



# ONEIR SOLUTIONS HELPS CHAIN OF WEIGHT LOSS CENTERS FIND FINANCIAL FITNESS

*Real-time reporting enabled by a unique Linux software/server accounting package keeps Quick Weight Loss Centers' owner on top of remote sales and inventory by Andy Shaw*

Ask anyone who has tried to lose weight systematically and they'll tell you there's an awful lot of detail to keep track of. If you're a company that helps clients lose that weight, there's a ton more.

Quick Weight Loss Centers based in Houston, Texas helps clients age 10 and up with individual counselling, behavioral education, supervision of a well-balanced food program, and the right mix of weight-loss aids during their 52-week programs for folks that are over their ideal weight. The Centers' nutritional plans provide 1,000 to 1,500 calories daily and contain carefully selected foods that are low in carbohydrates, fats and sodium. The Center determines caloric restrictions for clients based on their desired target weight, health profile and age.

Depending on the individual's needs, Quick Weight Loss Centers can also supply a wide range of weight loss aids including specially formulated appetite suppressants, vitamins, herbs, essential fatty acids, carbohydrate blockers - and about 60 different dietary supplements that run the gamut from protein bars and shakes to pretzels and salad dressings.

All this, Quick Weight Loss Centers

must carefully account for - in a business that's expanded to include a dozen Houston area outlets. Partly through judicious use of radio and TV advertising and very much through a growing legion of slimmer, happier clients, Quick Weight Loss Centers has become a well-known, weight-loss industry leader in Houston. But its very success had the business groaning at the seams, much like its prospective clients.

*"It (Oneir Solutions) gives growth-minded owners more comfort about undertaking risks."*

"The old pencil-to-paper method of record keeping could no longer accommodate our overwhelming growth in traffic and sales," says Quick Weight Loss Centers' owner and area director, Dorina Tisbury. "So what we wanted to do was standardize our processes and reduce the amount of paperwork we generated while efficiently keeping track of our Inventory, sales, Purchase Orders and our Payroll. With over 100 employees in sales positions in our 12 remote stores, we especially needed to identify the causes of the frequent inventory inaccuracies we were experiencing and then implement new procedures that would keep us in better control."

So they asked computer systems consultants from Corvuus Inc. and its president, Kevin M. Cook, for help.

The solution Corvuus supplied came from financial systems supplier Oneir Solutions Inc., which had come to Kevin's attention, as so many of the best ones do, by referral from a colleague, this one in Los Angeles.

"I found out from talking to them that because Oneir Solutions was Linux-based it could do real time reporting and that's exactly what Quick Weight Loss Centers needed," says Kevin. "Real time reporting eliminates the need for upper management to constantly have to call their remote locations for sales status reports. Also, I soon discovered that the Inventory Control and Purchase Order aspects of Oneir Solutions meant my clients could stay on top of what was happening with their stock."

So Kevin made a call to the Oneir Solutions offices in Toronto and, in short order, the Oneir Solutions team trained Kevin on their products. Then following joint consultation with his client, they all concluded that with so many products and so many customer choices - Would you like that supplement in peach or vanilla flavor? - Oneir Solutions would be superb at helping Dorina track who bought how much of what, where and when.

"We set things up for them so that with one key stroke they can see

what a customer's options are for any product," explains Jon Mainwaring, Oneir Solutions' Executive Vice President. "So that does two things quickly: it ensures that the client gets the right package of products and it keeps the company right on top of its inventory levels."

With Oneir Solutions' recommendations and Kevin Cook's guidance, Quick Weight Loss Centers chose an integrated blend of Oneir Solutions' modules - all running on a durable Linux-based server provided by Corvuss Inc. The product selection included Point of Sale POS Software for over-the-counter sales, Purchase Order Software and Inventory Management System for material requirements planning, customer relationship management, and Accounts Receivable Software, Accounts Payable Software and General Ledger Software for financial control. Then, to improve customer payment accuracy and speed charge card processing, Kevin integrated RiTA (Rapid internet Transaction Authority) from Go Software with the Point of Sale POS Software.

In addition, Kevin, an engineer by training, created complementary software that takes advantage of Oneir Solutions' flexible, open architecture and charts each client's weight loss. Kevin designed the Corvuss 'Weight Loss Charting' program so that counsellors can track their clients' progress during their two to three visits each week. He set up specialized reports within the software that turn raw data into plots and graphs of the telling measurements including clients' blood pressure, girth and, of course, their weight. The records the Corvuss Weight Loss Charting program keeps enable each Center to hand out awards to their top performers.

Similarly, Oneir enables the company's senior management to

monitor the performance of each of its Weight Loss Centers. "We no longer have to wait until the end of the week or the end of the month to see how we have done. We can pull sales and inventory reports up at anytime and see how we are doing at that moment," says Dorina. "In effect, we are able to audit ourselves on a daily basis. So if there are any money shortages, we can catch them right away. Or, for example, if one of our staff has made a mistake on, let's say, a credit card payment, we can go into the system right away and fix it."

"Spotting such mistakes early," adds Natalie Cook, Quick Weight Loss Administrative Assistant, "Not only makes for better control of the business, but it can also point out where staff may need further training. Therefore it gives growth-minded owners more comfort about undertaking risks."

*"Oneir's flexibility is also allowing us to integrate a charting function that tracks each client's state of health."*

"Oneir Solutions saves us a lot of money on paperwork, so we know that any new office we might open is going to cost us less to run than it would have in the past," says Dorina. "Also, you can set up your Oneir Solutions at another location almost instantly. And your new staff, instead of spending hours at the end of the day doing close outs, can, with a little training, have them done within minutes."

If there is one challenge in adopting Oneir Solutions, or indeed any new system that allows you to automate what had to be done by

hand before, it is not so much technical in nature as it is human. "It is hard to break the habit of doing things the old way," admits Dorina. "So you do have to establish some new procedures."

"But once you're over that hurdle, the rest is easy and beneficial to all," adds Natalie. "We spend a lot less time doing things like balancing inventory sheets and managing sales pegboards these days. So now we can focus on our client's needs."

"Costs to bring all this about have been modest," says Dorina. "It was an all-inclusive project for all locations. When added up, including what we spent on new computers, spare hardware, Oneir Solutions, custom programming, installation and support, we did it for much less than we expected."

The system has subsequently proven to be not only very cost-effective for his client but also extremely reliable, reports Kevin. "We've had hardly any hang-ups. And it is very seldom that I have to do any maintenance, even in this area where we frequently have thunderstorms and other adverse climatic conditions that can cut power. Oneir has a built-in automatic fallback that preserves the data and allows the centers to keep operating. Oneir's flexibility is also allowing us to integrate a charting function that tracks each client's state of health. In short, Oneir Solutions and our own complementary package have enabled me to automate and integrate most of my client's business."

And consequently for Quick Weight Loss Centers' own happy clients, their weight loss is now that much more automatic too.

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