



## Microsoft Business Solutions Retail Management System Customer Solution Case Study

**Tinder Box**<sup>®</sup>  
Since 1928

## Cigar Shop Owner Draws Deep Benefits from Retail System, and Smokes the Competition

### Overview

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** Retail

### Customer Profile

Tinder Box at Easton, located in Columbus, Ohio, is a franchise of Tinder Box International, offering premium cigars, pipe tobacco, accessories, and gifts from its shelves and humidor.

### Business Situation

Owner Stacia Joyce was dividing long hours between her investment banking career and the recurring problems of a slow and unreliable retail system in her store.

### Solution

Microsoft® Business Solutions Retail Management System offers dependability, accurate and instant reports, exact stock counts, and prompt, effective support and upgrades.

### Benefits

- Owner can manage business but spend little time in store
- Instant reports show hot-selling items, revenues, and stock levels
- Fast customer service at point of sale (POS)
- Prompt troubleshooting in minutes
- Fast capture of age-compliance data

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Stacia Joyce, Owner, Tinder Box at Easton

For four years, Stacia Joyce, owner of Tinder Box at Easton, constantly battled an aging system that crashed often and delivered inaccurate information. When both hardware and software became thoroughly unusable, she was forced to upgrade.

“As an investment banker,” she says, “I’m constantly on the go and can’t spend a lot of time at our store. I needed a system that would reliably and quickly provide me the management data I need.”

Microsoft® Business Solutions Retail Management System was the only solution she inspected. “Our due diligence,” she says, “was in the Microsoft name and reputation. My business experience demonstrated that Microsoft will develop and support a quality product.”

Joyce is happy with her decision. “We went from Stone Age to Information Age overnight.”

“... [T]he transition was smoother than I could have imagined. We went from Stone Age to Information Age overnight!”

Stacia Joyce, Owner, Tinder Box at Easton

## Situation

Stacia Joyce knew that running a cigar shop would not be easy. With a demanding day job, she needed all the help she could get. Stacia trusted her brother Brian Joyce with the crucial job of store manager, but an aging hardware–software combination dragged out his work days and gave foggy results.

Since 1928, Tinder Box International has been the only national franchise for premium cigars, pipes, and gifts in North America. Member stores seek high-end locations and discriminating clientele. The Tinder Box at Easton hosts receptions, cigar tastings, pipe shows, and seminars such as a smoke-out with the head of the Perdomo family cigar business; a retro 1970s night including a disc jockey for Acid Cigars; and an evening of Brazilian Caravelas, only available in about a dozen retailers in the United States.

“Because we keep long hours,” Brian says, “the [Microsoft®] MS-DOS®-based software, on old computers, in a smoky environment, was really frustrating. It would crash at the worst possible times. When it worked, it ran slowly and couldn’t deliver the knowledge we needed.” When the system vendor went out of business, the Joyces had no choice but to upgrade their point-of-sale (POS) system. “The question was,” says Stacia, “to what?”

“We have 2,643 SKUs in our inventory,” says Stacia, “but we also needed to account for special events and services—not so easy without a bar code.”

On top of that, she needed a customer tracking system that could reward customer loyalty, help her get the word out about special events, and spot fast- and slow-moving inventory. “I was also very concerned about ease of use and conversion difficulties,” she says, “I’m way too busy to get caught up in training or troubleshooting.”

The final criterion was perhaps the most important. “Was it going to help our customers?” Stacia asks. “When lines back up or we don’t have what they’re looking for—or what they liked last time—we can lose loyal customers.”

## Solution

The first thing Stacia did was to contact Steve Weber of GNS Partners in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, a Microsoft partner that focuses on helping small to medium-sized businesses drive profitable growth.

“Microsoft [Business Solutions] Retail Management [System] was the only solution I tried,” she says. “I urgently needed a system, and this product was clear, complete, and easy to use in all its functions. I rarely make rush decisions, but seeing the system and knowing the Microsoft name made it a slam dunk. GNS showed me expertise that eased my mind. With Microsoft, you get a world-class developer. Then you get nearby support from a reseller who knows your business and the product you’re buying. I know I made the smartest possible choice in a field where I’m not expert.”

## Easy System Conversion

Stacia and Brian are happy with the results. “This was a good idea from the get-go,” Brian says. “Installation was a piece of cake, and GNS did a fantastic job of customization and follow-up. If your staff has used Microsoft Windows® [operating system], this is easy to learn and operate.”

