NODUS®

CASE STUDY

icostore

INDUSTRY:
Customized Promotional Products

BENEFITS:
Nodus' eStore Solution Stack enables iCoStore to exponentially scale their online promotional goods business, while efficiently managing a high volume of low ticket orders through an integrated, highly customized ecommerce platform; all in a low-touch, error-free environment.

SOFTWARE USED:
Nodus' integrated eStore Solution Stack which is comprised of Nodus' flagship credit card processing solution, Credit Card Advantage, and fully customizable e-commerce web store.

ABOUT ICOSTORE

iCoStore is a technology-focused company that has designed a unique system to build, run, manage and fulfill corporate incentive programs, rewards programs, apparel programs and company stores. From the beginning, iCoStore has focused on staying ahead of the curve and building technology that gives customers a level of service and sophistication not offered elsewhere in the indutstry.

For more information please visit: www.icostore.com

TECHNOLOGY ALLOWS ICOSTORE TO RISE TO THE TOP AND SCALE QUICKLY IN THE COMPETITIVE PROMOTIONAL GOODS INDUSTRY

"We're now processing about 80 times the business that we were when we first implemented Nodus. Without the integration between Nodus and Microsoft Dynamics GP, we wouldn't have been able to scale the business like we have."

Kirk Howell
Chief Operating Officer for iCoStore, LLC

Technology has been a central focus for Tempe, Arizona-based iCoStore, since the innovative provider of branded merchandise, uniform, incentive, and rewards programs opened its doors in 2002. Since then, the organization has strived to stay ahead of the curve in a competitive industry by giving customers unsurpassed levels of service and sophistication. "Instead of taking the traditional, opportunistic, spot sales-focused approach to the promotional products industry," said Kirk Howell, COO, "we made a conscious decision to create a unique, completely automated and scalable business model."
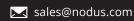
Whether a customer is setting up an employee uniform program or developing a website where its employees, clients, and brand aficionados can procure logoed apparel, iCoStore provides a wide selection of promotional goods in a just-in-time (JIT) manufacturing environment. To support that model, iCoStore's founders developed an automated process that would require very little human touch to reduce labor costs and the incidences of errors, while effectively handling high order volumes and low average ticket spends. Next, iCoStore needed a solution that seamlessly integrated an enterprise resource planning (ERP) software with an online storefront.

FINDING THE PERFECT SOLUTION

After looking at offerings from Oracle, SAP, and Microsoft, iCoStore decided to implement Microsoft Dynamics GP with Nodus' eStore Solution Stack. "Our primary concern was finding an ERP package that met the needs of a business that was grossing five figures per year at the time, but that was on the path to $10 million in annual sales," said Howell, "and all with average ticket of less than $200." He said Nodus' solutions rose to the top during the selection process due to their integration capabilities with Microsoft Dynamics GP, the openness of the combined platform, and the ability to customize the online storefront to meet iCoStore's specific needs.

"The order flow-through, the integration with GP, and the customizations that Nodus developed for iCoStore allows us to fulfill orders without any additional manipulation or review on our part."
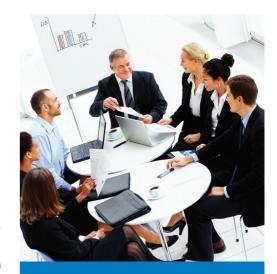
"It's a standards-based platform, which meant no new skillsets were needed to develop the required customizations," said Howell. "From the technology perspective, we'd be dealing with SQL server, ASP.NET, C# and the entire Microsoft stack – all of which we were already familiar with – as opposed to having to use four or five different vendors."

The software's price also came into play during the selection process. After reviewing the initial implementation costs and long-term maintenance expenses for several options, the iCoStore team realized Nodus' Microsoft based solution was "much less expensive than Oracle or SAP," said Howell, "and also much more robust than any other package that we looked at."

Customizations were a critical requirement for iCoStore's apparel business, which at the time comprised 80-90 percent of its total revenues. For these apparel orders, each item consists of a combination of several different variables including part number, color, size, and custom decoration details – all of which had to be integrated into its e-commerce platform. This requirement wasn't supported by any off-the-shelf e-commerce solution and was particularly vital because the custom nature of each order is the key to iCoStore's JIT model.

"Nodus worked closely with us to develop those customizations," said Howell, "and also to build out the additional reporting and budgeting applications that our customers needed to gain visibility into their orders and spending."

> *"Nodus has always provided great support and been extremely helpful. They dedicated a lot of resources to our customizations and supported us well during our initial rollout of eStore Solution Stack."*

MEASURING THE RESULTS

Today, Nodus' eStore Solution Stack fully supports iCoStore's JIT manufacturing process across roughly 10,000 active stock keeping units (SKUs). Once orders are placed, they flow into Microsoft Dynamics GP and the batched purchase orders are sent out to iCoStore's vendors. Because iCoStore handles most item decoration and personalization in-house, 100 polo shirts of the same color and size can be ordered at once – despite the fact that different logos or names will be placed on each of those items.

By combining technology with a long-standing commitment to stand out in the competitive promotional goods industry, iCoStore has been able to effectively differentiate itself in a commodity-based industry. "We're now processing about 80 times the business that we were when we first implemented Nodus," said Howell. "Without the integration between Nodus and Microsoft Dynamics GP, we wouldn't have been able to scale the business like we have."

iCoStore's technology platform also helps it save money on labor, while significantly reducing errors associated with re-keying orders from one platform to the next. "Today," Howell said, "we have zero re-keying errors coming through our web stores and no lag time between when the customer places the order and when we can begin processing it."

FUTURE EXPANSION AHEAD

With an eye on adding more Nodus products to its technology stable, iCoStore expects to begin using ePay Advantage in the near future for electronic bill presentment. "We're very interested in leveraging that capability – particularly from a PCI compliance perspective," said Howell, who has been consistently impressed with Nodus' ongoing support and regular product updates and introductions.

"They were extremely flexible, responsive, and helpful during the initial implementation," said Howell. "Without them, we wouldn't have had the success we had right out of the gate in terms of launching with a complete, well-baked, fully-functional system."

> *"ePay Advantage is probably in our very near future. From a PCI compliance perspective, the ability to move all of our cardholder data completely out of our environment is huge."*

ABOUT NODUS:

Nodus® Technologies, Inc. is a leading provider of electronic payment automation software. Nodus leverages Service Oriented Architecture (SOA)and web services technologies to provide cost effective, comprehensive: e-commerce, electronic payment and online bill pay solutions for Microsoft Dynamics ® CRM and ERPs. Nodus ® business solutions include eStore Solution Stack, ePay Advantage, Credit Card Advantage, CRM Charge, eSOP Advantage, Transact Advantage and Payment Acceptance Programs.

NODUS Technologies, Inc.

Microsoft Partner
Gold Enterprise Resource Planning
Silver Independent Software Vendor (ISV)