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Lighting Manufacturer Depends on Nutech, T.L. Ashford

North American Lighting (NAL), an Illinois-based manufacturer of automotive lighting products, has strict requirements when it comes to labeling. With customers ranging from Toyota, General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler to BMW, Honda, Nissan, and Mitsubishi, NAL has a diverse line of products, and each customer has its own method of numbering, describing, and quantifying parts. The company had been using custom labeling software that

(emulating the manual entry process) and monitors for complete and accurate updates. In this manner, every part is tracked from the receiving dock through assembly through shipping. Additionally, inventory replenishment is as easy as scanning the serial number on a Kanban card: When stock for a part is low, Viewpoint automatically triggers the replenishment process for that part.

The functionality of T.L. Ashford's Barcode/400 works hand-in-hand with Viewpoint. It allows printing of multiple label formats, routes the labels to the appropriate printers, and communicates easily with the latest printers. "We find [T.L. Ashford] to be the best product out there," says Don Gardner, client services manager at Nutech. "It's rock solid. We've dealt with other label printing packages, but we try to convince the client that if they don't already have T.L. Ashford, they need to purchase it."

North American Lighting is pleased with the results. "The automotive industry is harsh when it comes to specs," says Roger Meyer, a business systems analyst at NAL. "Even though there's supposed to be a standard, everyone wants something different. Nutech was able to adjust to those differences easily for us."

And if a problem arises, Nutech's tech support is "fantastic," according to Meyer. "With [other companies], you call and you have to wait for somebody, or you get some automated thing. With Nutech, I call right up and talk directly to the programmer. Anybody can sell software, but it's the support behind the software that makes it well worth it." □

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generated serial numbers and a limited amount of customer information, but as the company's needs became more complex, that software was quickly becoming outdated.

Integration is very important to NAL because it operates three plants, each with multiple production lines. These lines operate on JIT principles, and in one customer's case, only about four hours' worth of inventory is kept on site. Mistakes in labeling can be costly, and the labeling needs are huge, from Kanban labels to finished product labels to pallet labels. Thousands are printed per day, on different printer types spread across a wide area. It's vital that both the interface from the EDI to the production line and the complex printer routing occur seamlessly. NAL chose Nutech Systems and T.L. Ashford for its labeling and inventory tracking needs.

Nutech Systems is a data collection software company that implements radio frequency scanning and barcode scanning in manufacturing and distribution environments. Its Viewpoint software manages and controls NAL's barcode data and integrates it into an iSeries-based ERP. Finished goods requirements are sent daily to the three locations from the central iSeries, and labels are printed at various points throughout the facilities. Nutech's Viewpoint validates barcode scans (from serial numbers to product information), then stores the scanning history. The Nutech Screen Mapper running in the background maps data into the data entry screens of the business system automatically



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