

HOME DEPOT

Local Idea Blooms at Home Depot

Solution Overview

Industry

Retailing

Application

POS barcoding

Teklynx Software Products

Label Design Software

LABEL MATRIX

PartnerElectronic Imaging Materials, Inc.,
Keene, NH

The Home Depot is the world's largest home improvement retailer and second largest retailer in the United States. Garden professional and trainer, Mike Mitchell became aware of a problem that cashiers faced when store items, not just garden items, arrived at the checkout without the proper bar codes. Home Depot had cashier books that listed the items, but Mitchell felt that they could be improved and set out to figure it out. Mitchell looked for software that would enable him to type in the SKU code and automatically generate the bar code symbol. He also needed to be able to place it on the page in relation to the photo and product description. LABEL MATRIX® Quick Draw is a label designer from TEKLYNX® that is designed to do exactly what Mitchell was looking for. Now, the LABEL MATRIX-produced books are in several stores in the Northwest.

Home Depot garden professional Mike Mitchell was responsible for training new store associates in the Northwest region. He also conducted gardening seminars for associates and customers, and participated in television gardening features for the greater Seattle area.

Mitchell became aware of a problem that cashiers faced when store items, not just garden items, arrived at the checkout without the proper bar codes. Cashiers often had to call a floor associate from the appropriate department to check for the Stock Keeping Unit (SKU) and the price. With over 75,000 individual SKUs in each store, many of the items are not bar code tag "friendly." Small items, such as nuts, bolts and brackets, or bulky, heavy items, such as railroad ties and concrete blocks, often lose their tags or don't have a bar code that is convenient to scan.

Home Depot had cashier books that listed the items, but Mitchell felt that they could be improved and set out to figure it out on his own for his Bothell, Wash. store. He decided to try to combine a product description, photo and bar code for each of the troublesome items into a single element in the cashier books so that cashiers could look the item up and scan the proper bar code directly from the book.

“Once I dove in, it was just so easy to use that I went from making 20 books for my store to making 2000 books for the Northwest division...”

Mike Mitchell, garden professional

Using a digital camera and his home computer, he began to experiment. The challenge was to come up with a simple, inexpensive way to combine all three elements in a single frame. Obviously, the bar code had to be clear and accurate for scanning, and the photo and description also had to be easy to recognize so that the cashier, and the customer, could both easily see what item was being scanned from the book.

Mitchell looked for software that would enable him to type in the SKU code and automatically generate the bar code symbol. He also needed to be able to place it on the page in relation to the photo and product description. Researching and using over a dozen different programs for six weeks, Mitchell found a company on the Internet called Electronic Imaging Materials Inc., a firm that specializes in bar code technologies. “Some of the bar code software products were so complicated that it was not feasible for a rank amateur like myself,” commented Mitchell. “I tried several software packages and then I discovered LABEL MATRIX Quick Draw label design software through Electronic Imaging.”

LABEL MATRIX Quick Draw is a label designer from TEKLYNX that is designed to do exactly what Mitchell was looking for. “Once I dove in, it was just so easy to use that I went from making 20 books for my store to making 2000 books for the Northwest division, which is composed of nine states from Nevada to Alaska.”

To make the books, Mitchell identified the items that are most likely to have tagging problems. He photographed the items with the digital camera and loaded the images into his computer. Then, for each item he combined the photo, black & white where possible to save printing costs and color where necessary, the product description and the bar code into a single element. The cashier books have up to 25 items on each page and are printed double sided and then laminated. Using this approach, Mitchell is able to create 40-page books that have all of the problem items listed for less than 50 percent of what the older books cost.

The 6”x9” books are available at every register. They are organized by department to make it quick and easy for cashiers to find items. “I’m building 2000 books -- all done in-house using a PC, our own regular laser printer and a laminator,” commented Mitchell.

Making the books is not a cookie-cutter affair. Stores in different states or regions have slightly different product selections. Mitchell researches these differences and builds the cashier books to reflect the local requirements. “The beautiful thing is that I can use this program to make a Seattle book and a Utah book simply by changing the names and a few bar code descriptions. Usually I end up changing about 10-15 percent -- adding a few items and taking a few things out. The program makes it really simple. It’s a layman’s working tool,” he continued.

Also, seasonal product updates and product replacements require that the books be periodically updated. “Product change-outs are easily handled in the books by updating the individual page information and then swapping out pages,” he said.

For More Information

For more information about Teklynx products or services, please visit our Web site or call us at (414) 535-8200 in the US or Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact Teklynx at +33 562-601-080. To access information via the World Wide Web, go to:

<http://www.teklynx.eu.com>

<http://www.teklynx.com/>

<http://www.homedepot.com>

<http://www.eiminc.com>

© 2003 Teklynx International. All rights reserved.

This case study is for informational purposes only. TEKLYNX MAKES NO WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, IN THIS SUMMARY. TEKLYNX and LABEL MATRIX are trademarks or registered trademarks of Braton Groupe sarl or its affiliated companies. All other brands and product names are the trademarks of their respective owners.

The new cashier books have clearly been a success in Home Depot's Northwest district. As it turns out, the corporate office in Atlanta was interested in the same problem at about the same time. Once they heard about Mitchell's personal initiative, they decided to look at what he's done. The result: Atlanta has bought Quick Draw Plus and is evaluating it for a nationwide rollout to its more than 1,200 stores.

And Mitchell? Well, he's still working out of the Northwest division office but he's now part of the corporate group and his job is to manage the cashier books. As for his home computer – it's getting a well-deserved rest.