T.L. Ashford Facilitates Fruitful Inventory Management at Duckwall-Pooley

To you, it's a scrumptious pear. To Duckwall-Pooley Fruit Company, it's definitely that, but it's also inventory that must be carefully managed. The company accomplishes that goal with the help of T.L. Ashford's Barcode400 Labeling Software that runs on iSeries.

Founded in 1919 in the Hood River valley, Odell, Oregon-based Duckwall-Pooley annually packs more than 1.7 million cartons of premium pears, which it ships not just across the United States but also to Scandinavia, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Germany, Russia, India, the Far East, South America, Canada, and Mexico. The company receives pears from local orchards and sorts them by size and grade. Some of the pears are then packed in boxes for shipping, but others are placed in one of 27 controlled atmosphere (CA) rooms. The room is then sealed, the oxygen is pumped out, nitrogen is pumped in, and the temperature is lowered, thus suspending ripening for up to 10 months.

Good business practices demand meticulous inventory tracking both of pears being packed and the ones in the CA rooms. Bin labeling is an important part of this process. When Duckwall-Pooley discussed this requirement with its ERP supplier, Kirkey Products Group, a software vendor that specializes in applications for agribusinesses, Kirkey recommended Barcode400. Barcode400 was particularly attractive to Duckwall-Pooley because it doesn't require programming, and it easily integrates into most major software packages, including those from Kirkey.

Barcode400's graphical user interface makes label design simple. Adding iSeries data to the label as text or as a barcode requires only a few mouse clicks. Graphic images easily import to print on labels. When saved, the label format resides on the iSeries and is ready to print through existing iSeries applications. No additional licensed software is required.

Duckwall-Pooley created a different label for each type of pear it packs. Because Barcode400 integrates seamlessly with the Kirkey software, whenever bin information is entered into the Kirkey application, the system knows to produce a bar-coded label in the correct format for the type of pear being processed. The tag is then affixed to the bin.

When the fruit in the bin is packed, the tag is removed. It can then be scanned into the system, or the tag number can be keyed in. The system then removes the bin from inventory.

"The biggest benefit we've received from the T.L. Ashford software is that we now have very, very, very accurate inventory data," reports Fred Theiss, CFO at Duckwall-Pooley. "We process about 70,000 bins of pears through the system each year, and the percentage error is so small that it's difficult to measure."

A number of factors contributes to this improved inventory accuracy. For example, tags used to be hand-printed, with all of the inherent problems that entails. Now, all labels are consistent, legible, and bar coded. In addition, Duckwall-Pooley designed its labels so that the pear size is in a very large font so a forklift driver can quickly find the right bin.

Theiss lists ease of use as a major advantage of Barcode400. Additionally, customer service was another important element in this success story. "When we were setting it up, the folks at T.L. Ashford were really customer service-oriented," declares Theiss. ❏

T.L. ASHFORD®

TL Ashford
525 West Fifth Street
Covington, KY 41011
Telephone: 800-541-4893
E-mail: sales@tlashford.com
www.tlashford.com