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On the Cover – A monument designed and built by Schlitzberger and Daughters Monuments in Houston, Texas. Read more about this company, featured on page 18 of this issue.

Mission

To define and promote memorialization in a viable, innovative and diversified way for the membership and to enhance the awareness of memorialization by the general public and the remembrance industry.

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Manufacturers/Wholesalers Insights

BY BOADIE L. ANDERSON

Managing Inventory in the New Millennium

On August 4, 2011, I could have guessed at our inventory. However, a different guess could be provided by my dad, Ed Anderson; and a different number by my brother, John Anderson; and still a different answer by my mother, Judy Anderson. Our inventory was a fluctuating number that needed to be tamed so that we could match our orders as well as anticipate future orders.

Boadie L. Anderson Quarries, Inc. was founded in 1968 by my namesake and grandfather, Boadie L. Anderson, and my father Ed Anderson, who tracked orders on yellow legal paper. This method worked very well for 43 years.

It still works well, but the company needs an army of employees to enter data and double check it. As we have been blessed with more business, and as our selection of colors has grown, matching inventory with orders became more and more time consuming.

The Players:

A yellow legal paper, invented in 1888; a number 2 pencil invented in 1838 (improved with the



John Anderson, Boadie Anderson and Jake Cantrell.

black BIC pen invented 1945); and an iPad, launched in 2010.

The Challenge:

Could we successfully switch and integrate?

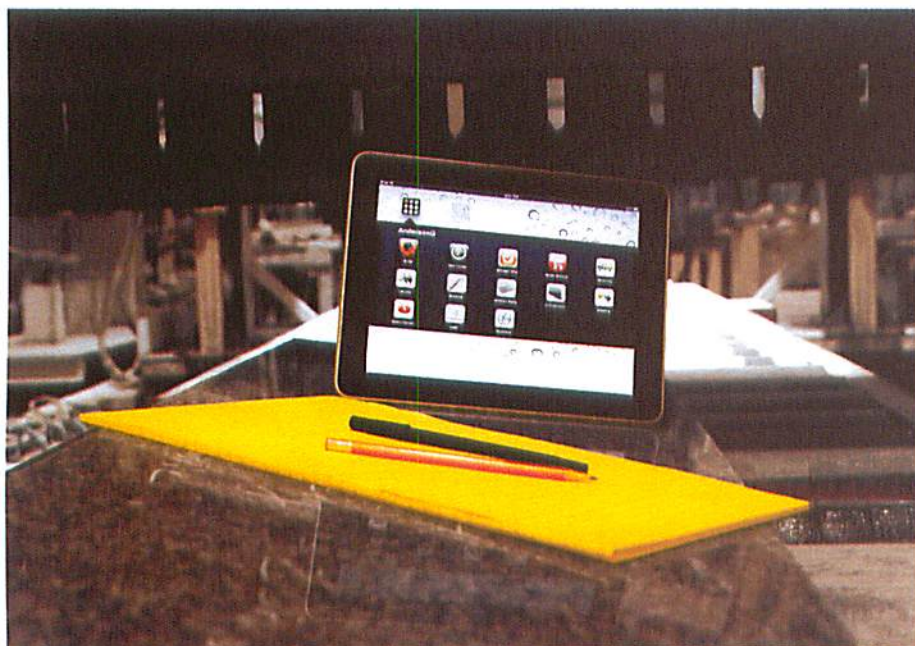
Criteria:

Success, determined by increased efficiency with reduction of errors.

Background Information:

Historically, orders came in by phone or fax (more recently by email). They could be copied up to six times through our plant from order entry to invoicing. As we expanded and grew (we manufacture over 16 domestic colors and import 19), the blessing of growth needed a system to reduce hand copying, errors, and to better manage inventory.

QuickBooks Enterprise is great for handling





our accounting, and we also used it to track inventory. The challenge for us was that QuickBooks was designed to fill a need for a variety of companies. We needed something customized, which actually was much simpler.

Usually, customers call and ask for specifics. As an example, “Do you have a China Black 3-6 x 0-6 x 1-8 P3 serp?” We would check QuickBooks for a semi-updated inventory and then walkie-talkie the guys in the plant for a visual if the quantity seemed low. If what they wanted was not in stock, more time was necessary to hopefully match up their request with what we actually had.

Our recent expansion offered us 10,500 square feet for storing imported granite. This had, however, burst at the seams, and we had overflowed into our 10 acre “backyard.” With 66,000 square feet under roof, we needed a different system and we found a rack system that allowed us to store about 40,000 pounds every 10 feet.

This tripled our square footage in the new area, and got our granite out of our scorching Oklahoma sun. The summer of 2011 was perfect timing for this project, as it was our hottest on record, with an

average temperature of 86.9 degrees and barely a couple of drops of rain!

Hero:

Enter Jake Cantrell of Cantrell Solutions. Jake’s my neighbor, we grew up together, and now he lives down the street from me in Ada, Oklahoma. He’s a programmer, but not just any kind of programmer; Jake keeps things simple and easy.

