

One of a series of articles celebrating the success of companies using today's information technology to solve operational problems common within their industries and beyond.

Success Story



Jacob & Esther Kuo, Owners

“KeyMan helps us in planning, giving us information to control inventory and order supplies in time. Now, we order the right materials and avoid ordering the wrong materials. That helps cash flow.”

—Jacob Kuo, President

Jacob and Esther Kuo started their company in Taiwan, then moved to the United States in 1984. Starting in New Jersey, moving to High Point, NC, then moving three more times to larger locations in Greensboro, NC, their history exemplifies success based on hard work and expertise in rattan and wicker furniture.

South Sea Rattan imports rattan and wicker products from Indonesia and the Philippines, and decorative case goods from China. They add value by assembling and sometimes finishing the frames, and cutting and sewing cushions from domestic fabric suppliers.

Even with over twenty years experience as an importer, South Sea Rattan is faced with competitive pressures as the global economy changes. Off-shore suppliers are shipping container loads to large chain stores direct, for example, at very low prices. Mr. Kuo believes that his company can maintain an edge by being quick to respond to fashion changes, and being more flexible in services provided.

A Quick Summary

Company Profile

Importer of specialty furniture, with 135,000 sq. ft. assembly and distribution plant in Greensboro, NC. 30+ employees, 20+ reps, \$6million in sales.

Information System Needs

Management needed a more flexible information system with the capability of specifying options such as fabric and finish at order entry time, rather than defining all possible combinations in advance. More accurate inventory control was a critical need.

Current Software & Hardware

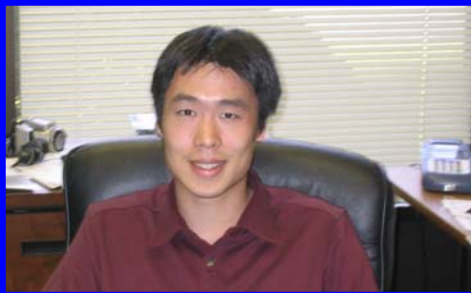
Dell server with Redhat Linux, with Windows XP and Powerterm on 12 desktop PC's, all local. The system is very reliable. KeyMan software from Carolina Cipher.

Benefits

“KeyMan has helped increase our sales by providing better customer service. We can give accurate pricing and shipping information to customers when they call, and suggest alternatives if we can't ship what they order.”

—Inor Kuo, System Administrator





“KeyMan enables us to use Options and Formulas which automatically determine the correct frame, finish and exact yardage of fabric needed to produce whatever furniture item a customer may order. Before, we had to manually specify all these things and then guess whether we had the inventory to make it.”

—Inor Kuo, Systems Administrator

Inor, please describe your company's operation.

We are manufacturing oriented. We import frames, then assemble them, build the deck with webbing and foam cushions. We buy the fabric here in North Carolina and cut and sew it ourselves. Sometimes we finish the frames. Then we wrap, package and ship.

What are your product lines?

Our primary lines are rattan and wicker furniture for outside use, plus living, dining and bedrooms. We have added the Fairfax case goods line, and will be adding leather soon.

Who are your customers?

Some are large like SAM'S Club, Temo Sunrooms and Artvan in Michigan. But mostly our market is smaller specialty stores. Temo has offered our furniture as a giveaway with purchase of a sunroom.

Why did you need new software?

Our old system required that we anticipate every possible combination of frame, finish and fabric in advance, which we were unable to do. We had to track inventory by a combination of memory, guesswork and frequent physical counting. Often we would run out of inventory without knowing it, and be unable to produce promised orders as a result. This caused a great deal of customer dissatisfaction, and hindered our growth.

How did you find KeyMan?

On the Internet, plus your people had contacted us previously. We were impressed by the demonstration, as it seemed a natural fit for furniture companies. We did not find anything else as suitable for us. Also, we liked how long you have been in business.

Can you be specific about how KeyMan works for you?

Our order clerks enter the orders directly from handwritten sales rep or store orders. The computer correctly calculates the price (which can vary by account) regardless of component combinations, and without any special knowledge on the part of the operator. KeyMan provides for the use of “options” and “formulas” which automatically selects the proper frame, finish and exact yardage of fabric needed to build a particular customer order, checks inventory for availability, reserves the inventory at order time and deducts all components from inventory at shipping time.

How are prices maintained?

Pricing updates are simplified by exporting our price list to Excel, using ReportMate. Then I update the prices by using multiplication factors by product categories rather than individual product. Then I move the new price list back into KeyMan using ImportMate. It is much faster, easier and more accurate.

What about Customer Service?

Being able to give accurate, honest answers is crucial to growth and success. We are now able to quote accurate lead times when a customer calls, and stick with them. By maintaining all information in the system, it is there for customer service. Before, they had to search through paperwork for information, and often failed to find what they needed. Now the answers to customer questions are readily available. We plan to implement work order control by setting up reporting stations such as cutting, sewing assembly, packing & shipping, utilizing bar coding at each reporting station. That will enhance our response to customer inquiries even more. We're working hard to get there.

Please tell us how KeyMan has helped your company.

From a financial standpoint, it has increased our sales. If you can sell what you have, and not make people angry you will sell more. It has reduced our order processing time, and as a result our order lead time. It has reduced inventory, by enabling us to have the right inventory on hand without having excessive amounts. Stock status information gives us sales history, committed and on order, so we can forecast better and not order too much or too little.



For more information please contact Carolina Cipher at 800-948-9968X5, Email sales@ccipher.com, or visit us at www.carolinacipher.com.

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