Leave Your Desktop Systems Behind to Future-Proof Your Operations

Sales Agility Pays Off in Challenging Markets When Desktops Can't Keep Up

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The economy is changing and small businesses must adapt.

1

The COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges to most businesses, especially small businesses. It was tough to manage inventory distributions in brick-and-mortar locations amid lockdowns and increased demand for online purchases. Then came the supply chain shortages and other issues. **But some small businesses succeeded despite those challenges. How did they do it?** What lessons can other small businesses take from their successes?

The retail industry has changed dramatically in the last few years as consumers want to shop from the comfort and safety of their homes as much as possible. In 2021, for example, the top priority of product sellers was adding new sales channels, including new means to sell online. By August 2022, sellers had shifted their focus from expansion to efficiency. Rather than looking for new channels, they were focused on better managing and operating the business they already had.

How did these businesses survive and thrive in the challenges of pandemic lockdowns and resulting supply chain disruptions? As in nature, the ability to adapt to changes in circumstances quickly and continually was key. "Survival of the most agile" is a more apt description than "survival of the fittest." Moving to the cloud and away from dated desktop software systems is a critical part of attaining that agility and adaptability in the face of changing market conditions.

A recent market study asked 1,100 about their experiences running product selling businesses in the last year, including how software factored into their businesses and what they both want and expect from that software. People who were surveyed had leadership roles in businesses with 5 to 99 employees, produced physical products (excluding food products) and generated at least $500,000 in sales in the previous 12 months. Respondents had to be at least a department/team manager or higher; 79% of respondents were director, senior manager, VP, CFO, CIO, CxO, CEO, president or owner. What did they have to say about the role software is expected to play in their business growth and agility in 2023? **Read on to hear from business owners and leaders like you.**

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What challenges are small product businesses facing when it comes to software and inventory management?

2

For small businesses, **desktop applications were, until very recently, ubiquitous**. It was simple enough to buy accounting software like QuickBooks Enterprise or Xero, inventory management software, a shipping program, a time clock program, and whatever else was needed, and simply run them.

But then **they'd stop working as operating systems outpaced them.** Hard drives and servers had to be replaced as inventory data grew. Or they became **vulnerable to security threats and data loss** because they weren't updated as needed. And these various programs **rarely integrated with one another**, requiring valuable user manual tasks and time to cross-check systems and make sure inventory matched sales numbers, which matched shipping reports and returns.

Running a business is challenging and time consuming; staying on top of software updates and releases can easily be put off for later, given everything else that has to be done. ERP systems like Netsuite, Oracle, Microsoft Dynamics and others can weigh businesses down, especially if they don't have a dedicated IT team or consultant to implement, run and

maintain them. ERP and desktop programs require constant upgrading for security and compliance, and consume precious time and resources to manage when owners want to focus on growing their businesses and making them more efficient.

Companies with five to 99 employees that are ambitious about growth and increasing operational efficiency need a solution that will manage inventory and accounting seamlessly to meet those goals. It's time to move on — and up — to the cloud.

It's clear that there's a lot of overlap among the needs of small businesses that create and sell products. And those needs aren't being met by current desktop accounting and inventory management systems.

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In the data from the market survey mentioned in the first section, small business owners and managers reported the following challenges with their desktop inventory management and accounting systems:

- Reporting that is inaccurate, outdated or inconsistent.

- Inventory gets oversold across different channels due to poor data visibility and lack of integration among systems.

- Invoices and financial data stored on a desktop system with limited licensing can only be accessed from a single office location or computer.

- Project tracking suffers from a lack of accountability.

- Connecting inventory across ecommerce, stores, third-party logistics companies and warehouse systems is difficult or non-existent.

- Forecasting and buying the right inventory at the right price and the right time is challenging because data has to be collected and collated from different sources.

- Returned products take way too much time and effort to restock or record as a loss.

- Small product based businesses need to save time and money while better managing the products they sell. They need a scalable, cloud-native solution that is also truly affordable and easy to implement while working with other systems they use every day.

The market data survey asked about the software "must-haves" from several different sectors of product sellers. What do manufacturers, retailers and wholesalers want from their accounting and inventory management systems? See graph below.

