

GLOBAL SHOP SOLUTIONS CASE STUDY

House of Doolittle®

Based in Elk Grove Village, Illinois, just outside of Chicago, *House of Doolittle®* makes more than 200 paper-based office, school, and personal productivity products, such as desk pads, appointment planners, wall calendars and memo pads. All are printed using 100% recycled paper with 100% post-consumer fiber and all use environmentally friendly soy ink. A Global Shop Solutions customer since 1989, House of Doolittle also donates five percent of its profits to organizations that work to create a more sustainable environment.



House of Doolittle palletizes thousands of products for shipment every day.



Scanning the barcoded packaging labels facilitates fast, efficient shipping.

House of Doolittle Goes Lean and Green

For some companies, “going green” is merely a slogan. At House of Doolittle, it’s a way of life.

But as many companies are learning, going green only works if you can do it while offering quality products at competitive prices. And that’s where Global Shop Solutions ERP software comes into the picture.

House of Doolittle ships thousands of custom-printed and stock products every day, with individual customers frequently receiving hundreds of boxes on one order. Packing, labeling and shipping such large, complex orders in an efficient and error-free manner is just one way that Global Shop Solutions ERP software contributes to House of Doolittle’s lean operations.

According to Ann Suplee, Systems Manager, the Shipment Validation screen has transformed shipping from a slow, mistake-prone, manual chore into a highly efficient, wireless process that rarely misses a beat. In particular, the color-coded tracking feature makes it easy ensure accuracy of even the largest orders. As workers scan the **barcoded labels** on the boxes, the color of the line item on the screen changes to blue. If a line remains red, it indicates that one or more items are missing from the order. Additionally, the system emits a warning beep if incorrect items are scanned into the order. When all line items on the sales order turn blue, the order is ready to be shipped.

“Prior to Global Shop Solutions, we did a lot of duplicate data entry and manual cross-checking of paper work orders, bills of lading and packing slips,” says Suplee. “Needless to say, it was slow, inefficient and rife with errors. With Shipment Validation, which Global Shop Solutions helped us put together with their **Global Application Builder** (GAB), everything is automatic.”

“Workers scan the barcodes on each item, and the system automatically determines whether the order is complete or missing any items,” continues Suplee. “It then prints a customer-specific shipping label with one click of a button. And each packing slip is barcoded with the order number and suffix for easy scanning into UPS WorldShip or FedEx Ship Manager. There’s no manual cross-checking or multiple data entry to inject error into the system, and everything flows through one simple screen.”

GAB Eliminates Clunky Databases

When Suplee joined the company a few years ago, House of Doolittle managed a variety of critical information through four separate Microsoft Access™ databases. The databases linked to Global Shop Solutions ERP software through a third-party software, and were slow, clumsy and inefficient. Every time Microsoft updated Access, it required expensive and time-consuming changes on Suplee's end. At [Suplee's request](#), Global Shop Solutions used their proprietary Global Application Builder (GAB) to build four separate screens that eliminated the need for the databases and significantly improved several important processes.

First, Global Shop Solutions built a screen that enabled the creation of barcodes for [product labels](#), a critical process that sometimes worked in Access and sometimes didn't. Although designed primarily for shipping, the barcode numbers can also be used to create reports and labels for House of Doolittle's retail products.

Next, Global Shop Solutions created a GAB screen to track and manage the value of product samples and overproduction pieces.

"Sometimes we have extra pieces and over-production with our custom products," says Suplee. "We put them in our 'sample' location in inventory, but we don't want the cost to show there because they're considered samples. The GAB screen allows us to show the amount transferred each month separate from our listing of inventory dollars."

The third database "makeover" involved creating a pre-invoice screen that manages key data in several important ways. For example, one task it performs is to look at each sales order, find the item number for each product on the sales order, and put the correct barcode in one of the information fields. It also automatically updates several information tables when changes to the data occur.

Finally, Global Shop Solutions created a GAB screen to track shipping charges by sales order. When House of Doolittle customers exceed a specific dollar amount on a sales order, they earn free shipping. The GAB screen tracks each sales order and automatically adjusts the shipping charges when customers surpass the specified amount.

