

The Right Direction

The Right Summary

Client:

Southern Awning & Construction

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Solution:

SouthWare Excellence Series



Southern Awning & Construction

"They've Gotcha Covered"



What do you do when you want to start your own business? You might do what Melton Knight did in 1984—borrow \$1800 from the bank, get in your 1965 Ford pickup truck, borrow a ladder rack, and hit the road. As most entrepreneurial business owners will tell you, they did whatever it took to get their business going. For Mr. Knight, owner of Southern Awning and Construction Company, it took keeping a change of clothes in the truck so he could call on potential customers and give quotes, then change into his work clothes and install jobs. Southern Awning was built by "word of mouth" and quality of work. A little shop behind the house for two years has grown into two large buildings they constructed with multiple additions to both.

Southern Awning specializes in custom built patio covers and carport covers. They also sell and install the Generations Thermal Core Vinyl Siding which offers their clients 20% or more in energy cost savings during a year. Glass room and screen room additions to homes using a maintenance free all-aluminum construction is another area in which Southern Awning excels. Partner all of the above with the vinyl siding products as well as the gutter sales and installation and custom windows, and you have a winning formula for success.





Another secret to starting your own business is help and support from family. Brenda Knight, Melton's wife, jumped in as the bookkeeper and manages the inventory. She first accomplished this with Lotus spreadsheets and then moved to QuickBooks. Brenda soon discovered that this package allowed for no checks and balances in the accounting portion of the business and no trails for tracking entries. This could lead to changes and deletions which she realized was not a smart way to run a business.

In 2001, a straight-line wind storm hit Columbus and surrounding areas. Although this presented an opportunity for a tremendous increase in business, there was no way with their current software to manage the orders or the inventory for this kind of volume. That is when Brenda began to look for different software. She decided on the SouthWare Excellence Series and BTM Solutions and has never looked back.

"It is so user friendly," says Brenda, "I don't know how anybody could not like it."

When asked about the major advantages this software had given their business, Brenda noted three areas:

1. **Inventory Control**—previously they had no way to designate orders for a particular job. With the inventory portion of the software, they are able to assign inventory to a specific job and track orders for multiple jobs. This has led to shorter lead times and therefore better customer service.
2. **General Ledger capabilities**—Brenda did not order the General Ledger module initially but soon realized that this was a mistake. She now has the General Ledger set up in such a way that she can use it for anything from history on a certain category to a cross reference with Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable. This not only saves research time for her but renders up-to-the-minute, accurate information.
3. **Reporting**—Brenda has "little reports" as she calls them set up to help her with all types of information and reminders. For example, a series of reports is set up to print automatically at the beginning of the month with information for everything from automatic A/P payments to inventory level reports to 401K information.

Brenda has also used the Extended Data module of the software to set up fields which give her information every three days such as which bills are paid online, when they were last paid, amounts paid and amounts due. They have also implemented new company procedures which have improved the ability to track inventory, orders, and billing using their software. One example of these procedures is mandatory picking slips for the shop. This way they insure that all product sold is billed correctly and in a timely manner.

"BTM has done tremendously well with customer service," remarks Brenda. "They have learned the little things that we need and make sure that they happen. I've enjoyed working with BTM over the years and would definitely recommend BTM Solutions and SouthWare to anyone."



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