

Case Study

About The Company

[ANH Refractories](#) is a family of companies that sells and services under the well-recognized trade, service and brand names: A.P. Green, North American Refractories Company, and Harbison-Walker.



These businesses provide high-grade fireproof ceramic refractory products and services for high-temperature applications in the cement and lime, energy, chemicals, non-ferrous metals, glass, iron and steel, and environmental technology industries.

The Challenge

The company implemented QAD in 1996, but tolerated a manual data collection process for nearly ten years, until the CFO was no longer willing to accept the inventory inaccuracies and adjustments this approach created.

And while no CFO likes write-offs and inventory inaccuracies, plant managers were equally convinced that they needed to be able to find things without having to deal with locations manually.

Like many Eagle-QAD customers, ANH Refractories had a name for some of its challenges. Instead of LIFO or FIFO, all too many times their inventory could be designated as FISH: First In, Still Here.

Eventually the CFO insisted on an automated data collection (ADC) and bar coding solution. Initially, he was less concerned with ROI than with optimizing data accuracy, timely information and reducing write-offs. He just wanted it fixed!

The Solution: Why Eagle?

Because ANH team members had attended QAD Explore conferences and user group meetings, they were already familiar with Eagle. In fact, watching demos and discussing the Eagle solution with Eagle consultants and project managers over a period of years made it easy to go forward smoothly when it was time to pull the trigger.

According to Dale Powers, Manager Business Processes at ANH, "We knew it would be easier and faster to get up to speed on Eagle's RF Express™ for QAD Enterprise Applications than any other ADC offering, simply because Eagle is the market leader in the QAD space. Eagle has worked with QAD for so many years and has an installed base of satisfied customers around the world. We felt that we knew the people, the company and the solution and were well positioned to move forward."

The Rollout

The first implementation took place in 2006. "We chose the biggest, ugliest one first – the one that does the most things and has the most problems," commented Powers. "We figured if it worked there, it would work anywhere."

This first site was doing 10,000 items a year and had many "one-of-a-kind" pieces of inventory that were very difficult to track and find before they put automated data collection in place. If they misplaced something, they might have to search the entire facility, something Powers described as an "Easter Egg hunt."

Since 2006, ANH has implemented Eagle at 14 plants and 26 distribution centers/warehouses. Of those, three are in Canada; the rest are in the US.

They still have two more relatively new distribution centers to go, at which point they'll be finished with this type of site.

In the early going, Eagle's project management and training was highly successful, enabling ANH to take on more ownership internally over time.

From Eagle's perspective, this is a very successful install, with extensive transaction use of Eagle pallet logic and 2D bar codes throughout their operation.

The Benefits

No more Easter Egg hunts, for one thing! Here are some benefits cited by Dale Powers:

- Inventory accuracy is hugely improved
- Cycle counts are now about 97% accurate: most of the remaining discrepancies occur when someone moves an item and fails to record it
- Lots and quantities are almost exactly on the mark
- In the plant where the Eagle solution was first implemented, physical inventory took three full days. The first year after the Eagle implementation it was down to only one day, and now it's even less than that.
 - Shutting down a plant for three days to do physical inventory meant lost production time. Being able to complete the inventory in less than one day – and with a very high degree of accuracy – saves time, money and man hours.
- Shipping accuracy has prevented errors because the bar code warns the operator if they have the wrong pallet. In the past, these orders would have gone through because there was no way to know there was a problem.
 - ANH ships to cement and steel manufacturers. Although those companies don't require the level of JIT shipping that's typical of the automakers, they operate very close to it. With fewer errors, ANH is able to ship correctly and avoid problems, improving its relationships with its customers.

- For sales order shipments, ANH added the QAD ship confirm step so that the invoice is posted as soon as the truck load is scanned. The company now also captures the time the truck left, based on when the load was scanned. This data is used to improve cash flow and evaluate carrier performance relative to scheduled pick up time.

The Future

At present, the company is using the Eagle solution only for finished goods but is talking about extending the benefit of Eagle's inventory accuracy to raw materials in the future.

About Eagle

Eagle Consulting & Development is the leading provider of portable wireless technology solutions for users of QAD Enterprise Applications worldwide. Eagle's product, RF Express™ for QAD Enterprise Applications, provides functionality for fault-proof, real-time automated data collection and bar coding at the single site or multinational level enabling manufacturers to achieve their data accuracy, inventory accuracy, labor cost and efficiency goals. Over 800 QAD customers around the world have chosen Eagle to meet their automated data collection needs.

For more information, visit www.eaglecondev.com or contact Bill Paone at +1.973-838-5006 ext 119. RF Express™ for QAD Enterprise Applications is a trademark of Eagle Consulting & Development.