Originally, we talked with Jake about an easy way to handle order entry, where we could enter the customer name, granite color, shape/size/finish, and voila’....it prints on yellow legal paper! At that point, Jake cut me off and ran down a tangent about how cool it would be if everyone was walking around with iPads.

The Jetson’s flashed through my mind, and I knew this level of technology would never fly. But Jake understood we needed to break this task down in easy-to-use modules, where my parents could see progress quickly!

You know that warehouse I mentioned earlier? We stored grey dies in this area, and benches over in that corner, and pedestals in this



nook, and fancy black along the North wall, and unusual colors on the South. When John and I gave Jake the nickel tour in the summer of 2011, He walked around sweating with us, nodding his head a lot and asking questions that made us realize he “got it.”

Implementation:

Armed a few weeks later with air conditioning, ice cold water, and some great tunes blaring from speakers, the three of us had a working model. We would work until midnight, knock out a portion of the program, high-five each other, swing by the donut shop, then go home for a few hours of sleep.

At work the next morning, we’d put it through its paces, calling Jake with help on the inevitable glitches. I would start with, “Jake, it’s me again... there are a lot of hash marks showing up around the core hole placement on xyz order.”

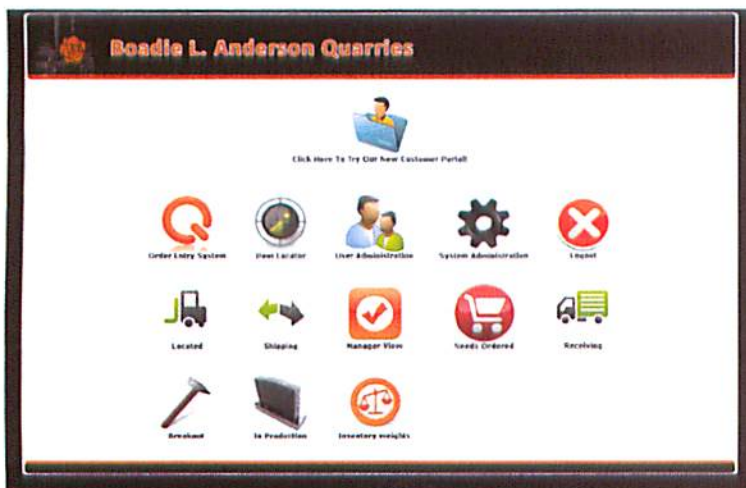
His response was generally the same. “Wait for it...wait for it...Ta da! Now hit refresh ... is that what you had in mind?”

“Yep Jake...perfect.” Early on, Jake had become a true “granite man.”

Impressed with a successful order entry process; our scope quickly expanded to inventory. The first conversation with Jake expanded from inventory discussion to location of inventory, quantity, reorder points, and more.

We then had to prioritize matters and really figure out what was most important, and in what order. We landed on the following categories: inventory, Wi-Fi., iPads, label printing, loading lists, and weight.

Things progressed quickly. A Saturday was spent arming the plant with Wi-Fi. Multiple weekends were spent with two man teams crawling over baking granite, and shouting out numbers like brokers on the floor of the NYSE as we inventoried every piece of granite!





We filled up page after page, book after book, and then entered all these items into "The Q." If you have a new system, you must have a new name and Q seemed a little James Bond-ish. "Do you have that on the Q?" "Yes." Or, "I'm not sure, check the Q for its location."

Next we labeled our storage racks- A, A1, A2, A3, all the way thru BBB2. Pieces were brought in from the "backyard," consolidated on to pallets and placed three pallets to a rack.

One Saturday, after completing re-storage of a wall of granite, John said, "Wow, how much do you think all that weighs?" I thought about guessing, but pulled out my cell and called Jake.

By Monday morning, if our staff tried to put a pallet on the rack, the system would turn red if the total weight exceeded 7,500 pounds. That was still safely shy of our 10,000 pound per rack limit.

The use of iPads quickly followed, much to John's joy, as he was able to fulfill orders on the move. We were highly pleased with this level of technology.

Jake was not; he needed more magic. A few days later Jake showed up with a box of label printers, and quickly had John wirelessly printing labels from his iPad. Loading lists became a piece of cake after some minor adjustments.

To Date:

The warehouse is full, so we built another. Warehouse Number Two is filling up nicely. Customers are able to log in and see the status of their orders, check the weight, and see what is available in our import inventory.

What's Next:

Jake and I are working on adding a pricing module, a special for sale section, a reporting function to track productivity, and reorder points for specific colors and sizes. John and I have started entering our domestic inventory into "The Q."

Epilogue:

A year later, I can tell you the exact number of pieces we have shipped, exactly how many pieces of import granite we have in inventory, and the weight. "Wait for it...a container just arrived...it will soon be in "The Q"! **MB**



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