

**Solution Overview**

**Company**

Ateco (August Thomsen Corp.)

**Customer Profile**

August Thomsen Corporation (Ateco) manufactures and distributes cake decorating supplies and materials worldwide. The company is located in Glen Cove, New York, and employs 40 people.

**Business Situation**

Ateco had purchased a solution to get them through Y2K; but they wanted an integrated solution that would grow with their growing business. They needed a solution that would speed order processing and simplify their customer service.

**Solution Description**

With the help of Microsoft reselling partner, Access IT, Ateco implemented Microsoft® Business Solutions—Navision®. Access IT helped Ateco implement this software and they continue to add modules as the business grows.

**Benefits**

- Improved customer service
- Reduced inventory by more than 15 percent
- Provided the ability to track bills of material
- Improved accounts receivable
- Multicurrency capabilities

**Partner**

Access Information Technologies, Inc.

**Software and Services**

Microsoft Business Solutions—Navision:

- Financial Management
- Supply Chain Management
- Analytics

**Vertical Industries**

Distribution & Manufacturing



**Ateco “Takes the Cake” Reducing Inventory and Improving Customer Service**

*Ateco has been a successful distributor and manufacturer for four generations. But after years of using a legacy system and rushed software purchase to resolve Y2K, the owners of Ateco knew it was time to find an integrated business solution to grow the company into the next century. In 2000, their search led them to Microsoft reselling partner, Access IT, and Microsoft Business Solutions - Navision.*



**By implementing Microsoft Business Solutions - Navision, Ateco has...**

- \* *Reduced inventory by more than 15%*
- \* *Reduced customer service time by 50%*
- \* *Improved customer service with real-time information.*
- \* *Grown their business without adding additional customer service staff.*

**Situation**

August Thomsen started selling cake decorating tools through August Thomsen Corporation (Ateco) in 1905. Little did Thomsen know that his company would be growing and flourishing three generations later. The company is currently owned and operated by two of Thomsen’s great-grandsons, Jeff and Doug Schneider.

Ateco manufactures and distributes a comprehensive line of cake decorating items including colors, tubes, decorating bags, spatulas, turntables, rolled fondant icing, and other tools for baking. Its products are available world-wide through bakery and restaurant supply companies.

Ateco owns and operates two subsidiaries. The Ameri-Color Corporation, located in Placentia, California, has 15 employees; and Satin Fine Foods, located in Chester, New York, has five employees.

Ateco was operating on a main-frame IBM-36 using Mapics which was not Y2K compliant. This system was outdated, cumbersome, hard to train employees on, and difficult to operate. Invoices were not user-friendly or customer-friendly; tracking orders was even worse.

As 2000 neared, Ateco scrambled to put a solution in place and selected a PC-based database. While this got them through Y2K,

they knew they needed a more complete software package to support their growing organization.

Early in 2000, they began looking at new solutions and connected with Microsoft reselling partner, Access Information Technologies (Access IT).

**Solution**

“We were immediately comfortable with Allyn and Bill from Access IT,” says Jeff Schneider, President. After listening to the benefits of several solutions, they chose to implement Microsoft Business Solutions—Navision® with implementation services from Access IT.

“Since we were in a rush to get a new solution implemented, we started talking with Access IT in April of 2000 and we went live in August 2000,” says J. Schneider. In addition to implementation services, Access IT also provided staff training for Ateco employees.

“The more we use it, the more we learn and the more we like it,” says Doug Schneider, Vice President of Sales. “We are adding more and more of the modules to our business; we like how logical and nicely integrated this solution is. The way you can get the information you need from it is spectacular.”



Prior to implementing Microsoft Navision, Ateco had experienced stability problems. They have found their new solution to be stable and reliable. "We have never had a problem with the reliability or speed of Microsoft Navision," says J. Schneider "Data comes up so darn quickly and organized so nicely. It's been a dream come true."

Ateco appreciates the ability to drill down to information at a glance. "We know more about our business than we ever did," says D. Schneider.

Servicing customer orders has significantly improved for Ateco. They find that more and more customers call the company directly to ask questions and to place orders.

"Customers today request more and more accommodations," says D. Schneider. "Before, we used something similar to customer cards and had to add comments about special packaging and shipping details. It was easy to get inundated with extra information. Microsoft Navision incorporates all of this information as part of the standard package. This really makes everything flow easily and with fewer mistakes."

Customer Service before implementation was described as "primitive" by Norma Damiano, Customer Service Specialist. "After answering the phones, we would have to go to the files to look up the information that the customer wanted," says Damiano. Employees now have the ability to look up real-time information in the computer while on the phone with customers.

Ateco is in the process of adding E-Ship to their Microsoft Navision solution. This module will enable them to scale, ship, and track orders automatically. The tracking even includes information on who signs for the package upon receipt. If needed, this can be e-mailed directly to customers.

Ateco also plans to add their two subsidiaries, Ameri-color Corp. and Satin Fine Foods, to Microsoft Navision in the upcoming year. This will enable financials from these companies to flow effortlessly into their books.

"The whole Access IT team has been incredible," says D.Schneider. "They have been able to customize or modify anything we want changed within the software."

#### **Benefits**

##### **Improved Customer Service**

Microsoft Navision has streamlined order entry and billing for Ateco. It has helped

**"With Microsoft Navision, our inventory management is second to none. Based on orders coming in, we know exactly what's ordered and what raw materials and goods are needed on a daily basis."**

**Jeff Schneider**  
President, Ateco

the company reduce errors and become more knowledgeable when responding to customer calls. Doug estimates that Ateco has reduced the time required for customer service by 50 percent as a result of implementation.

"If we still had our old solution, we would have had to add customer service employees to keep up with the growth of our business," says J. Schneider.

"The atmosphere in the office is different now," says Damiano. "It was frustrating before when you had to answer the phones while trying to look up information for other customers. It's much easier now."

#### **Inventory Improvements**

Implementation has allowed Ateco to reduce their inventory by 15 to 20 percent and has freed up cash.

"Our inventory management is second to none," says J. Schneider. "Based on the orders coming in, we know exactly what's ordered and what raw materials and goods are needed on a daily basis."

Microsoft Navision provides Ateco with the ability to easily track bills of material (BOM). This allows them to put together custom sets and easily track the inventory and the price of inventory that goes into each set.

As a company, Ateco is about 50 percent distribution and 50 percent manufacturing. Inventory management through Microsoft Navision helps Ateco staff be more cognizant of inventory purchased from other suppliers.

#### **Improved Accounts Receivable**

Microsoft Navision has helped Ateco improve the management of accounts receivable. "We have a variety of customers on different terms," says J. Schneider. "Our new solution automatically makes the necessary adjustments for each customer so they never receive 'past due' notices when they shouldn't."

#### **Multicurrency Abilities**

Ateco purchases items from England, Japan, Spain, South Korea, China, and Germany and ships products worldwide. Microsoft Navision provides currency translations which enables all bills to be paid in U.S. dollars.

#### **For More Information**

For more information about August Thomsen, Corporation (Ateco) products and services, call 516-676-7100 or visit the Web site at: <http://www.atecousa.com/>

For more information about Access IT products and services, call 631-756-2700 or visit the Web site at: <http://www.accessit.com/>



#### **Access Information Technologies, Inc.**

35 Pinelawn Road, Suite 204E  
Melville, NY 11747

Main Office: 631-756-2700 Fax: 631-756-2910 [www.accessit.com](http://www.accessit.com)

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