

## Microsoft® Business Solutions Retail Management System

### Solution Overview

#### Industry

Retail – small chain of camera stores in Arkansas.

#### Scenario

Customers have depended on Bedford's to be "Picture-perfect since 1974." Each store carries a full line of photographic, digital and video equipment and supplies and boasts a busy portrait studio.

#### Company Profile

With its Springdale store serving as headquarters, Bedford must instantly know inventories in outlying stores. Bedford's has built strong customer loyalty.

#### Situation

Legacy, name-brand software and hardware was slowing growth and frustrating the marketing ideas of an energetic staff. Two trusted providers joined forces to install a sophisticated new system over one weekend.

#### Software Used

Microsoft® Windows® 2000  
Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000  
Microsoft Small Business Server 2000  
Retail Management System Store Operations and HeadQuarters (HQ).  
Great Plains® Financials  
Microsoft Office XP  
Norton AntiVirus™

## Bedford Camera

Microsoft Retail Management System from Microsoft Business Solutions delivers reliable chainwide inventory views, enables sales from sister stores, integrates with Great Plains for financials, and confirms expansion to a sixth location.

Bedford Camera & Video, Inc. didn't like the blurry stock levels they were getting from name-brand legacy software and hardware. Unreliable communications left outlying stores scrambling. The small, independent Arkansas chain couldn't get the fast, accurate answers that retailers need to compete and increase profits. Today, Microsoft Retail Management System (RMS) from Microsoft Business Solutions gives them quick, clear pictures of every department in every store. Bedford's sixth store opens March 2003.

"We were in a black hole," said Stan Bedford, founder and president. "Our old retail software gave us spotty, most often wrong, product counts. It was inefficient in multi-store inventory management and didn't offer features for agility and growth. The developer offered almost no support for accounting and none for point of sale. My team's good marketing ideas were constantly frustrated by the software's inability to flex, execute and report."

Bedford's stores maintain the largest stock of many photographic products, accessories and supplies in the state. All stores maintain busy portrait studios and give seminars in new digital technologies. A typical store has 6,800 SKUs.

#### Solution selection

"Microsoft's reputation went a long way to help us pick this solution," said Bedford. "A robust yet economically leveraged system is pivotal to retail survival and growth. I want to know the developer's solutions will integrate, and that I can count on downstream upgrades and support. Microsoft Retail Management System answered our wish list, gave us new capabilities to outmaneuver the competition, and vastly improved our executives' visibility."

Microsoft® Business Solutions  
**Retail Management System**

For more information about Microsoft Business Solutions Retail Management System, visit [www.microsoft.com/BusinessSolutions/POS](http://www.microsoft.com/BusinessSolutions/POS)

## Microsoft Business Solutions Retail Management System

Microsoft  
Business  
Solutions

AFFORDABLE

“We also selected Great Plains (formerly e-Enterprise) for thorough financials and accounting,” Bedford said, “because, after years of mediocre software, we were unwilling to accept a short-term solution. Microsoft Business Solutions has a reputation for listening to customers and, most importantly, prioritizing the lost art of follow-through when they hear from small businesses.”

Bedford’s team examined several proposals and selected a joint solution from REACH-Associates, LLC and award-winning network integrator and managed services provider Avow Technology Solutions, Inc. REACH is an accounting-heavy Microsoft Business Solutions Partner certified in Great Plains, Solomon and Small Business Manager. VARBusiness magazine ranked Avow among the USA’s top 500 solution providers in 2002.

“REACH and Avow really grasped our needs,” said Bedford. “They presented a cohesive solution and we were impressed by their aggressive, well-thought-out installation plan”

### Installed over a weekend

Avow installed Windows 2000, SQL Server 2000 Standard Edition, Microsoft Small Business Server 2000, Office XP and Norton AntiVirus™, according to Tom Allen, Avow president. Then REACH installed Store Operations, the Microsoft RMS POS store-level solution, and HeadQuarters (HQ), the Microsoft RMS small chain solution. According to Tom Major, REACH president, his staff configured the system to Bedford’s complex product, transaction and customer billing needs. Working in Avow’s lab, REACH ported in Bedford’s customer and inventory data including quantities, SKUs, product names and details.

