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Doug York, President & CEO, Ewing Irrigation



Solutions from Manhattan Associates help Ewing Irrigation flourish

EWING IRRIGATION SOAKS UP SAVINGS WITH MANHATTAN’S WAREHOUSE MANAGEMENT AND REPLENISHMENT

The Egyptians are typically credited with inventing irrigation, using the Nile River to create the first system. Roughly five thousand years later, in 1922, Atlas Lawn Sprinkler began providing irrigation sales and service to another thirsty civilization in San Francisco. The company later sold its design and supply business to King W. Ewing, who laid the foundation for one of the largest wholesale providers of professional quality landscape and irrigation materials in the United States.

Ewing Irrigation Products, subsequently passed down to King’s daughter Sue and her husband Ray York, is a privately-owned family business. It’s thriving under a third generation of Ewing/York leadership with the York’s two sons, Doug and Richard, assuming executive positions at the company. Now headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona, Ewing prides itself on serving as a leading authority on water-conserving products, trends and best practices while providing landscape, irrigation and golf course professionals with the supplies they need to create healthy, sustainable environments.

INVENTORY SOLUTIONS FIND EARLY ADOPTION AT EWING

Technology solutions aren’t new to Ewing Irrigation. The company has employed computer systems and software to automate processes since the late 1960s. “We made our first foray into technology with an IBM System 3, and later became a beta site as a multi-branch organization in 1977,” said Ray York, chairman of Ewing Irrigation Products. “All of our relevant demand data fit on two bytes, which was an achievement in those days.”

Sue York and others developed home-grown software programs that ran on the IBM platform and supported Ewing’s various locations. “We had the ability to manage inventory in five sites when most of our competitors were 100% manual,” York said. “That gave us the ability to forward buy more effectively and start expanding our business.”

By 1989, Ewing’s original System 3 eventually evolved to an IBM AS-400 supporting automated inventory analysis for approximately 23 locations. With a firm grip on technology implementation, the company continued to



Headquarters: Phoenix, Arizona

Facilities: Seven distribution centers nationwide at approximately 200,000 square feet each; plus 195 storefront locations.

Manhattan solutions: Replenishment and Warehouse Management for IBM i

Challenge:

Ewing needed a warehouse management system that could store and pick its expanding inventory.

Goal:

Improve company performance and profitability, increase employee satisfaction and effectiveness, and enhance the customer experience in store-front locations.

Solution:

Upgrade Warehouse Management and Replenishment throughout DCs to drive up inventory optimization and drive down labor costs.

Results:

Inventory accuracy was improved by 100%, Ewing reduced its work week from six to five days, and the fill rate jumped to 95%.

expand, growing to more than 100 locations by 2000. "We've successfully stayed ahead of our time and our competition," said Doug York, president of Ewing. "Keep in mind that Ewing is an irrigation service company—sprinkler guys early on. For our industry I would say we've blazed a trail."

Over the last decade, Ewing has expanded to 195 branch locations and developed an online services business that provides business tools for contractors to review inventory, pricing and place orders. And the company is the only one in its industry to use wireless RF scanning devices in its warehouses.

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MANHATTAN STRIKES A SOLID RELATIONSHIP WITH EWING

Staying on the leading edge of technology, Ewing Irrigation became the first customer for what is now Manhattan Replenishment. "Our company was an attractive beta site for Replenishment because we had multiple locations shipping significant inventory," said Ray York. "Plus we had already invested heavily in technology and were open to solutions that would make our operations run smarter and faster."

Ewing was able to manage and predict inventory needs with Manhattan's Replenishment solution, but still faced challenges. "With the construction industry in decline, there's been significant downward pressure on our pricing," said Richard York, executive vice president. "Other issues that impact our business are regulatory pressures and rainfall."

Fluctuating drought and rainfall conditions can also have a significant impact: if there's too much rain there's no demand, if there's too little water rationing occurs. To help manage these issues and leverage its technology investment, Ewing required a more efficient method of managing the company's overall supply chain.

Ewing thoroughly investigated four different Warehouse Management solutions over a two-year period, ultimately selecting Manhattan Associates. "We had a select criteria set, budget and solution attributes in mind when we reviewed different companies," said Ray York. "Manhattan not only met every requirement we had, but made us want to become more engaged with a software partner that provides the necessary tools to develop a strategic supply chain that's in the forefront of the industry."

"Manhattan and Ewing operate by many of the same core values, resulting in the company's rise to the top of our preferred partner list," noted Terry Williams, vice president, customer experience. Some of these attributes included a business model that utilizes a strategic, long-term approach rather than a tactical, short-term approach; a commitment to investing in continuous innovation; a philosophy of integrating system upgrades based on customer feedback; and a cache of technical similarities in regard to how data, security and hardware are managed.

POSITIVE NUMBERS RAIN DOWN ON EWING

With Manhattan's Warehouse Management and Replenishment, Ewing has seen improvement across its operations. Error rates and overtime labor expenses have been virtually eliminated. "We've experienced a 50% increase in throughput and went from six operational days to five, for a 15% reduction in labor hours," said Williams. "We're now operating at a 98% fill rate, for an 18% increase."

With 13,000 SKUs, 250 vendors, eight buyers, and seven distribution centers totaling around 200,000 square feet each, Ewing is managing quite well. "Before Warehouse Management we were running at 100% capacity," said Williams. "Now we're operating at around 60%, which allows us to work on maintenance and other projects as the need arises. Plus we have the opportunity to grow and expand."

Looking ahead, Ewing intends to push vendors and contractors to keep pace with its technology capabilities. "Some vendors don't provide bar codes on their products," said Doug York. "If they could boost their technology capabilities we could enter information more efficiently into Warehouse Management." And while Ewing's ecommerce program is available for contractors to shop, place orders, pay bills and more, adoption of those tools is still underway.

"We feel our company is well positioned to manage any inventory issue that comes our way," said Doug York. "Our partnership commitment with Manhattan Associates has made us more successful and gives us an edge our competitors simply don't have at this point."