



PAINTBALL GAMES CHAIN FINDS ONEIR FEATURES AN IDEAL SOLUTION

Oneir Solutions' financial control and inventory management provide growth to the Official Paintball Games of Texas Inc.
by Andy Shaw

At the six-acre outdoor paintball park in Forney, Texas operated by Official Paintball Games of Texas, for example, there are three levels of paintball systems in the inventory that paintball players can rent: bronze, silver, and gold, depending on how sophisticated they want their gas-fired paintball weaponry to be. Then there are the 100, 200, and 500 lots of paintball "bullets" that players fire at their opponents and that must be restocked. And will that be CO2 (carbon dioxide) or the zippier NO2 (nitrous oxide) to power your weapons?

Then there are the jumpsuits, jerseys, masks, and camouflage tops - all in different colors and sizes - that paintball players usually don before going into action. All this and more to be bought and accounted for whenever patrons of Official Paintball go to "war" with each other in Forney.

"Even on a slow day we'll have 150 people go through the park and for some of the special events we stage we can have as many as 500," says Official Paintball's owner-operator

Richard Vasquez.

In addition, there's all the business going on at Official Paintball's retail locations in the nearby towns of Garland, Frisco, and Plano to be monitored.

"All in all, we have about 2,200 SKUs (stock keeping units) we have to track" says Vasquez. That's all now but Vasquez's passion for paintball began much before. He started playing the sport as a youngster and a family entrepreneurial trait soon took over his interests. By the time he was in his early twenties, he had partnered up with relatives, bought the paintball park they played in, and was running the business.

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But even as a fledgling businessman, Vasquez knew he needed better financial control, especially as the popularity of paintball and consequently his company grew.

"Particularly after we opened our retail locations, it was hard to be completely aware of what was going on. Our stores are all about 20 miles apart and, of course, I couldn't be in more than one place at a time," says Vasquez. "Also, each of our locations is a separate division of the company, so we have to bill them for every shipment. There's a lot to keep track of as a result."

Enter Bill Green and Oneir Solutions.

Green and his wife, small business owners themselves, operate Management Systems & Forms, a value-added reseller and systems integrator. They specialize in Point of Sale POS Software technology for the traditionally under-served market of smaller enterprises that must manage and track the finances of three to four remote locations.

When asked for a solution by Vasquez, Green knew the answer: a Linux-based Point of Sale POS and Inventory Management System from Oneir Solutions. The new Linux-based packages offer a wide range of business modules and features ideal for Green's market and Official Paintball. These encompass Multi-Channel Selling including Point of Sale POS for over-the-counter sales, Sales

Order and Invoicing for telephone, wholesale and e-Commerce sales, Repeat Billing Software for contract and membership sales. Inventory Management, Purchase Order Software for Materials Requirements Planning, Customer Relationship Planning, and Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable and General Ledger for Financial Control round out Oneir's basic product offerings. Other optional products include Bill of Materials Software for Process Manufacturing and Canadian Payroll Software. For those wishing to get more virtual with their selling, Oneir has developed an e-Commerce Interface for their web sales. The Oneir EDI Interface automates selling and data updating with the larger enterprise customers.

"The thing that struck me most about Oneir Solutions when I first encountered their software at one of the company's seminars," says Green, "is that it is not just a database. It is one of the few with an attached General Ledger and financial controls. So you don't have to manually port your sales figures into your accounting system. And even if you have a separate bookkeeping system, Oneir Solutions makes that transfer easy."

"But functionality aside, I also realized that competitive systems could cost my clients double the set-up costs. That meant for Official Paintball they could come in under budget with a new system and still get all the features they wanted."

The feature Vasquez wanted most, of course, was the multi-site capability that sets the Linux version apart. So he be-

came an early and happy adopter.

Now, most of the financial work at Official Paintball is being done on a customized Linux server housed in the Garland main store. So there is no need for heavy-duty computer equipment at any of the other locations. Essentially, what the POS terminals at each location do mostly is to record sales and track inventory. Yet the beauty of the Linux-based system is that sales to their vaunted paintball warrior clan clients can keep on being recorded at any Official Paintball location - even if the connection to the central server is broken.

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"Companies are spending a lot of money these days on special lines for their VPNs (virtual private networks) because that's what they think they need to transfer data between locations," says Green. "But they really don't. Official Paintball is just using a standard, low-cost DSL line to support its Oneir Solutions."

For other Linux-based users, Oneir Solutions is even working in a dial-up environment - still supplying real time financial information whenever the connection between sites is made.

In real time, Linux-based Oneir

Solutions can:

- Display sales, rentals and layaways all on one screen
- Scan barcodes
- Update inventory, receivables and the General Ledger with each sale
- Show complete customer and sales histories
- Check credit limits on-screen
- Report outstanding rentals
- Tabulate sales for each location and each sales person

Among the most useful tools they use, he adds, is the system's ability to track layaways and its Size and Color Matrix that keeps Official Paintball on top of its highly varied and quickly changing inventory.

Concludes Green, there's no better package on the market for multiple site store owners than Oneir Solutions' Linux-based version: "Without spending a ton of money, they can get low implementation costs, excellent communication site-to-site, ease of use, and good functionality."

Even, as Vasquez and Official Paintball have discovered, in a war zone.

Andy Shaw is a freelance writer, broadcaster and international journalist with articles in many business and technical publications.