

Shelving Off the Shelf

Custom Software Streamlines Tire Company Operations

Toyo Tire had a choice to make. Their software was out of date and it was time to upgrade. They carefully reviewed all their options and narrowed them down to two choices: upgrade their current off-the-shelf software or opt for a customized program. After they brought in their auditors for a full assessment, they decided on the customized software solution from KDI.

Although the process of creating a customized software package took longer than purchasing and installing an off-the-shelf package, that development gelled the staff together. Each department was interviewed to learn what the current software package did and did not do properly. The goal was to build the actual foundation from ground zero and incorporate the unique needs of each department into the final product. It worked.

Because of Toyo Tire's size and their IT approach, Robert Dubois, the IT manager for Toyo Tire was able to take the tools provided by KDI to create the software package of Toyo Tire's dreams. "Toyo did not enjoy the vendor lock-in experience. They were looking for something to get more control," said Dubois.

Toyo expected to get the same type of results that they would get from a software upgrade, but moving to the custom software yielded unexpected benefits. The new program not only increased their efficiency and productivity ten-fold, but also the development process boosted staff morale in unexpected ways.

"We threw away the old book and said built something better. I'm more productive now, hands down," said M. Paul Cook, Toyo Tire's credit manager. He no longer wastes time searching through useless reports for the exact information he needs. "Because I have all the information I need on the screen, I have a huge productivity improvement. The business is now driving the IT side, where before the IT side was driving the business."

Cook, who's been in the credit business for close to 30 years, has never seen a software program meet his needs the way KDI's customized system does. But then again, he's never been part of developing the software he uses. "What I've been able to develop here is every credit manager's dream. I have yet to see a software package that offers what we have here," he said with pride.

Cook's not the only one raving about the system, it's ease of use and his increased ability to do his job more effectively. The sales department tore apart the old system to get exactly what they needed, as did purchasing. In the end, each




Toyo Tire's hard working staff.

department received exactly what they needed, all thanks to their candid input, KDI's "can do" attitude, and Dubois' hard work.

"When you get everyone involved, that investment pays extraordinary dividends every day. That's dollars and cents," said Cook, adding that the enormous staff buy-in made Toyo Tire employees less resistant to the software change and more excited about improving the way they do their jobs.

This experience really changed Cook's outlook on purchasing software. "I would say it's short-sighted to go the canned system route. You have to conform to their system and that's not the way to do it," he said. "We've had the other canned packages before and what did we get from it? We got nothing but grief. In the long run you get nothing useful."

Defining their software needs not only increased Toyo Tire's efficiency; the quick response they receive from both Dubois and KDI to any IT issues is also a productivity booster. Most importantly, this increase is clearly measurable in nearly all departments.

For example, invoicing now takes one third the time that was previously required. With the ability to react quickly to customer concerns, efficiently deal with purchasing and credit issues, easily connect with other offices, and streamline tasks for all staff members, Toyo Tire isn't looking back. 

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