It's clear that there's a lot of overlap among the needs of small businesses that create and sell products. And those needs aren't being met by current desktop accounting and inventory management systems. So why not upgrade? The survey asked that question too. **Read on for the answer.**

Top 4 Software "must-haves"

	Manufacturers	Retailers	Wholesalers
1	Manufacturing, made-to-order, assembly...	Retail management / Point-of-Sale	Retail management / Point-of-Sale
2	Warehouse management	Inventory control	Inventory control
3	Inventory control	Return merchandise authorization (RMA)	Warehouse management
4	Retail management / Point-of-Sale	Warehouse management	Manufacturing, made-to-order, assembly...

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What's holding product sellers back from upgrading to a cloud-based solution?

3

The top answer small businesses gave for not moving to an end-to-end cloud-based solution for accounting and inventory management was implementation. Business leaders and owners are concerned about the costs and amount of time it takes to move to a new platform. They don't want to spend tens of thousands of dollars and take several months to get a new system set up when what they have is "okay."
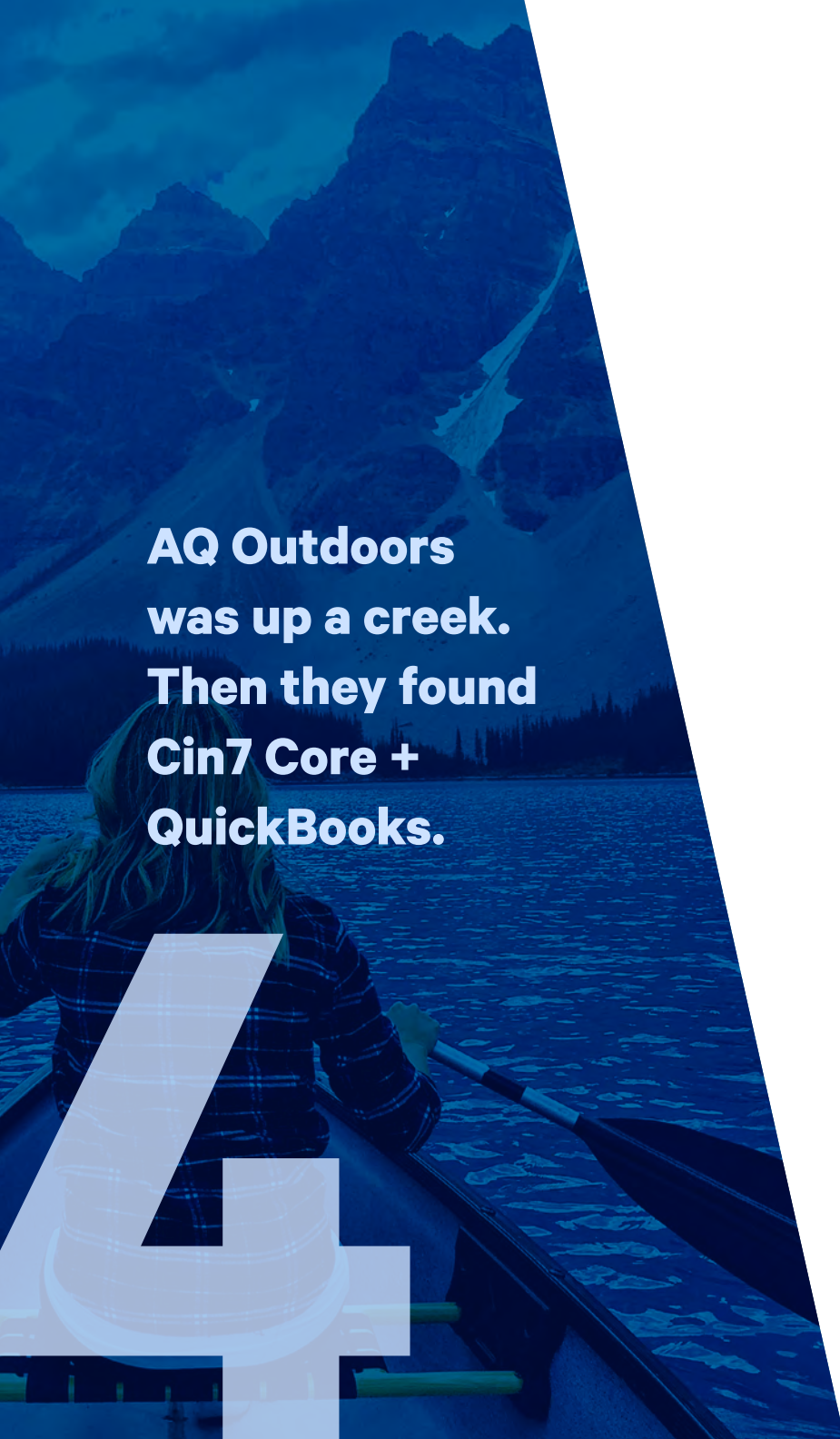
What if there was a solution that took less time and cost less to implement? Cin7 Core (formerly DEAR systems) + QuickBooks **saved users from one-third to half the normal implementation time** as an enterprise solution and **cost from 50% to 70% less** to do so. In fact, 70% of Cin7 Core implementations have the business running in less than three weeks compared to an average of 7 months for ERP implementations.

