



Purple Oak Helps GBC Evolve and Grow with Wireless Solutions



GBC Office Products Group is the leading manufacturer and marketer of products to communicate, organize, bind, enhance, protect and present information. The GBC brand dates over 50 years, with the introduction of plastic binding, and later, laminating and now includes GBC, Ibico and Shredmaster products.

For close to a decade, GBC Office Products Group has been putting data collection technology to work for their warehouse management needs. GBC's story is a testimony to the value of selecting true "solution" partners when designing a data collection system that will grow and change with the company's needs over time. GBC found these partners in HHP, the global leader in image-based data collection, and Purple Oak, Inc., specialists in data collection systems integration and a certified HHP solutions partner.

Back in 1993, GBC chose HHP equipment to automate the order fulfillment process for their Quartet® product line. Using the latest technology available at the time, they designed a custom order fulfillment system, which used Laser-Wands from HHP over a UHF wireless network. The system ran in GBC's Booneville, MS warehouse, and connected to their Praxa enterprise software in their Skokie, IL headquarters.

GBC's objective was to eliminate the mistakes being made in order fulfillment by using bar coding to address the various sources of the errors. The new system all but eliminated these mistakes, and GBC recognized many immediate benefits: less time wasted correcting orders; reduced fines levied by customers for incorrect orders; and reduced inventory shrinkage due to over-shipping product.

In 1996, GBC engaged Purple Oak, Inc. to assist in the ongoing development and enhancement of the system. GBC had acquired new companies, as well as new customers. Their business needs were changing rapidly, and they wanted Purple Oak to help them manage their changing system needs. GBC chose Purple Oak because of their expertise in warehouse automation, their experience developing and integrating hand held data collection software with host systems, and their extensive experience with HHP equipment (Purple Oak and its founders have worked with HHP since 1988.)

By 1998, GBC's Quartet® business had grown significantly. Hand held data collection technology was becoming more advanced, and GBC was looking for ways to improve their system to take advantage of the benefits offered by the new technology. Purple Oak recommended that GBC upgrade their system to HHP's Dolphin 7200 RF hand held computers and a wireless ethernet LAN. The new RF technology gave GBC more reliable communications, with no downtime on the wireless backbone. In addition, GBC's warehouse had grown to 250,000 square feet, and the 2.4GHz radio backbone enabled them to extend coverage to all areas of the warehouse. They replaced 90 hand helds, and installed a new RF wireless network, which required new data collection software. The software had to integrate seamlessly with the existing order fulfillment system, with no modifications to the host system. Purple Oak designed and developed new data collection software, installed the wireless network, and updated the interface to the host system. And GBC proceeded to reap the benefits of real-time data collection.

Fast-forward to 2001. Once again, GBC's growth required them to expand and upgrade their system. Their order fulfillment system was no longer meeting their needs, so GBC decided to upgrade to PkMS®, an advanced fulfillment management system from Manhattan Associates. In order to achieve maximum system efficiency, GBC engaged Purple Oak to upgrade their Dolphin 7200 RF hand held computers with terminal emulation software, bringing the power of PkMS directly to the warehouse floor. "By reconfiguring the existing Dolphin 7200 RF units, we preserved GBC's investment in the hand held and RF equipment, and helped them minimize the cost of their new system," said Joe DeCarlo, Purple Oak CEO.

A decade later, in 2003, GBC continues to work with Purple Oak to keep their data collection operations up to date. GBC has a stated commitment to maintain a standard of excellence for their business operations, and they know from experience what it takes to be an industry leader. They chose data collection experts HHP and Purple Oak to make sure their technology investment would stand the test of time.

Purple Oak, Inc. designs bar code and RF solutions for data collection problems in manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, and corporate business operations nationwide. Purple Oak customers range from Fortune 500 companies to small businesses desiring to improve the efficiency and accuracy of their data collection operations in all applications. Founded in 1996, Purple Oak is a privately held company headquartered in Morton Grove, IL. For more information, contact Purple Oak at 847-965-8771 or visit www.purpleoak.com.