

## Hy-Ko Products Signs on with Psion Teklogix to Increase Inventory Accuracy

New warehouse management software and rugged mobile computing system helps leading manufacturer of house numbers, letters and signs streamline its order fulfillment process

"We were already providing customers with labeling and order fulfillment for their specifications, but with an automated WMS and rugged mobile computing devices we're able to do that much more efficiently. We have eliminated a whole step in our order fulfillment process and our employees can pick directly into the shipping carton.

Bill Ashby,  
Information Systems Manager,  
Hy-Ko Products

Hy-Ko Products is a Cleveland-based company that manufactures and markets numbers, letters, signs and accessories to a worldwide market base of retailers. Established in 1949, Hy-Ko has grown into the industry leader, selling a broad range of products to many of North America's largest hardware, home center, grocery, drug and mass-merchandise chains like Wal-Mart.

### Challenge:

Hy-Ko Products manufactures and distributes house numbers, letters, "For Sale By Owner" and other types of signs, key chains and accessories, and key-duplication blanks. The company produces and ships close to 4,000 different low-cost items within its warehouse environment.

"We are one of two significant players in this game, and our products by nature are very low cost – a 'For Sale' sign that goes in your car window is essentially pennies. Now that we've grown into an almost \$40 million company, it's a fair chunk of change," says Bill Ashby, information systems manager, Hy-Ko Products.



### Highlights at a Glance

**User**

Hy-Ko Products

**Product**

- Psion Teklogix 7535 Hand-Held Computers
- QSSI PowerHouse/WMS

**Partners**

- Quality Software Systems Inc.
- Sedlak Consulting

**Application**

- Warehouse Management System

**Benefits**

- Improved Real-time inventory information
- Increase Productivity and Resource management
- Rugged hardware
- Adaptive technology to enable growth



"We were just plain hitting a wall with our existing system inhibiting any additional growth – the challenges associated with printing, distributing and keeping track of the huge number of paper pick tickets were becoming overwhelming," says Ashby. "Ten years ago, Wal-Mart was not even a factor in our business and today, they're our largest customer. To supply them and other customers like Home Depot and Ace Hardware more efficiently, and to continue growing beyond where we are now, it was clear we needed to change to a paperless, wireless WMS."

## Solution:

Hy-Ko approached Sedlak, a company that specializes in supply chain consulting and system design, to help them figure out what they needed in a software product. After reviewing WMS offerings from five different vendors, Sedlak recommended, and Hy-Ko chose, to deploy PowerHouse/WMS from Quality Software Systems Inc. (QSSI) to improve inventory control and accuracy, increase the order cycle time, and better track labor.

QSSI recommended that Hy-Ko select Psion Teklogix 7535 hand-held computers to automate the data collection process within the new WMS. The company also installed Psion Teklogix' Cisco wireless backbone and access points as support infrastructure for the new system.

"I've worked with all types of devices and from my experience, for durability and ease of use, Psion Teklogix makes a great piece of hardware for the warehouse environment," says Schumacher. "The durability of the gun makes it a tremendous asset. I've seen them dropped from eight feet – they bounce, then you pick them right back up and they're good to go."

"When we initially consulted with Hy-Ko, we brought in Symbol hand-held devices to test against the Psion Teklogix products," says Scott Gallik, senior consultant, Sedlak. "We felt the Psion Teklogix equipment outperformed the Symbol gear – we even dropped the units from shoulder height to test the ruggedness of the products and they did indeed withstand the kind of abuse that can be expected."

Hy-Ko rolled out PowerHouse/WMS and the mobile computing solution in two phases, during which time the company also moved into a new warehouse building. It went live with the system initially to handle its Wal-Mart business, and gradually shifted over its other customers after running test orders through the environment.

"It took some getting used to, but now our warehouse staff prefers to carry around the rugged 7535 mobile devices rather than handfuls of crumpled paper – they automatically know what they have to do and where they have to go to fill their orders, and all the necessary data is at their fingertips," says Ashby.

## Benefits:

With an advanced warehouse management solution in place, Hy-Ko is able to pick orders directly into the carton being shipped, eliminating the manual order separation and re-packing process.

"In the past we would have someone go and pick the orders, and then they would have to be checked and re-packed before shipping," says Ashby. "Scanning barcodes with the hand-held computers makes us absolutely certain we are picking the right orders the first time, so we've been able to speed up the order fulfillment process by eliminating a step."

"In an automated system like PowerHouse/WMS there is much less room for human error because everything is channeled through the same interface," says Ashby. "Upgrading to an automated WMS with Psion Teklogix hardware gives us a more accurate inventory and better labor management – we never send a shipper to a slot that's empty, whereas we used to frequently."

Deploying the Psion Teklogix 7535 hand-held computers as part of its WMS solution is also helping Hy-Ko prepare for future needs, because the units are RFID-ready.

"The WMS gives us the ability to be RFID-compliant once our customers require it – we are not within Wal-Mart's top 100 suppliers mandated to ship with RFID tags, although the capability is in place for when we are in the future," says Ashby.