

VOGO Cabinets Streamlines Operations with Crows Nest

Versatile software addresses multiple needs for Denver-based custom cabinet manufacturer.

Jackie Brown joined VOGO Cabinets 18 months ago as director of operations after previously helping manage a \$1 billion outdoor footwear company. Her quest to take the Denver-based custom manufacturer to the next level of profitability included finding a software package that could address VOGO's CRM and production systems.

"We needed a CRM system in addition to a system that could provide project information, production scheduling, quoting capabilities, invoicing, and visibility to the shop," Brown says.

After sitting through several dead-end software demonstrations, Brown began to think that VOGO would probably have to invest in separate project management and ERP software packages. Then, eureka!, she saw an ad for Crows Nest software in an industry trade magazine.

"We were immediately attracted to Crows Nest because it was designed specifically for custom millwork shops," Brown says. "After the first presentation, we knew this was the right software for us because it covered so many areas of our business in one package."

VOGO implemented Crows Nest in March 2020 to use across all phases of its operations from order entry, supply procurement and inventory to project management, billing and payroll. While Brown is the most versed on the software, all 21 of VOGO's employees have been trained to use it according to their job functions.

"We're only a six-year-old company," Brown adds. "Before Crows Nest, we used Google spreadsheets. That's great when you are in your infancy but as you grow it's not efficient."

"One really good thing about VOGO's owners is they see the big picture in things," Brown adds. "They are willing to invest for the long haul. We're also lucky that every employee could see that while there was going to be a learning curve, it was going to make us way more efficient and way more profitable."

Brown highlights some of Crows Nest's key capabilities that have helped VOGO attain time-saving efficiencies that have yielded increased productivity and cost savings.

Communication: "Before Crows Nest, we did not have a central database for our estimators, project managers and shop personnel to keep tabs on customers and projects. We were constantly asking each other who's the contact for this project, what's their contact information and what's the production status? Because there are so many people involved in each project, we've become very disciplined in putting all of our notes, emails documents and schedules for each project into Crows Nest so that everyone has access to them. If someone calls and says, 'You did the cabinets for my last home,' we can go back and easily find all of the contacts and all of the information for that project."

“Crows Nest saves us a ton of time. Adding up all of the hours for each employee, we save 40 to 50 hours per week in terms of reduced meetings, less time walking around asking questions and fewer mistakes. That translates into about a 30 percent increase in productivity.”

Estimating: “In the past we did not have an inventory or purchase order system. This software also has those capabilities,” Brown notes. “About six months ago we started using that aspect of the software. Now we can see how much our materials cost from our vendors. What’s nice about this is that when I put a product that we are purchasing into Crows Nest, it populates the last price that we paid. If I’m looking at an invoice from a vendor and I see that a product went up fifty cents or a dollar, that triggers me to run a report to see what our price increases have been for a month or two months and relay that to the estimator that we’re seeing a 10% increase from this vendor or a 5% from that vendor so that he can factor that into the next quote. We didn’t have that view before.”

Production Scheduling: “In addition to a CRM system to streamline our internal communications, we were looking for a system to help us with visibility in the shop for production scheduling, job tracking, inventory and more. There’s a lot of moving parts to keep in sync and Crows Nest has helped us do that. If we know we’re going to get super busy in the shop we have the ability to kind of move a project out because we know that if we don’t move something forward, we’re going to be jammed up. It’s also giving us better visibility for installation and scheduling installations so that we are not promising two clients installation on the same day and then having to work to fix that issue.”

Invoicing: “We save about five hours a week on billing, which has also improved our cashflow because of more timely invoicing. Crows Nest gives us better visibility on who and when to invoice.”

Payroll: “We save another two hours a week on payroll because Crows Nest’s time clock feature collects the hours of our shop employees when they clock in and out each day. We’re able to run a quick report from Crows Nest, hand it over to accounting and say, ‘Here’s everyone’s hours for the week.’” Accounting plugs each employee’s hours through Crows Nest into ADP and the paychecks are generated. In the past, we did not have a sophisticated clock in and out system. It was taking a lot of time for the shop manager to figure out everybody’s hours.”

Now that VOGO has Crows Nest firmly in place, Brown and the VOGO team are looking to build on its capabilities. “It’s a step-by-step process and then each step kind of branches off into something else,” Brown says. “Every day I’m learning something new, which is great, because that is going to benefit us.”

“Are we happy that we invested in Crows Nest and would we do it again?,” Brown asks rhetorically. “I think there’s no question that every single person at VOGO would say that we are so happy and that we would definitely do this again. We would recommend this to any cabinet shop. We’re thrilled with what it has been able to let us accomplish.”

Learn more about VOGO Cabinets at vogocabinets.com.