"I got tired of struggling with Access," recalls Suplee.

"I told the folks at Global Shop Solutions what it was supposed to be doing for me and they created new screens in GAB that actually do what we need the system to do. Rather than being clunky add-ons, these screens integrate with the Global Shop Solutions system, so the transfer of data is flawless. Plus, we no longer have to worry about changing our system in response to Access updates. To me, GAB is one of the most important tools in the entire Global Shop Solutions system."

Efficient Information Flow Leads to Cost Savings

When you have customers as big as Staples, United Stationers, Amazon, and S. P. Richards, integrating systems becomes an important way of improving shop floor efficiency, and thus reducing costs. The [EDI](#) module, which facilitates the automatic processing of frequently used transactions, makes it possible to manage huge customer transactions in a timely and efficient manner.

"EDI automatically makes the orders in Global Shop Solutions, which is a real timesaver on these huge orders," explains Suplee. "Plus, once we ship the order, EDI automatically makes the advanced shipping notices and creates data for the invoices. EDI serves as both an efficiency tool and a data management control function for us."



A production worker uses Document Control™ to check a custom order.

House of Doolittle also makes extensive use of Crystal Reports, a reporting function found within the Global Shop Solutions **Business Intelligence** module that – like GAB – allows a high degree of customization within the system. In addition to containing numerous built-in reports, Crystal Reports also enables Suplee to quickly and easily create custom reports that help her track and manage data in a way that fits House of Doolittle’s complex shop floor processes.

“We often get customers who request specific information regarding their orders,” she explains. “Crystal Reports allows me to make a report that addresses their questions and is clean, neat, and easy to read. We can even dump the same data into Excel™ so that customers can massage the data as they see fit.”

“We also funnel all of our sales reports through Crystal Reports,” adds Suplee. “One of the standard canned reports I’ve turned on in Global Shop Solutions is used by our sales personnel to distribute to our reps around the country. With it, we can dump in the sales order data, take off the cost field, and show them exactly what they’re selling for a particular period of time.”



A production worker prepares calendars for customers.

calendars. The ability to forecast what those customers will be buying enables shop floor personnel to anticipate production and schedule their jobs accordingly.

Shop floor personnel also point to **Document Control**, which links a variety of documents to specific work orders, as an important time-saving feature. Document Control provides instant access to artwork, designs, packaging specifications, and other information production people need to ensure that the product and packaging meet customer specifications.

In addition to using the GAB tool, Suplee also makes frequent use of the online GAB Forum, a place where Global Shop Solutions customers can exchange ideas about how they’re using GAB to customize the software in their companies. Suplee likes to refer to the GAB Forum as Global Shop Solutions’ “app store.”

“The GAB Forum lets you check out custom screens that other customers have come up with and integrate them into your own system,” she explains. “We recently downloaded two of them. One is a customer service screen that eliminates potential shipping conflicts. When we enter a ship date for a customer, the screen automatically warns us if the date falls on a holiday or a weekend so that we can reschedule to a different date.”

“The other screen enables automatic emailing of invoices to eliminate stamps, mailing, and paper,” adds Suplee. “We’re always striving to eliminate unnecessary paper. By transmitting all invoices electronically, it saves us time in our financial area and quite a bit on postage.”

From shipping and invoicing to **financial management**, Global Shop Solutions ERP software delivers a completely integrated order management system that keeps everything lean, efficient, transparent, and under control – a process that fits very well with House of Doolittle’s green approach to business.

GAB Forum Like An “App” Store

Suplee does not stand alone in her praise of Global Shop Solutions ERP software.

Employees throughout the company credit Global Shop Solutions’ highly efficient **Advanced Planning & Scheduling (APS)** application with making their jobs easier and less stressful. With many custom orders interspersed with regular product orders, raw materials and information need to flow smoothly in order to meet customer deadlines. According to Suplee, APS handles such challenges with ease.

One especially useful APS feature is the ability to forecast orders. Many House of Doolittle customers buy large quantities of stock products, such as printed