



Gas and Convenience Store Tracks Fuel and Merchandise

Sigma Oil Series2k and QuickBooks pump up revenue at Cedar River Plaza by adding valuable business intelligence.

AT A GLANCE:

- ▶ **COMPANY:** Cedar River Plaza
- ▶ **LOCATION:** Cedar River, MI
- ▶ **INDUSTRY:** Retail
Gas and Convenience Store
- ▶ **BUSINESS CHALLENGE:**
Tracking fuel prices and recording merchandise sold proved to be challenging and time consuming. Cedar River Plaza needed an integrated inventory and accounting solution that would drastically reduce data entry time and better understand overall business activity.
- ▶ **SOLUTION:**
QuickBooks: Pro 2005 and Sigma Oil Series2k
- ▶ **BUSINESS BENEFITS:**
Together Sigma Oil's Series2k and QuickBooks allow Cedar River Plaza to:
 - Reduce data entry time from three hours per day to less than 10 minutes
 - Quickly identify best pricing structures based on wholesale costs and margins
 - Wrap up end-of-year taxes
 - Track daily sales and stock volume
 - Manage inventory more effectively using a state-of-the-art price book
 - Control fuel inventory while complying with local and Federal regulations
 - Identify critical inventory shrinkage



"I have a much better feel for what my margins are today. I know if I'm making money or losing money, and I can look at a department and identify overall volume and margins on each item I sell."

Keith Jacobsen
Owner, Cedar River Plaza



Business Challenge

Keith Jacobsen admits that when he first bought the Cedar River Plaza convenience store he didn't have the foggiest idea what he was doing. "Buying and selling goods seemed easy enough, but all the rules around selling fuel was a mystery," says the gas and convenience store owner.

Before diving into his new business venture, Jacobsen researched applications that would help him manage his highly competitive business. Selling gas was more complicated than Jacobsen expected. He had to follow certain industry rules and regulations, plus track variable prices and distributors.

He quickly decided on QuickBooks Pro as his accounting solution because he was familiar with Intuit products and liked their ease of use. Finding an application that helped him track gas and diesel fuel was trickier. He met with software developers who were willing to customize an application for his business. While what they promised sounded appealing, the cost—from \$30,000 to \$50,000—was too expensive for his budget, and their plans did not allow him to capture data from QuickBooks.

Jacobsen needed a solution, fast. He wanted an easy method to break out the costs for the multiple grades of fuel and to track the separate federal and state taxes. With an average of 300 visitors per day, he needed a solution that would free him from entering data and put him back out in front of his customers.

"I spent about three hours every day manually entering numbers from the cash register tape into QuickBooks. Moreover, it was taking me away from doing the things I like," he says. "In a retail business, the last thing you want to do is data entry—there's no benefit in plugging in numbers."

Solution Overview

Just as Jacobsen was reaching the breaking point, he found Series2k from Sigma Oil. "It sounded too good to be true," he recalls. Based on Sigma Oil's recommendation, Jacobsen connected his store's back-office PC to his point-of-sale system. Next, Sigma Oil installed Series2k, which takes information from the cash register and shares it with QuickBooks. Sigma Oil handled the installation and training remotely, saving Keith time and money.



Business Benefits

Within four days, which included the time needed to set up Cedar River Plaza as a new company in QuickBooks, Jacobsen began seeing immediate results. "I can enter all the data in about nine minutes," he says. "And the information I get back is 10-times better. I have detailed information about my business in minutes."

With Sigma2k, Jacobsen can track granular information about the store's inventory. He knows how many cans of diet cola he sells each month, whereas before he only knew the number of sodas sold. He can also discern how much profit he makes from a specific potato chip brand or an automotive accessory.

"I can decide if an automotive accessory is a good use of my shelf space by looking at what I've sold and how much money I've made. I can make smart business decisions based on the data I see in QuickBooks and Series2k," he says.

Jacobsen relies on these numbers to make merchandise and stock decisions. Sigma2k and QuickBooks also help him determine retail pricing. When suppliers send him an electronic invoice, Jacobsen enters the information into Sigma2k. If his cost for purchasing a chocolate bar goes up, for example, he can run reports that show the adjusted margin based on the new suggested retail price or the current price.

"I have a much better feel for what my margins are today," says Jacobsen. "I know if I'm making money or losing money, and I can look at a department and identify overall volume and margins on each item I sell in seconds."

After years of working with Series2k and the team at Sigma Oil, Jacobsen is pleased with the progress he's made at Cedar River Plaza. The business is running so smoothly that he has time to pursue other business interests. He attributes much of the store's success to Series2k.

"I've never had an application that is so ideally suited to a task," says Jacobsen. "It's rock solid, reliable, and more than worth the price because of the time it saves me."

"I can make smart business decisions based on the data I see in QuickBooks and Series2k."

Keith Jacobsen
Owner, Cedar River Plaza

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

QuickBooks

www.QuickBooks.com

Sigma Oil

www.series2k.com

Intuit Developer Network

Developer.intuit.com

Intuit Solutions Marketplace

Marketplace.intuit.com

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