integrated, real-time inventory management solution is essential. In fact, a comprehensive enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution is an important part of attaining and preserving profitability, and Wist Office Products knew that the right solution could help the company achieve significant bottom-line results.

Wist was running an outdated ERP system that presented several problems for the distributor. The first primary concern was the system's lack of flexibility. The software did not allow the company to implement process improvements, and this in turn required Wist to incur extra, unnecessary labor costs. Errors were also common and prevented Wist from acquiring the information it needed for accurate reporting and data analysis.

Quite simply, the industry specific ERP package that Wist was utilizing had become obsolete and forced the company to make an important, business transforming decision. Either Wist could convert to an updated version of a package that lacked the features and flexibility that the growing distributor needed, or it could seek out a new solution. The company has grown significantly since implementing its original distribution package and what had once provided ample functionality now ate up valuable employee time for simple data entry tasks.

Still, the biggest challenge was in effectively managing its warehouse operations. As a just-in-time supplier, Wist needed a distribution solution that offered accurate, timely data and automated features to streamline operations and get products out the door for next-day delivery. The company's old system was simply too outdated to handle this request and required many employees, manually entering data and picking product to make good on its delivery promises.

It was crucial that Wist tackle its excess labor issues without sacrificing the next-day delivery guarantee that set the supplier apart from the competition. To address this, the warehouse staff needed to know where the

*The Solution continued:*

product was located and how much was always on hand. Additionally, since Wist stocks about 1,300 to 1,400 items, but offers over 50,000 products, the supplier required an automated purchasing system that could automatically transmit orders to its suppliers. This was an important and mandatory requirement since wholesalers are an integral part of Wist's business model. An effective method to manage this procedure was crucial to the company's long-term success.

Wist reviewed several distribution packages before settling on the one software company that offered the solutions and the expertise to deliver – VAI. Not only could VAI provide a premier ERP solution, but VAI's S2K Enterprise software suite would give the company all the ERP capabilities enjoyed by larger distributors, at a fraction of the cost. VAI recommended its S2K for Distribution solution to address the company's needs. Importantly, S2K handles next-day delivery and because VAI has extensive experience

working with distributors in every industry, the firm was equipped with the knowledge to design an automated purchasing solution to facilitate seamless communications and integrated operations with Wist's wholesale partners.

VAI worked with Wist to ensure that S2K's Suggested Purchasing application met the company's needs. Wist accepts orders for items that the company does not actively stock and these orders transmit automatically to the wholesaler, but when dealing with 30 wholesalers at any given time, this can become a time consuming and cumbersome process.

Ryan Wuttke, Director of IT, Wist, explained, "The Suggested Purchasing module has helped us significantly because we go direct to other dealers. This can be a difficult process, requiring our buyers to make decisions on what, when, and how much product to purchase. Essentially, we don't want to carry unnecessary products. In addition, it is imperative to control costs by selecting the vendor with the most competitive price for each item. When dealing with tens of thousands of pieces, this can easily become an overwhelming responsibility, but VAI has helped Wist to eliminate wasteful purchasing." Wist no longer runs an opinion-based purchasing system. S2K

takes the guesswork out of the equation with a user-friendly, data rich suggested purchasing module, which keeps inventory levels lean, but still ample to meet customer demands.

VAI's S2K for Distribution has helped Wist reduce inventory levels, streamline operations, and decrease overhead cost. Prior to the S2K installation, Wist required an excessive number of employees to meet its promise of next-day delivery. Now, the company can get the up-to-date, high-quality information that it needs to run a competitive business using less payroll hours. Additionally, the company has incurred tremendous cost savings.

The Warehouse saw a dramatic decrease in labor. With VAI's advanced warehouse automation features including picking and order verification, Wist has replaced its manual processes with an efficient system that not only saves time, but also saves money.

As Wist continues to grow, S2K for Distribution is flexible enough to grow with the company. Wist is empowered to modify the system to meet its changing business requirements. For any company that prides itself on providing accurate next-day delivery, customer service must rest at its core, and it must continually reevaluate procedures and implement process improvements

*The Solution continued:*

to reduce errors. This is the trademark of an industry leader—and a

characteristic shared by Wist and VAI. Overall, S2K has equipped the distributor to run an efficient

operation with easy access to all the data it needs to continue fueling its growth.

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## The Results

Robert Wist, CEO of Wist, summed it up best, “For Wist, the payoff has been substantial. In just 2 years, we’ve recouped the packages implementation costs and S2K has provided a 10% reduction in employee overhead, while gross margins have increased

by about 4%-- both considerable benefits for our company.”

Since the launch, Wist Business Supply & Equipment has been using VAI’s ERP software to:

- Provide seamless communications and integrated operations with Wist’s wholesale partners

- Eliminate wasteful purchasing
- Maintain lean inventory levels still ample to meet customer demands
- Streamline operations and decrease overhead cost
- Incur tremendous cost saving.

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“For Wist, the payoff with VAI S2K ERP has been substantial. In just 2 years, we’ve recouped our implementation costs and S2K has provided a 10% reduction in employee overhead, while gross margins have increased by about 4%-- both considerable benefits for our company.”

– Robert Wist, CEO, Wist Business Supply & Equipment