

AT CENTURY LABEL

Although Randy Wise only bought his company, Century Label, a decade ago, he is no newcomer to the label business. His first exposure to the industry was in the late 1970s, in Kansas City. He followed his wife, Geri, to a new job in New Jersey, where he worked with another label manufacturer, and then to Texas, for a stint with still a third label producer. By 1999, Wise was ready to make the leap from employee to owner, and he purchased 25 year old Century Label, an established Dallas supplier of prime labels to both regional and national customers.

At one time, Century Label had as many as 17 employees, but by the time Wise bought the company the number had dwindled to only five. Operationally, the company had suffered from benign neglect. Only one computer was on site at the time it changed hands, and the business was being managed essentially manually. But under the leadership of Randy and Geri Wise, growth has been exceptional. Today, with only 16 employees, Century Label does three times the business it did at its peak under the previous owner. Randy Wise manages the business on a day-to-day basis, and Geri Wise is responsible for sales and marketing. The company relies on a few brokers, but most sales are made directly to the customer by a network of sales representatives around the country. In addition to conventional flexographic prime labels, Century Labels offers customers the opportunity to increase



value with the RFID and foil stamping. An in-house art department not only ensures that customer artwork is press-ready, but can execute designs from scratch.

ing program was not entirely appropriate for such a specialized business. So Wise took a bold step: “The first major purchase I made after we bought Century Label was a Label Traxx software system, made by Tailored Solutions of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I had seen Label Traxx at a Labelexpo show in Chicago, and was impressed with what I saw, so I

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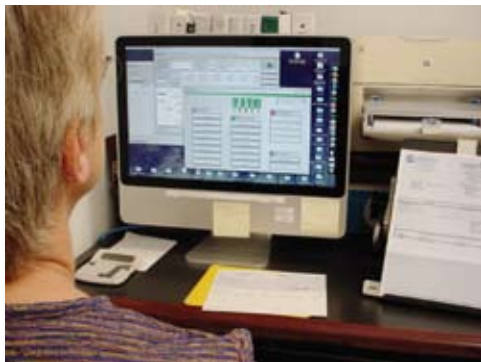
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knew this was the kind of help I needed to manage the business. And, I felt that we could make it work—particularly since it enabled us to mix Macs and PCs in the same environment.

“Because I was unfamiliar with databases and the like, I hired an outside consultant recommended by Label Traxx, and within just a few hours he had us up and running. The key was entering our equipment into the system properly, enabling us to get reliable estimates.” Wise added: “Although it took some time for us to gain complete confidence in the system, now Label Traxx is used throughout the plant. Every employee is trained on the system, and although specialized workers



Estimating in Label Traxx

Because Century Label was a small company when he bought it, Wise initially managed it with Quick Books. But he quickly found that a generalized account-



like rewinders do not log their time on the system, they still use it to determine job status and look at schedules.

The Century Label business was successful enough that after a few years the Wises were ready to expand. Their choices were whether to make their Dallas operation larger, or to expand by purchasing another

show the better plant in which to run a specific job, based on expected profitability, delivery time, equipment utilization, or any other criteria he selects. “Although we are still using separate databases, Label Traxx is consistent and predictable enough that when we estimate the same job in the two plants the difference in projected costs is usually within pennies.”



Randy and Geri Wise and employees



Looking back, Wise says: “If it were not for Label Traxx, we would not be where we are today. Label Traxx lets us do much more with fewer employees. We particularly value the module webinars and user group meetings offered by Label Traxx. These enable us to continue to learn the intricacies of the system and how to use its many features. Today we do not have to guess about our results, or wait for an outside accountant to tell

label supplier. Ultimately they bought Hyde Park Label in nearby Austin, Texas. “Buying an Austin supplier made us a true regional presence in the marketplace, but still provided us a business that was easier to manage than if it were further away. One of the major things that influenced us to make this specific acquisition was that Hyde Park was already a Label Traxx user, and we felt that integrating the two companies would be relatively easy. We had to do some training at the new company, but the software similarities made the acquisition go more smoothly than most.”

us whether we are making money. We are efficient, profitable, and have consistently logged record years even when the economy has tanked. Label Traxx has played an important role in our growth and success.”

The Wise business strategy is to fully integrate the two companies, with one common database, which he expects to take roughly 18 months. When integration is complete, Label Traxx will quickly



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