Barcode400 helps a meat distributor to reliably answer the question "where's the beef?" . . . or the pork, veal, lamb, or poultry

Bar code labeling is now standard practice for producers of most goods, but that wasn't the case in the meat-packing industry 10 years ago. Back then, some products arrived at meat distributors with bar code labels, but others didn't. What's more, there was no universal standard as to how the labels were printed. To improve the efficiency and accuracy of its operations in this environment, Wolverine Packing Company went looking for a bar code–labeling product that would run on the AS/400.

The solution it found was Barcode400 from T.L. Ashford (*tlashford.com*). Wolverine chose it because of its reputation for reliability and its affordability. John Kuriwchak, IT manager at Wolverine, also checked with references who gave Barcode400 very favorable reviews.

A family-run business for more than 65 years, Wolverine is a distributor of lamb, veal, boxed beef, pork, poultry, steaks, and portion-control products. Its products come both from its own packing facilities and from other meatpackers. Wolverine's customers include food service businesses and food retailers. The company prides itself on a large delivery fleet and expanded processing and warehousing facilities that help to ensure that it fulfills its standard of on-time, next-day delivery. Wolverine runs its business on a System i model 520 server.

Wolverine has been using Barcode400 to produce serialized bar codes for about a decade now, but the product hasn't stood still all that time. At first, Barcode400 was entirely green screen–based, but the latest version allows Wolverine to custom-design labels, including graphics, on a PC and then use those designs in the System i–based bar code–printing software, without the need for programming or middleware.

Kuriwchak has become even more comfortable with his choice because the longevity of T.L. Ashford has given him confidence that the company will continue to support Barcode400 on the System i into the future. "T.L. Ashford has been around since the early '80s," he notes. "Its product has been around a long time; the company has been around a long time; and they're not going anywhere. That's important because, over the years, I've seen a lot of products come and go. The longevity is a great testament to the product and to T.L. Ashford's support."

Kuriwchak also speaks highly of the reliability of Barcode400 and T.L. Ashford's commitment to quality. "The product works," he declares. "Whenever I go from one operating system release level to another, I check with T.L. Ashford, and they've already tested it. If I need any PTFs, they've been right on the button with that information. You'd think that would go without saying, but we've had situations with other vendors where they said, 'Get these PTFs and our software package will run fine,' only to find out we have issues. We've never had that with T.L. Ashford. That says a lot about their product testing."

Wolverine doesn't currently use Radio Frequency Identification tags (RFID), but it appreciates that Barcode400

> **What it comes down to for Kuriwchak is that "Barcode400 works, which isn't something I can say for all vendors. And T.L. Ashford's devotion to its product and its support is second to none."**

is future-ready. The product allows "Smart Labels" to be encoded with data directly from the System i and printed to RFID thermal printers. "If we do have to go to that, they are ready to print RFID tags now," remarks Kuriwchak. "And whatever [RFID] printer we are likely to use is already supported by the product."

What it comes down to for Kuriwchak is that "Barcode400 works, which isn't something I can say for all vendors. And T.L. Ashford's devotion to its product and its support is second to none." ❐
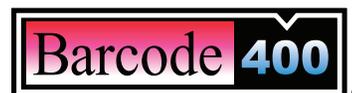
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