

BRAKE SERVICE COMPANY

"Switching from Activant to Nexpart® Distribution Management has enabled me to grow my business substantially. It is fast, easy to use, and gives me a technological advantage so I can provide better service for my customers."

History:

Brake Service Company in Newark, Delaware was founded by Harry Lambert in 1958 to provide automotive brake services and automotive parts distribution for local service dealers. The owner bought an Activant (Triad) system to handle inventory and point-of-sale counter transactions.



"My partner, Marie, and I grew up in the automotive parts business" commented Eliot Brown, current Co-owner of Brake Service Company. Marie joined Brake Service in 1974 as a driver and Eliot joined the company in 1981 as a counterman. "I quickly found out that due to my focus on customer service, we had significantly increased our business." In 1986, Eliot and Marie worked out an agreement with the owner that let them manage the business as they bought out the owner over a ten-year period.

"In 1993, when Marie and I took over running this location, it was producing much lower revenue. In just one year we grew it into a million dollar store. It was a major milestone for our business." They had taken a lot of business away from other local parts suppliers mainly by focusing on customer service.

Business Challenges:

But Eliot was quick to point out that he also had several other factors affecting his overall profitability. "Our business and the

industry have both changed greatly over the years. But, it's our attention to customer service that has been our most productive and consistent guiding management principle. We're big on getting the latest technical information to our customers, as well as good pricing."

The overhead to run two locations with the associated real estate costs, system support for each location, management and staff costs was taking a bigger bite out of their profits every year. On the system side, Eliot knew that the Activant system needed an upgrade just to support their expanding business. Activant wanted him to change out all of his computer hardware in order to support their software upgrade at a cost estimated at over \$30,000. Competition from larger chain competitors for walk-ins was cutting profitability from retail trade. He had to figure out a way to decrease his overhead and increase his business at the same time.

Selecting the Optimum Solution:

Eliot spoke with his customers and calculated that if he consolidated the two locations and opened an eCommerce site, he would be able to significantly cut overhead and could actually widen his inventory to better serve his growing wholesale trade. "We aren't in the repair business. We refer all requests to our most loyal service dealer customers.

Many parts stores don't feel that they can compete with the huge chains for retail trade, but they can.

It means that you really have to know your most loyal customers and support them with better service and pricing."

"It helps to join a buying group or marketing consortium to get better pricing as a group than we can as individual independent jobbers." Brake Service Co.

OWNER'S OBJECTIVES:

- REDUCE COSTS WHILE EXPANDING BUSINESS REPLACE AGING UNSUPPORTED SYSTEM
- DEVELOP ECOMMERCE INTERNET BUSINESS

joined the POJA Group (Professional Organization of Jobber Associates), a regional buying/marketing consortium to compete with the buying power of the larger chain stores. "POJA



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allows us to make better purchases and stay competitive," said Eliot. "I have developed supply relationships with two of the major area distributors as well."

Eliot realized that the old system needed a whole system replacement, but even with that, they would still have no direct connection to the Internet for eCommerce. "When Activant notified me that they wouldn't support their old system any longer, I did a year of research on systems" said Eliot. "It wasn't just about lowering my overall costs. I wanted something that would help me grow my business and expand into eCommerce, but I couldn't get there with my old system."

Eliot decided on the Nexpart Distribution Management, Windows® based store management solution that runs on standard PC's over the Internet. It was designed to manage jobber store inventory, point-of-sale counter transactions, and back-office reporting. In addition, the system included Nexpart, eCommerce that gave Brake Service Company immediate web presence with an eCommerce site.

Implementing the Solution:

"Because it is an Internet based program, I was able to train on the Nexpart Distribution Management system from my home as well as from my store. Some of my countermen learned the Nexpart Distribution Management system faster than I expected. They were used to the old system and I told them that any new system will require some learning. But, with its great graphical user interface it is intuitive and much easier to learn."

The Nexpart Distribution Management system and Nexpart

include a powerful set of pricing controls that provide tiered pricing and account based management for repeat customers. "I carry multiple supplier lines and with the Nexpart Distribution Management system my countermen quickly find and source parts without making multiple phone calls or delaying the customer. The Nexpart Distribution Management system is well thought out. My countermen can click a button on screen and see a diagram or information directly from the manufacturer's web site."

RESULTS:

- Overheads greatly reduced
- Better information and management with Nexpart
- eCommerce business growing rapidly

The built in eCommerce is growing business for Brake Service. Eliot now has many of his customers using the Nexpart eCommerce site at any time of the day or night, without adding to his counter staff. "My customers like using it, and their business with us is increasing."

Initially, Eliot was concerned because Nexpart Distribution Management stores data in the WHI centralized data center in New Jersey over secure Internet connections.

"I was so used to having my data sitting in the old server box in my store, that I was very nervous about having all of that important information stored somewhere else. But, I soon began to realize that it's actually more secure than what I had before and less work for me to maintain."

Each customer's data is partitioned so it cannot be accessed by any other customer. Up to five years of detailed customer information is immediately available. Professional datacenter staff runs automated system backups to protect the data and the center has fully redundant servers to limit down time. The Nexpart Distribution Management system also has a feature called Mode 2 which enables the system to run even if the store's Internet connection temporarily goes down.

Improved Customer Support:

"Overall I haven't had many reasons to call WHI customer service, but whenever I do they are very responsive. With my old system, I was used to wasting my time waiting on hold for their customer service to pick up and they also had much slower problem resolution."

Summary:

"I needed a system that was designed for my jobber business in the store and on the Internet. With the Nexpart Distribution Management system, I can get a better snapshot of my business, faster. It shows me what product lines are moving or not, so I can expedite my customer service approach. The reports show me more detail about productivity by counterman, manufacturer lines, individual parts and returns."

Overall, I feel I made a good decision for my business and I've already recommended the Nexpart Distribution Management system to others." Eliot summed up by saying, "The Nexpart Distribution Management system is the best computer system bargain in the industry. What it can do for you, for the price, is better than any other system offered."