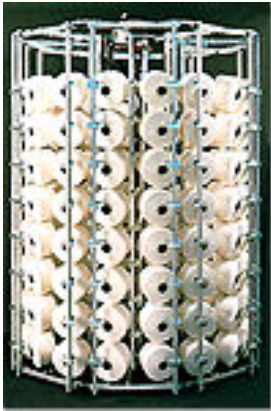


Success Story

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.



No industry has suffered more pain from the growth of foreign competition than textiles, especially in the southeast region of the United States. Since NAFTA was begun in 1997, 299 U.S. textile plants have closed, 185 of them in the Carolinas. Textile employment in North Carolina alone has decreased 43.7% during this period. This Success Story describes how a textile-dependent company in Troy, North Carolina, has survived these challenges. A heritage of innovation has enabled them to cope with change and look forward to new opportunities confidently.

An Alandale "Creel"

A Quick Summary

Company Profile

Alandale's mission is to identify and solve problems in knitting plants. They engineer and manufacture products such as creels, lint control equipment and isolation rooms.

Information System Needs

In 1990, Alandale began to search for software appropriate to support their custom manufacturing operations, integrated with accounting. Because of the infinite variability of their products, they were unable to find a solution until they saw KeyMan®

Current Software and Hardware

Dell server with Microsoft Windows 2000 network. Carolina Cipher KeyMan Sales Orders, Work Orders, Estimating & Standards, Inventory, Purchasing, MRP. SouthWare Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, General Ledger, SalesMark.

Results

"KeyMan has handled all of our needs effectively. I have been very satisfied."

—Carol Atkins, IT manager

Suppose you are a person who is always looking for a better way of doing things. What do you do when you are having problems for which there are no solutions?

If your name were Alan Gutschmit, and you were the owner of Alandale Knitting Company in 1987, you invented the solutions yourself. When other companies became interested in Gutschmit's solutions, Alandale Industries was founded to produce them.

Alandale's Products

Creels are devices that hold spools of yard and dispense them to knitting machines in a controlled manner, improving the quality of the cloth by maintaining correct tension, reducing floor space needed and increasing operator efficiency. Other products include isolation rooms, fans and lint collection devices to maintain a clean environment and oilers to insure proper machine lubrication.

Traditional Customers

Circular knitting manufacturers, spinners, dyers and finishers, and original equipment manufacturers supplying those industries have been Alandale Industries' customers. According to Michael Snyder, President, that market grew each year until 1997, when it began to shrink drastically. Foreign competitors have taken over nearly all labor-intensive and commodity production, forcing layoffs and plant closings.

Since 1997, about half of Alandale's customers no longer exist, and those that remain are buying much less equipment. One reason is the proliferation of used equipment, which is widely available for pennies on the dollar. Another reason is uncertainty, resulting in an unwillingness to make capital improvements.



"We're stealing second while keeping one foot on first"

We asked Michael Snyder, President, how Alandale has survived.

"Our market has shrunk tremendously. One necessary response has been to downsize. We have reduced our workforce and have moved into a smaller plant and office. It has been a difficult adjustment. The good news is that, in my opinion, we will continue to have a market domestically and in this hemisphere for our products. I believe that most of the high-end apparel manufacturing will continue to be done here, which includes goods that are more expensive, and more style oriented. More technical products, such as stain repellent clothing, will also tend to remain here."

"Alandale was founded on innovation, and now we need it more than ever to move forward"

"We are working hard at finding ways to diversify, while continuing to protect our traditional business as much as possible. I call it 'stealing second while keeping one foot on first.' Recently, for example, we adapted a product originally developed for circular knitters, and adapted it to meet a need for golf courses. It's basically a fan which moves huge volumes of air across the green and prevents mold. We call it 'Greensweep.' As we have opportunities, we will do much more of that. We have also been fortunate to work with some companies outside the textile industry, working on isolation rooms, for example. Containing contaminants or fumes is a common problem, while keeping equipment accessible from the operator's perspective. We have the ability to produce panels with access doors in any size or location, for example. It's something like building a custom house. We have worked with technology companies who are creating new products for dyers and finishers. We need to be involved with innovation in whatever shape or fashion we can find it. It's funny, this company was founded on innovation, and now we need it more than ever!"

Carol Atkins, IT Manager, explains the complexity of Alandale's custom made products

"Our industry requires extreme flexibility in software, because our products are so variable. There are about ten different aspects of a creel that a customer can specify with different materials, sizes and designs. Potentially, there is an infinite number of combinations possible, which cannot be anticipated. So each customer order results in a customized bill of material."

"We needed a system that could handle that efficiently, integrated with complete accounting, cost of goods, inventory control and purchasing. KeyMan is the only product we could find that had the ability to handle all the options inherent in our product line."



"KeyMan handles all the variations in our product line."

We asked Carol how KeyMan's "formulas" have helped Alandale

"KeyMan provides for the use of user-maintained formulas, which work in conjunction with options to readily handle all of our product variations, including variable dimensions. This has automated our costing, pricing and quoting. We are able to give a customer an immediate quote while on the phone, which would never be possible otherwise. The system then produces work orders with complete specifications for our plant personnel, and all the accounting is handled as a by-product."

How would you describe your relationship with Carolina CIPHER?

"Carolina CIPHER has been very helpful from the start. They worked with us closely to use the software to the best advantage. Since I have worked with it for so long, I have been mostly self-sufficient for a long time, but they are always available when I have questions. They are very open, and always willing to listen to us. They have responded to many specific needs we have had by making the solutions a standard part of the package. We have been very satisfied."

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

