

Home Depot

Home Depot Maintains Inventory More Efficiently with VSI-FAX

Case Study

Home Depot, with approximately 950 stores, saves considerably by automating the sending of faxes at each store. The large home improvement chain uses VSI-FAX to accomplish this. Headquartered in Atlanta, Home Depot maintains an up-to-the minute stocking program by using faxes to provide its vendors with purchase orders. The store chain originally tried out VSI-FAX in a pilot program for special orders for kitchen and bathroom remodeling.

Approximately 20 stores were designated for this special order service. In testing and rolling out the automatic faxing capability for these special orders, Home Depot found it worked so well that they decided to incorporate VSI-FAX into the entire chain's purchase order system.

"Faxed communications are crucial to our stocking system," says Joan Burkett, Manager of Store Applications. "Products need to be in stock. For many of the products we carry, we can't abide even a 24-hour delay in shipment. That's why faxing orders to our suppliers is so important."

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— Joan Burkett Manager of Store Applications, Home Depot



Each Home Depot store sends approximately 80 multi-page faxes a week to vendors. Done manually, these faxes could take anywhere from 2 to 4 hours a day, often requiring a dedicated employee. Not only did the store chain want a faster method of reaching its vendors, but it also wanted to free its operators for more productive work. Automating its faxes allowed the company to do both.

"An additional plus," adds Burkett, "is that scanning the PO's for manually distributed faxes often produced illegible results at the other end, and required more employee time to verify and correct them. When we send them directly from the computer, the faxed copy received at the other end is clear and legible. It doesn't require a call-back for verification."

Each Home Depot store is equipped with an HP9000/827 running HP-UX. With VSI-FAX installed on each of these computers, the faxing of the company's purchase orders is fully automated. VSI-FAX creates a cover page to accompany the purchase order, obtains the vendor's fax number from a database, and automatically transmits the purchase orders to the vendors.

As a result of Home Depot's changeover from manual to automated faxing, the benefits it receives are:

- Increased sales and reduced inventory overhead through expediting and improving its restocking program by faster ordering
- Reduced costs by being faster, more dependable and less expensive than the mail — and less expensive (with better, more legible copy) than manual faxing
- Streamlined worker productivity with reduced or eliminated manual procedures

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