

Before using technology, Little Bit’s operation consisted of paper order forms and human error.

A St. Louis-based non-profit, The Little Bit Foundation provides a wide range of programs and services that address the comprehensive needs of local children across 29 schools in the St. Louis area, from shoes, coats, and school uniforms to nutritious meals and medical screenings. Their core program seeks to remove obstacles standing in front of the greatest opportunity students have to end the cycle of poverty—their education.

The distribution arm of the organization procures purchased goods and receives in-kind donations that are brought into their warehouse with an inventory management module, and are in turn distributed to children at schools through a network of dedicated volunteers. These volunteers not only deliver products that were ordered the previous week at each school, but also place orders for new clothing and supplies as needs arise.

Like any rapidly scaling business, Little Bit was outgrowing many of the manual processes they built their organization on. In 2012, they turned to Handshake to automate their operations and prepare for the growth that was to come over the next 5 years.

Before Handshake: Unable to Keep Pace with Demand

Before using technology to automate ordering, Little Bit’s field operations consisted of paper-based ordering and the human error that often accompanies manual processes.

Volunteers would meet with children in their respective schools and fill out paper order forms that noted their names, school, and any items they needed to order. Orders would then be collected and keyed into the Little Bit database, and with time, typos and other mis-keyed information resulted in order errors and wasted time. Explains Rose Hanley, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Little Bit:

“At first, when were in just a few schools, order forms seemed to work just fine. But we couldn’t keep up with the demand, and we couldn’t keep up with all the paperwork. We were hiring people just to do data entry, and it just wasn’t efficient.”



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Although improving efficiency was important to the Little Bit team, the biggest problem they faced was managing their rapid growth. As word of the organization’s impact got out, more schools were signing on, and Little Bit recognized that they needed a system that would allow them to grow more efficiently. Continues Hanley:

“I remember at that time we were receiving funding to adopt more schools, but we couldn't help more children unless we came up with a better way of processing orders. So the money was there, but we couldn't keep up with the demand.”

As a response to this dilemma, Little Bit Foundation’s board began an initiative to support the growth of the organization, including a search for a digital ordering solution. After deliberating on multiple approaches, including building their own custom solution, Little Bit found Handshake to be the best fit for their requirements: a solution that would work on smartphones and tablets, would integrate to QuickBooks (the accounting system they were using at the time), and support the growth they knew was coming.

Handshake Rep, a native mobile application typically used by B2B sales reps selling in the field, turned out to be a great fit for the Little Bit distribution model. Touched by the Little Bit mission, Handshake granted a pro-bono subscription to the team and established a partnership that would continue for years to come. Recalls Hanley:

“Handshake was really open to working with us as a non-profit. They believed in us and wanted to see us successful, and there was a personal relationship built that was really meaningful to us. Given a lack of in-house technology expertise at the time, there was a lot of handholding along the way, and we really appreciated the support.”

After Handshake: More Efficiency, More Students, More Growth

After receiving Handshake Rep licenses for their volunteers and an integration that connected their order data directly to QuickBooks, Little Bit’s new operation was ready to go. Volunteers downloaded and

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Little Bit Solution Requirements:

- ✓ Works on smartphones & tablets
- ✓ Integrates to QuickBooks
- ✓ Supports future growth

Since implementing Handshake, Little Bit has distributed over 500,000 items to 9000 local students.

logged into Handshake Rep on their smartphones or tablets, and could view their “customers”—the full list of children at each school—along with a list of products available to order.

A straightforward process was important to Little Bit’s team. Explains Tim Hydar, Director of Distribution, “Our volunteer base only does this 2-4 hours a week. So the simpler we could make it for them, the better.”

As Little Bit grew over time, so did their back office requirements, and within a few years, they outgrew QuickBooks and upgraded to a new ERP, NetSuite. The Handshake team worked closely with Little Bit to ensure that any custom data was mapped properly, and that data was flowing seamlessly between NetSuite and Handshake.

Since implementing Handshake, Little Bit has been able to serve over 9,000 students, distributing over 500,000 items to children in need. What’s more, Little Bit is using reporting from the Handshake app to prove the impact of their service, tying products and services delivered to outcomes like attendance and graduation rates. As Hanley explains:

“Without Handshake, we wouldn’t be able to show this impact. That is going to help us increase funding, put more attention on Little Bit, serve more children, and really be able to tell the story in a more data-driven way.”

To learn more about the inspiring work being done at The Little Bit Foundation and how you can support their efforts, visit www.thelittlebitfoundation.org.

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