Enterprise solutions that allow the integration and functionality most product sellers and manufacturers want can be quite costly, and may be "too much" for a small business. Cin7 Core + QuickBooks Online offers **one powerful solution for your inventory and financial management needs** — at a fraction of the cost of an ERP. The perfect pairing of Cin7 Core with QuickBooks Online provides a suite of full lifecycle tools — from sales to purchasing, production, warehousing, shipping and returns. All data is fully integrated, easily giving business owners and leaders greater transparency and clarity into their businesses.

For a fraction of the cost of an ERP, small, ambitious businesses will get the speed, agility and automatic updates they need to run more efficiently. Cin7 Core + QuickBooks allows businesses to be forward-thinking in planning and to respond quickly to spikes in demand and changes in the economy. See how that worked for one specialty sporting goods company in Canada.

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AQ Outdoors was up a creek. Then they found Cin7 Core + QuickBooks.

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AQ Outdoors is a specialty paddle sports store that started in Calgary, Alberta. It's run by Simon Coward, who — in an ironic contrast with his surname — is all about the extreme sporting life.

AQ Outdoors sells canoes, kayaks, stand-up paddle boards, as well as snowsports equipment. These days they're a true multi-channel business, with a comprehensive online offering backing up the bricks-and-mortar operation to reach their enthusiastic customers.

Before the pandemic, Simon and his team were already ahead of the cloud software adoption curve. They were using Vend for point-of-sale in stores, and it was talking to Shopify via an API. But when the pandemic hit, its effects on foot traffic and supply chains compounded the problems inherent to running stores in multiple locations. After ten years of relatively smooth sailing, AQ Outdoors found itself floundering. **They needed an inventory solution that could keep stock numbers straight across multiple locations and channels**, and that talked natively with vital software services like Shopify. They needed Cin7 Core to break free of the limitations of their old Vend software.

Extreme acceleration

"We were already doing reasonable volume online, but then COVID happened, and it accelerated things by five years — in six months," Simon says. COVID had an unexpected effect on the outdoor products business: as initial lockdowns ended, sales went up.

Implementing Cin7 Core's Point of Sale system solved 99% of the issues they'd been having. "It's awesome," he says. "The Cin7 Core POS is gloriously simple to use."

With their existing system, AQ Outdoors had found a "whole bunch of limitations" with how inventory management and purchase orders were working. So, they went searching for a better system. They looked through a lot of different options, sitting through many sales pitches. Implementing Cin7 Core's Point of Sale system solved 99% of the issues they'd been having. "It's awesome," he says. "The Cin7 Core POS is

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gloriously simple to use. The process we've built around how it integrates with Cin7 Core inventory, how we do our special orders — **everything is infinitely easier, and infinitely less prone to errors than our systems in the past.**" Details from in-store and ecommerce transactions flow straight from Cin7 Core to QuickBooks Online, ensuring the books stay up to date, and compliance is quick and easy.

"Cin7 Core is now our single home and source of truth, whether it's financial, whether it's inventory," Simon says. "Having one piece of software as your source of truth is pretty amazing. If you're looking for the right information, you always know where to find it – and that's saved us a whole pile of time." •

Get started with a single, integrated cloud-based solution today. Whether you're already on QuickBooks via your desktop or new to the solution, moving to the cloud is in your best interest.

Cin7 Core (formerly DEAR) + QuickBooks Online is the solution for small businesses that have products and inventory to manage, ship and sell. It gives small businesses the opportunity to have a single source for both inventory and financial information. Thanks to the cloud, the system is faster and easier to implement than desktop products and users never have to be concerned about updating to new versions or security updates not being applied in a timely manner. It integrates seamlessly with other tools as well, including shipping services and online sales channels while costing less and being faster to implement than an ERP.

Discover how moving to the cloud will give your business the agility you need to succeed.

Start a free trial >

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