Although REACH had not previously installed Microsoft RMS Store Operations and HQ, Major said, “Installation went very fast. We have installed Great Plains in more than 20 sites.” Store Operations manages each store, and HQ was installed at their Springdale headquarters to provide chain-wide visibility and management.

PRODUCTIVE

CUSTOMIZABLE

SCALABLE

A few SKUs needed to be hand-entered and old, false quantities were updated. An Avow engineer at each store removed and replaced old hardware over the weekend. REACH and Avow stayed on-site Monday to verify operations, fine-tune last-minute problems, and instruct staff.

Bedford’s now has an all-new environment, tighter security and a virtual private network (VPN) to share e-mail and calendars. The network connects via Cisco IOS® Firewall and routers. Installation included an all new Hewlett-Packard computing environment with desktops, servers, monitors, printers and switch. Microsoft RMS enabled replacement of expensive leased ISDN lines with DSL at a fraction of the cost.

“After one week’s operations, I told REACH and Avow they had far exceeded expectations,” said Bedford. “They did the impossible, totally converting software and hardware over a weekend. Five stores in five cities were up and running Monday morning. Avow and REACH are first-class organizations and deserve my highest recommendation.”

### Improvements

“There are almost no operational areas where Microsoft RMS hasn’t already shown its value,” said Bedford. Easily learning Store Operations’ clear POS screens, associates immediately reported faster transactions, including those with discounts, rebates, warranties, serial numbers, credit transactions and store accounts. New bar-code scanners sped store lines and assured accuracy. Authorized employees can look into sister stores’ stocks to make an immediate sale by offering rapid delivery from nearby inventory. Customers applaud the shorter lines, new receipts and improved availability of past transactions in case of returns or problems.

As HQ automatically polled stores for sales and inventory data every 15 minutes, Bedford executives and managers began using accurate product levels to achieve better product distribution through the chain. Purchasing is tighter and faster, and Bedford’s can now view and trade off the cost of maintaining larger in-store inventories of

specific products against probabilities of increased sales and customer satisfaction. Stores’ data moves from HQ into Great Plains for complete financial details, reports and analysis. “This is too easy,” remarked an employee in accounting.

“Already we have saved money several ways,” reports Bedford. “We eliminated one IT position, consolidated five servers down to one Compaq ProLiant™ ML350 G3, and Avow’s analysis of our phone costs slashed monthly bills.”

“HeadQuarters is a tremendous big-picture management tool,” reported Steve Elkins, Bedford’s vice president of operations. “It has details when I need them and scope when I need that. It can manage everything because its visibility and control are tremendous. It’s painless communication to and from the stores. Setup was easy and, after that, store data just appears in HQ whenever you schedule it.”

Bedford’s uses Great Plains in their Springdale headquarters for accounting and finance needs such as payroll, accounts payable, and general ledger. They find it smoother, more flexible and complete than their earlier solution.

### Success confirmed expansion

With the system in place, Stan Bedford assessed its results in fast-moving lines, accessible customer information, balanced inventory, accurate purchasing, and flexible reporting. He resolved to proceed with plans for their sixth store, in North Little Rock. Microsoft RMS Store Operations will manage POS transactions, track inventory and customers, and connect automatically to HQ.

“I’m running Store Operations, HQ and Great Plains. I can get sales levels, stock, revenue, purchasing and accounting/finance answers 24/7. Our new data communications is proving nearly bulletproof. We get good follow-through from our providers and from Microsoft itself. Based on proven results in a short time, opening a new store is a much easier decision,” said Bedford.

“I want to know the developer’s solutions will integrate, and that I can count on downstream upgrades and support. Microsoft RMS answered our wish list, gave us new capabilities to outmaneuver the competition, and vastly improved our executives’ visibility.”

Stan Bedford, Owner  
Bedford’s Camera and Video, Inc.

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