



A major distributor of Eastern White Pine and other superior grade wood products, Timber Trading Inc. has earned a reputation as one of the most highly regarded lumber companies in the Northeast since 1983. Timber Trading relies on technological expertise from DMSi's Agility SaaS (Software as a Service) to manage their lumber wholesale business.

The Challenge

Timber Trading was searching for ways to provide sales with more collaborative capabilities as they met with contractor yards and builder yards across New England, to ultimately reinforce Timber Trading's dominance in white pine lumber distribution. "Enticing loyalty long-term requires managing the amount of lumber we move between the mills and reload centers; quality controls in our shops; and how fast we can ship it out of the warehouse," explained Timber Trading General Manager, Dave Zappone.

The Solution

What Zappone drew together in 2003 was a combination of modern technologies that help him give customers a live snapshot of the company's inventory and delivery schedules for the ultimate convenience in purchasing lumber. Leasing lumber distribution software through the Internet was helping Timber Trading to capitalize on customers' needs for instant and accurate lumber information. Plus, Timber Trading reduced expenses. "Our capacity to provide better service to customers has improved substantially. 30 percent better, no question, since we started using Agility SaaS," Zappone stated. "As a management tool, it makes our office run a lot smoother."

Today, Timber Trading's entire IT system runs at a remote data center, allowing them to pay on a metered basis. Adapting to this change ahead of the curve, Zappone first weighed the true value of hosted software to his business, including: information control, reliance on technical expertise, and infrastructure upkeep costs. "I first saw software hosted through the Internet at a NAWLA trade show and its potential was obvious to me," described Zappone. "The SaaS program allows everyone in our office be more mobile, more productive, and offer customers real-time answers when out of the office."

The instant access to information eliminates return phone calls, a common practice before Timber Trading opted for the remotely hosted business management application. Plus, the risk of unknowingly selling units of lumber while a second prospect deliberates its procurement is significantly reduced. "Prior to Agility, you checked your computer screen and printed 50 or 60 sheets of product information, or you wrote it manually before getting an answer to your prospect," Zappone said. "Unlike many companies in the industry, no unit length is the same when we receive material. Depending on our customers' inventory, certain length configurations are more appealing. Complete inventory access from any computer is helpful in closing the sale and keeping our customers happy."

Breaking from traditional computerization keeps infrastructure hassles far out of the office. Timber Trading saves about \$12,000 annually by reducing third-party networking expenses. Time savings from handling technical issues are substantial, especially without having IT resources on staff. Timber Trading has more IT control of inventory and customer data than ever before. "Initially we wondered about expenses in a SaaS environment. But, to stay up-to-date otherwise, you're changing equipment every four hours before it's obsolete," Zappone joked. When the switch to SaaS was announced company-wide, sighs of relief by staff confirmed Zappone's recognition of the bottom line benefits. "Implementing this new technology will be one of our industry's challenges over the next five years as we become more integrated with customers," he added. "If you want to stay current in sales, you'll need this kind of system. With Agility we're delivering a value-added service faster to make us more efficient and better competitors."

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