

ERP Solution Drives Efficiencies for Tennessee Wine & Spirits Distributor

Business Drivers

- Single Solution
- Integration with Third Party Add-On Tools

Athens Distributing Company was founded in 1946 by two brothers-in-law. Today, the family business is still owned and operated by descendants of the White and Donnelly families.

Athens Distributing Company opened its first wine and spirits wholesaling business in Nashville. Today, the business operates offices in Nashville, Memphis and Chattanooga – reaching three of the state’s top population centers. With 175 employees, including nearly 60 sales reps, Athens Distributing sells hundreds of leading wine and spirits brands to both on-premise establishments and off-premise packaged goods stores.

Replacing a 30-Year Old Legacy System

For close to 30 years, Athens relied on a highly customized legacy system for sales reporting and invoicing. A second system helped the wholesaler manage accounts payable activities. While the DCC system produced good results for the distributor, support for the aging system was set to expire. In 2007, the company formed a selection committee to find a replacement system that could integrate its entire operations, streamline business processes and improve data sharing among its three independent offices.

“DCC support retirement was the biggest driver for us,” said Don White, CFO. “We were using Solomon for our accounts payables and DCC for sales reporting. We knew we wanted an integrated system that could accomplish all those tasks, and work with our third-party tools from Inventiv and RoadNet.”

Athens’ technology search prompted the company to attend the annual Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) trade show to investigate potential software providers. That’s where COO Scott Moore first heard about Apprise Software’s industry specific solution for wine and spirits distributors.

“Word of mouth is big in the wine and spirits industry. So the WSWA show was a great resource for us in our technology search,” said Scott Moore, COO. “We knew we could gain efficiencies by moving to a new system. It was helpful to know other wine and spirits distributors were getting good results with Apprise.”

Ideally, the company wanted a distribution solution designed specifically for the wine and spirits industry. After rejecting several solutions that didn’t meet this criteria, Athens narrowed the field to two software providers. Athens chose Apprise Software as its technology partner based on the company’s leading technology and knowledge of the wine and spirits industry.

“We chose Apprise because it was better aligned with our distribution business,” said White. “We needed sales reporting, financial tools and third-party integration. Apprise provided those things and more.”



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-Don White
Senior Partner & CFO
Athens Distributing

Profile in Brief

- Family owned and operated wine & spirits wholesaler
- Distributes more than 6,000 SKUs
- Offices in Nashville, Chattanooga and Memphis, Tennessee

Business Impact

- Improved Data Sharing
- Streamlined Picking and Invoicing
- Deep Drill-Down Capabilities for Improved Business Intelligence
- Simplified Compliance Reporting

Integrated System Improves Data Sharing

Apprise is an enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution that helps wine and spirits companies manage their entire business from importing through delivery.

Athens Distributing relies on the ERP solution to help manage warehouse inventory, gain visibility into sales history, and more efficiently comply with industry reporting requirements. In addition, the Apprise solution enabled the company to interface with FinTec, an electronic collections service. Integration with FinTec helps speed payments to Athens, while keeping its large restaurant chain customers compliant with Tennessee's 10-day credit law.

Besides supporting an important relationship with the national restaurant chain, integration with FinTec streamlines the process and saves the company time through a simple click of a mouse. And the company's route delivery process is more efficient too, now that drivers are no longer involved in collections activities.

Streamlining Processes Through Best Practice Solutions

Since going live on Apprise, Athens has streamlined its warehouse picking process. Previously, the company printed invoices, then picked orders directly from those documents. Trouble was, inventory wasn't always on hand, and route delivery drivers had to manually adjust invoices before delivery could be made. In addition, accounting personnel needed to adjust invoices and enter credits to reconcile the difference. The process was redundant, time consuming and error-prone.

Today, Athens Distributing uses an integrated approach to managing its business data. Apprise provides one solution for managing inventory, POs, invoicing and other data. Making it easier to implement industry best practices throughout its business. Now, warehouse personnel print pick tickets, pull orders from those documents, then print accurate invoices. No reconciliation or rekeying necessary. And replenishment is much more efficient than before.

Detailed reporting is another asset for the distributor. Apprise enables the company to gain visibility into its entire business through sophisticated reporting and analytic tools. History can be pulled by sales territory, region, representative, customer and product. With streamlined data management, sales and financial reports are shared more easily between the three independent offices and among the company's sales staff. And integration with Inventiv handheld tools allows sales reps to access the latest inventory counts, customer and product-specific pricing data, discounting and incentive programs and other critical business information.

Before going live on Apprise, pulling detailed history was time consuming and cumbersome. Now, Athens uses the Apprise Inventory Matrix Inquiry tool to gain detailed transaction data at the product level, including allocations, restrictions, reservations, PO's, adjustments and more. The functionality helps them understand PO-level inventory discrepancies that can occur during product returns.

For Don White, user friendly drill-down functionality makes it easy to pull business intelligence for faster and better decision making. "We didn't have drill down functionality previously," said White. "Apprise gives us the ability to look at our financial statement and fix things that are out of line. We can drill into the original invoice without having to switch screens."

The company's accounting and finance staff appreciate the simplified and streamlined processes now in place for creating checks, making payments, and managing detailed compliance reports, including depletions reporting, state requirements, samples, placements and more.

"From A/R to A/P more information is at hand," said Scott Moore, COO. "With Apprise, its easier to apply payments and easier to correct them since we can see calculations on screen. In the past, we struggled with sales history. Now we can see more detailed transactions

"From accounts payable to receivables we now have more information at hand. It's easier to apply payments, and easier to correct them since we can see calculations on screen. In the past, this was a struggle — now we see more detailed information."

- Scott Moore
Partner & COO
Athens Distributing



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