



“How big is the dollar sign that it creates for our customer?” asks David Lowman, president of 1 EDI Source.

retailers including Wal-Mart.

Keck says the company found a solution to its problem in IntelligentXchange, software made by the Solon-based 1 EDI Source. The program uses electronic data interchange, or EDI, technology to identify pricing or quantity discrepancies involving purchase orders and invoices.

“This pulls all the data together and analyzes our electronic data interchange transmissions,” Keck explains, allowing the company to view a customer’s complete transaction history on a tidy dashboard — the big picture, as Keck calls it — rather than in bits and pieces.

Within days of adopting the software, Winston Products’ mystery was solved and it was able to restore a positive relationship with frustrated customers, says 1 EDI Source president David Lowman.

His goal is to help suppliers to larger retailers do away with paper-based purchase orders, shipping statements and invoices and begin catching errors in electronic business-to-business documents using 1 EDI Source’s flagship product, EDI HQ, and the newer IntelligentXchange.

Winston Products’ success is proof that the organizational changes he’s instituted since taking office in July 2013 are bearing fruit.

“Innovation was not driving growth in the business anymore,” says the former SageQuest chief financial officer of his first impression of the 26-year-old 1 EDI Source. “Turnover rate before I came in was over 50 percent a year.”

This year it has been minimal, even though the staff count has grown to about 90.

Lowman has made the change in part by challenging his employees to focus on creating value for customers: “How big is the dollar sign that it creates for our customer?” he asks. “We don’t want to be just a little better.”

It’s a reinvigoration and accountability strategy that’s paying off. Company revenues have

grown 15 to 20 percent annually for the past three years, with 2014 revenue reaching \$15 million.

Lowman wants to double company revenues every two to three years for the next dozen years, an aggressive goal that will involve growing leads each year by 25 percent, developing new products and expanding into other industries and geographic markets, although he declined to share details.

That also means recalibrating the company culture, something Lowman has managed to do by forming a product management team — “the voice of the customer,” he calls it — instituting regular town hall meetings and installing flat-screen TVs that allow associates to track sales and performance.

“People can see in real time where we are against the targets,” he says.

He’s added a recreation room for employees to play pingpong and a company cafe.

Lowman has also encouraged employees to volunteer, such as teaming up for the VeloSano cycling competition to support cancer research at the Cleveland Clinic or growing beards during No-Shave November to benefit the American Cancer Society.

Like Winston Products, Solon’s Cequent Consumer Products has also benefitted from 1 EDI Source’s software.

“If there are missing pieces of data, the software itself is going to notice and it won’t go out,” explains Deborah Stitts-Isaac, IT manager at Cequent.

That’s important, she stresses, because big box stores and other retailers are known to ding suppliers for errors, fining companies for relatively minor mistakes.

Stitts-Isaac is such a strong believer in 1 EDI Source’s software that she’s spent the past two years reaching out to some of the company’s smaller retail partners and encouraging them to adopt it as well.

“The more you can automate, the less expensive overall, the less opportunity for error,” she says.

FINANCIAL

Fixer

WITH AN ENERGETIC NEW LEADER, 1 EDI SOURCE IS HELPING CUSTOMERS KEEP INVOICES STRAIGHT AND BIG BOXES HAPPY.

BY NEIL COTIAUX

It was a mystery that faced Cleveland’s Winston Products every month: Several of its biggest customers were consistently questioning the company’s invoices, causing major problems for Winston’s productivity and cash flow.

“[Day sales outstanding] was

up, revenue was being lost, and a great deal of time was being spent researching pricing and invoicing issues,” recalls Laura Keck, vice president of finance for the company, which supplies consumer products such as smartphone cradles and Yonanas dessert makers for large