



American Packaging Corporation Gains Efficiency with SupplySentry

APR's RFID-Enabled Supply Management System Provides Real-Time Inventory Information

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– Robert Jamison, Printing Manager at American Packaging



Robert Jamison
Printing Manager

Johnna Moeller
Maintenance Clerk

Overview

American Packaging Corporation (APC) is a family-owned flexible packaging converter and renowned leader in the North American packaging industry. With a reputation as the go-to source for effective solutions in flexible and specialty packaging, APC serves the unique needs of a multitude of end-use segments with the most demanding applications. APC specializes in flexographic and rotogravure printing, multi-ply extrusion, adhesive lamination of film, paper and foil, as well as pouch and bag fabrication to meet a variety of requirements.

Established in 1902, APC has surprisingly experienced only one major ownership change, when the Schottland family purchased the company from the Kardon family in 1986. Today, APC operates five Centers of Excellence in the United States (located in WI, IA and NY) and employs approximately 1,000 talented professionals.

Challenge

In 2010, APC began searching for a more efficient way to keep count of its supply inventory. They often found themselves running out of material, requiring expedited shipments, and having to dedicate internal resources to managing inventory across their facilities and departments. One example is tracking their tape usage. With over 45 different tapes used regularly, it was challenging for the company to ensure that the correct tape quantities were on hand to meet changing business demands and consumption requirements.

One of APC's core values is innovation, and they were open to pioneering new approaches to implement increased efficiency. The company evaluated several inventory management solutions during the initial project. They analyzed current internal time studies and then reviewed each system based on cost of implementation, post implementation labor allocation, reliability, and added supplies costs.

Ultimately, they turned to All Printing Resources (APR) for recommendations on ways to overcome their inventory challenges. APR and APC have had a long-term supplier relationship. According to Robert Jamison, Printing Manager, "APR has been our valued partner for supplies management, Esko equipment, and training for several years. We were confident they could provide us with an innovative path forward."

Solution

APR recommended SupplySentry -- a management system that can be used for almost any plateroom or pressroom consumable (including photopolymer plate material, sticky-backs, tapes, doctor blades, end seals, safety supplies, cleaning supplies, and more.)

With SupplySentry, all products are shipped from APR with an RFID tag. The supplies are placed in an RFID enabled area (e.g. shelf, cabinet or full inventory-managed room) and the

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system automatically re-stocks the supplies as needed. This eliminates the need for an appointed employee to spend time doing so, in addition to eliminating unnecessary repeat orders and outdated inventory sitting on shelves. SupplySentry customers have access to real-time information on their inventory levels and know exactly what they have in stock at any given time. Today, APR has over 60 SupplySentry customers in the market.

Outcome

Four SupplySentry cabinets were first installed at APC's Story City, IA location in 2011. As the facility grew, an additional SupplySentry shelf was added in a secondary location inside the facility in 2015. In 2020, a supply room was constructed to allow for further expansion of the system and encompass increased volumes of inventoried items.

The company added the inventory capability to their DeForest, WI facility, added a full inventory room to their newly-built Greenfield Flexographic Printing and Laminating facility in New York in 2018, and will also be adding SupplySentry to their Columbus, WI facility this year.

Each of these installations has gone quickly and smoothly. APC's employees have been very receptive to the system as it has eliminated the need for daily or weekly monitoring of supplies that fell to key department resources. Johnna Moeller, Maintenance Clerk at APC, says that "SupplySentry has been a great addition to the facility. It has taken several items off my plate while still ensuring that we do not run out. It has also helped with the consolidation of supplies and the amount of time and labor it takes to place PO's for multiple vendors to order everything we need."

Jamison adds that "SupplySentry's flexible options easily adapt to the specific environment and also allow for quick adjustment to our changing needs. Generally, a SupplySentry System can be installed and operational on the same day and requires minimal employee training to ensure system effectiveness." Dave Neiman, President & CEO of APR, comments, "American Packaging's use of SupplySentry has grown as our technology has improved. They are very focused on efficiencies throughout their organization and we believe the benefits of SupplySentry fit well within this philosophy. We are thrilled they have expanded the number of products



One of APC's SupplySentry installations: Two rows of shelves with an additional area for larger items. RFID readers hang above to monitor the whole area.



we manage, increased the size of the installations, and added other facilities to it."

APC conservatively estimates that they save 10-15 hours per week by having the system at each facility. Not only is there a reduction in physical inventory, but they also save on costs by not having supply outages and eliminating the need for expedited shipments. Jamison concludes that "SupplySentry has allowed APC personnel to focus on operations without concern of critical inventory supply issues. With the variability of order changes, this has had a positive impact on our customers as it ensures we do not delay or miss job dates due to internal supplies availability. As a fairly lean company, this has really allowed APC to focus resources on daily production demands versus supplies management."



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