



Restaurant Equippers Boosts Shipping Productivity 25% with InfoShip®/Vx



About the Client:

Restaurant Equippers (Equippers) is a leading distributor of high-quality, commercial-grade food service equipment and supplies at warehouse prices. The company sells its products via three brick-and-mortar stores in Ohio, Michigan, and New Jersey, and its online store, www.equippers.com.

Challenge:

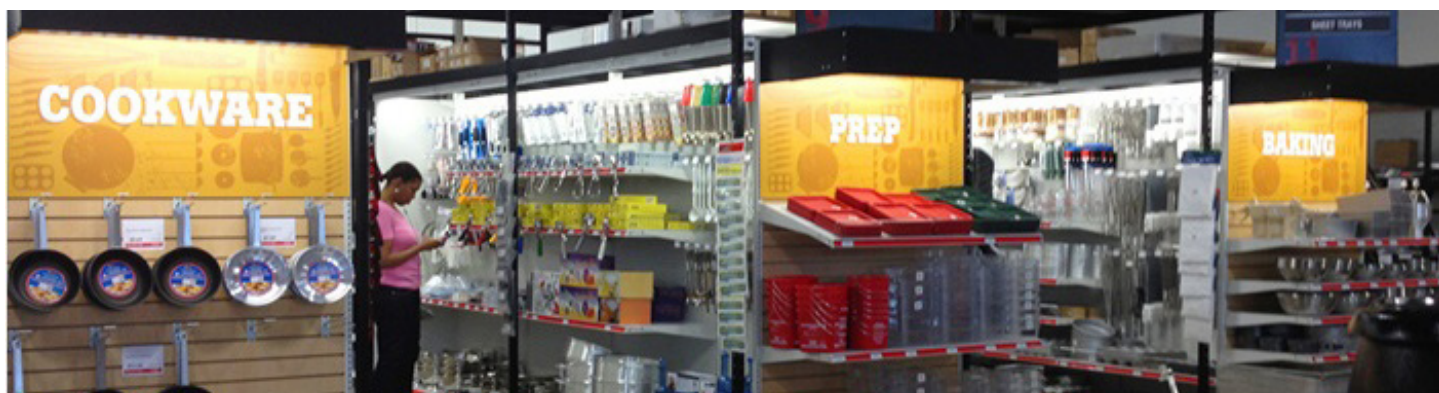
Equippers initially built its business by selling equipment to restaurants and commercial food service companies, but experienced a further boost in sales as consumers found its online store.

Order volumes grew to the point that its fulfillment operations had hit a ceiling in capacity. However, expanding or moving to a new distribution center (DC) was not ideal.

The company used several systems to process orders. "The staff toggled between four different screens to convert an order for shipping, which took on average, four minutes per order," said Dave Cox, Chief National Sales and Fulfillment Officer. "The work was paper-driven, time-consuming, and required too many touches by the staff."

Rather than considering new facilities or adding shifts, Equippers decided to upgrade its warehouse systems to eliminate manual processes, choosing the HighJump warehouse management system (WMS) and the CLS InfoShip®/Vx shipping system.

“Our DC is located in Columbus, OH, a hotbed for fulfillment companies with competitive pricing for labor and real estate,” said Dave Cox, Chief National Sales and Fulfillment Officer. “We needed to increase throughput in our existing DC without having to add second or third shifts.”



Solution: Faster Shipping, From Four Minutes to a Few Seconds per Order

The new HighJump/CLS solution has reduced shipment processing times from four minutes to a few seconds per shipment. InfoShip/Vx is implemented as a blackbox solution that receives order data from the WMS according to workflows designed by CLS and Noel Wallbridge, a HighJump implementation specialist. As a result:

- Packing and shipping stations were merged and reduced by half and converted into combined pack/ship stations where orders are now processed via one screen. Workers no longer toggle between applications or walk the packed orders from the packing to the shipping station, saving even more time.
- Orders that are shipped in corrugated boxes are picked and moved to the combined pack/ship station, where the staff scans a barcoded order ID to pull up order and shipping details onscreen. The packer verifies and closes out the order, prints and applies the shipping labels, and moves the packages to the carrier loading zone.
- Single-item orders that are shipped in their original packaging now skip the pack station workflow. Instead, they are queued for batch processing to preprint shipping labels in the pick flow sequence.
- The picker takes the preprinted shipping labels and using an RF gun, scans the shipping labels for the WMS to direct the picker to the items to pick. The picker applies the shipping labels on the items as they are picked, then moves them directly to the carrier loading area.
- Shipping costs, tracking numbers, etc., are automatically uploaded to the WMS and ERP system, eliminating the need to rekey the data.

"Now, it just takes one barcode scan and we're done in seconds. InfoShip/Vx processes the order, converts it to a shipment, and updates the WMS and ERP systems with the details," said Cox.

Benefits:

Since implementing the new systems, Equippers has dramatically streamlined its order processing and shipping workflow, gaining multiple benefits, including:

- **25% increase in productivity and capacity.** Equippers has automated its processes, significantly reduced its reliance on paper, and increased shipment processing speed from four minutes to a few seconds per order. Staff time spent walking between packing and shipping stations is now completely eliminated.
- **Rapid training.** Employees can be trained in minutes, compared to weeks of training required for the legacy processes. "This was critical when we were faced with staffing challenges and a sudden spike in e-commerce orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic," Cox said. "It's been all hands-on deck, for non-warehouse employees as well. Within 30 minutes, they're trained and processing shipments."
- **Accurate, up-front freight rates during the sales process.** With products ranging from kitchen cutlery to large commercial refrigerators, shipping costs are important to know up-front. "With all our carriers loaded on InfoShip/Vx, we can quickly provide customers with accurate freight costs while they are shopping, either online, on the phone, or in our stores."

"Thankfully, we'd gone live on the new solution a few weeks before the pandemic restrictions hit and we were able to handle the sudden, dramatic increase in online orders. I shudder to think how we'd have managed without it." Dave Cox

Positioned for Growth

The CLS/Highjump solution has proven it can handle peak season shipping volumes, which Cox believes are here to stay. "Peak season volumes are now an everyday volume for Equippers," he said. "Once buyers find us online, they become repeat customers."