Installation went smoothly. “GNS extracted all the data needed from our old system,” Stacia says, “so the transition was smoother than I could have imagined. We went from Stone Age to Information Age overnight!”

## A Selection of Needed Functions

“The biggest difference is in reporting power,” she says. “I have thorough inventory

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management, better tracking tools, and more business-useful reports. As someone who can only spend two or three days a month in the store, I rely on my manager and Microsoft Retail Management [System] to concentrate and organize my data to guide mutual decisions.”

Another vital management tool is the end-of-month sales report to Tinder Box corporate offices. “That used to be very painful,” she says. “Now it’s literally done in a few minutes.”

#### **Customer Service Improvement**

The most important area to show immediate improvement, however, was customer service. “We had several long-standing problems,” Stacia says. “Transactions took longer, credit cards ran very slowly, and to void a transaction you had to go through a laborious six-step process. Even changing a transaction midstream was tricky.”

Now POS is seldom a worry. “The credit card system is so much faster, it makes me wonder how we managed before,” she says. “And we use the QuickCapture feature that GNS developed.”

To safeguard tobacco and alcohol retailers with an audit trail, GNS QuickCapture integrates into Ohio’s age-vigilance system. It can also discreetly gather data to match customers with their buying preferences.

#### **Benefits**

“Thanks to the easy reporting functions in Microsoft Retail Management [System], I’ve got back more time for my busy days,” says Stacia. “There are more ways to sort data, more ways to extract it, and more ways to make it useful. No matter what retail business you’re in, this solution should bend to work well for you.”

One area both Joyces point to is inventory control. According to Brian, “We used to take way too long counting and entering inventory. Now that’s faster and, with the tight counts I get, I know what I have on hand, what sells, and what I need to put on clearance. And I don’t worry as much about shrinkage.”

“Customer information is a huge benefit,” Stacia says. “We track customers’ histories and preferences, establish a database, and get out the word about special events such as scotch tastings and pipe shows. We can even mark people as preferred customers and give them discounts.”

As an absentee business owner, even an investment banker can find business waters dangerous and choppy without accurate and timely information.

“Speaking as an owner who doesn’t spend a lot of time at the store, having Microsoft Retail Management [System] is almost like being there! My advice to retailers who can’t be on site during a POS upgrade,” says Stacia, “is to know your store and your staff so you can predict and avoid problems. Expect some initial resistance to change, but a good reseller and good procedures will smooth your transition. The end result for managers and owners is so much more management information and knowledge of what is going on in every nook and cranny of your store. You get what you need to make correct long-distance decisions.

“GNS has always been absolutely wonderful in their support. They are prompt and their fixes aren’t guesswork; they’re right on the money. I feel lucky to have found them.

“Finally, we have good data. Brian has what he needs in the store and I have what I need as owner. Managing a store from an office across town and a cell phone is no longer a pipe dream. It’s real and we’re doing it.”

## For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)

For more information about GNS Partners products and services, call (614) 501-3775 or visit the Web site at: [www.gnspartners.com/getrms](http://www.gnspartners.com/getrms)

For more information about Tinder Box at Easton products and services, call (614) 475-7872 or visit the Web site at: [www.tinderbox.com/store\\_pages/p1003.htm](http://www.tinderbox.com/store_pages/p1003.htm)

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Document published December 2004

## Microsoft Business Solutions Retail Management System

Microsoft Business Solutions Retail Management System offers a complete store automation solution for small and medium-sized retailers, streamlining point-of-sale (POS), customer service, and store inventory management, and providing real-time access to key business metrics. Microsoft Retail Management System is a comprehensive solution for single-store and multi-store retailers that empowers independent proprietors, store managers, and cashiers through affordable and easy-to-use automation. Microsoft Retail Management System has the flexibility and scalability to grow with a retailer's business. It works with the Microsoft Office System, Microsoft Windows Small Business Server, and leading financial applications to provide end-to-end support from the cash register to the back office.

For more information about Microsoft Retail Management System, go to: [www.microsoft.com/pos](http://www.microsoft.com/pos)

### Software and Services

- Products
  - Microsoft Windows XP Professional
  - Microsoft Office 2003 Professional
- Solutions
  - Microsoft Business Solutions Retail Management System

### Third Party Software

- GNS QuickCapture

### Hardware

- Stand-alone generic PC
- Back-office notebook

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