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Ensemble Business Software Scales To Accommodate A Decade's Growth

Fifth Sun of Chico, California is a shining success. Its colorful casual wear, emblazoned with licensed logos and images, lines the shelves of most of the country's major retailers such as Walmart and J.C. Penney, and thousands of smaller specialty stores.

Over the past decade, Fifth Sun has grown from \$3 million in annual revenue to over \$20 million. A typical company would have changed business management software an average of three times during that decade—but not Fifth Sun. Its solution, Ensemble Business Software, has not only kept up with Fifth Sun's growth—it has facilitated that growth.

Choosing Well

BJ LaRosa, general manager at Fifth Sun, recalls his decision to purchase Ensemble Business Software nearly ten years ago. "We needed software that would support our size and color matrix. I didn't want to go down the road of having something custom developed—I've just seen too many nightmare implementations of custom software. We wanted a solid, proven solution that was flexible, powerful—and affordable."

LaRosa was familiar with Sage MAS 90, and as an accountant, was impressed by its strong financial backbone and detailed audit trail. However, the software lacked the specialized features and functionality that apparel manufacturers and distributors require.

Sage Software directed him to Ensemble Business Software, publishers of a garment industry vertical solution of the same name. Ensemble Business Software tightly integrates with Sage MAS 90. "I felt comfortable with Sage MAS 90, and once I spoke with the consul-

tant at Ensemble, I felt immediately comfortable with them and their solution too. They have a 'roll up your sleeves' attitude, working to identify the business issues and developing cohesive solutions."

Efficient Work Flow

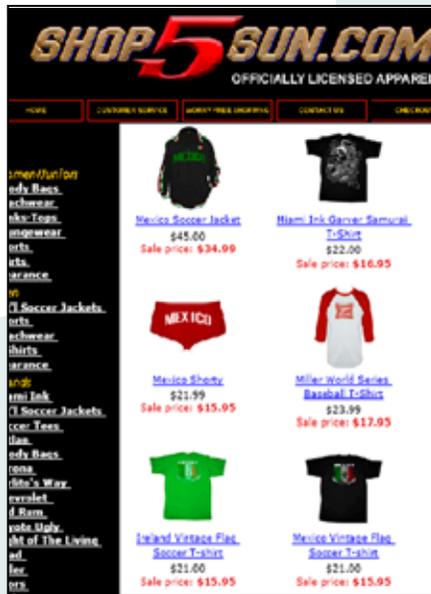
Initially, one of Fifth Sun's most pressing needs was a UPS manifesting solution to expedite its shipping. Ensemble Business Software delivered an integrated UPS

manifest that accurately calculates freight rates and communicates directly with UPS.

It is a streamlined, highly efficient solution that requires minimal effort. The result is quicker shipping. No longer does an order have to be routed back to accounting to have the actual freight charge recorded. This efficiency means that orders are typically shipped the same day that they arrive.

Ensemble Business Software's bill of materials functionality allows Fifth Sun to account for the blanks and the embellishment materials used to produce its products. It also fully supports Fifth Sun's size/color matrix.

Customer service personnel enter sales orders as they speak with customers. An intuitive spreadsheet style interface makes data entry fast and efficient. Real time visibility into available quantities helps ensure the agents are able to make promises they can keep. The software allows the agents to drill down find detailed item information including customer sales history, pricing options, and alternate warehouses. When quantities of a certain style or color fall short, the software offers suggestions for alternate items, increasing customer satisfaction and preserving the sale.



Real-time visibility of available quantities helps ensure that customer service agents are able to make promises they can keep.

"When I see other similar companies struggling to manage their growth, I know we made the right decision."



SAGE MAS 90

SAGE MAS 200

Business power, industry finesse. The complete player

Visibility into stock on hand is crucial to making quick decisions. LaRosa appreciates the fact that he can query any one of the company's four warehouses to determine the most strategic warehouse from which to draw stock.

Inherent EDI Capability

In order to meet the requirements of major retailers as customers, Fifth Sun needs EDI capabilities. Fifth Sun's EDI processing is handled entirely within Ensemble Business Software. Orders are received electronically and flow automatically into the sales order system, and shipping notices and invoices are electronically routed back to the customer.

LaRosa has seen other companies in the same industry outsource this vital function when their internal systems were incapable of handling EDI. This adds to the overhead of processing orders, and can slow the entire cycle down. Ensemble Business Software's fully integrated EDI capability is efficient and seamless. "When I see other, similar companies struggling to manage their growth, I know we made the right decision," says LaRosa.

Long Term Success

LaRosa says the key to his company's long term success with Ensemble Business Software is the software's flexibility and ability to expand to meet the company's needs.

When Fifth Sun initially purchased the software, it ran the basic accounting and distribution modules need to support its apparel business. Since then, it

has been able to add manufacturing, manifesting, and EDI functionality as needed to support its growth.

As a result of Ensemble Business Software's scalability, Fifth Sun has been able to maintain its growth track without starting over again, without reimplementation costs, without data conversion. "Ensemble Business Software has not only grown with us, it has enabled us to grow," says LaRosa.

Fifth Sun's long term satisfaction with the software is due in great part to the company behind it.

LaRosa describes his relationship with Ensemble as a partnership, "I don't consider Ensemble as a vendor; they're not trying to sell us anything. I believe they want to see us succeed."

The Right Investment

Ten years ago, Fifth Sun took a risk. It invested in a business management solution for the long term. Rather than buying a less expensive smaller-scale solution that fit the company's needs at the time, the company had the foresight to buy a modular solution that scales to fit the company as it grows and changes. "It was a big decision for us back then," LaRosa recalls, "The payoff has been that as we are faced with a new demand or challenge—Ensemble Business Software is already there to handle it."



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