Barnes & Noble College Uses Caspio to Streamline Operations

Barnes & Noble College operates 750 of the finest campus bookstores and websites nationwide for such top academic institutions as Harvard, Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, Indiana University, Georgia Tech, and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. They proudly serve over 5 million students and faculty – delivering "what's next" in a campus retail and digital learning experience.

Industry
Retail

Company
Barnes & Noble College is one of the country's leading college campus store and website operators. Serving over 5 million students and faculty, Barnes & Noble College strives to continually deliver superior products and a world-class customer experience.

Challenge
The Inventory Control department was initially looking for a cloud database solution that would streamline processes between them and their stores. The Accounts Receivable team needed a cloud-based survey and data management tool that would allow them to retire their paper-centric processes. The Field Auditors were looking for a mobile tool that could help them work efficiently in the field and provide real-time updates for management. Vendors were looking for enhanced communications and guidance related to a comprehensive EDI project.

Solution
After comparing a number of solutions, Barnes & Noble College chose Caspio due to its extensive functionality, ease of use, and affordability. The company has since decreased processing time, tightened controls, improved accuracy, and developed enhanced reporting and dashboards to provide business-critical insights. Furthermore, the 750 store locations are thrilled because they can spend more time with students and faculty.

Slow Paper-Based Processes

For years, the Operational Finance Department utilized Microsoft Excel and Access as their primary internal database systems. Without paperless systems for collecting information from various store locations, they waited on mail and then keyed in data. From the critical dates that affect student access to scholarships and grants, to processing inventory adjustments, many procedures relied on these traditional manual methods. Inevitably, the system was prone to delays and errors.

Daisia Lewin, Senior Inventory Analyst, recognized that the communication of critical information could be improved and streamlined, but had trouble finding a viable solution that a modest budget could sustain.

Lewin needed a system that could provide an easy gateway of access by both home office teams as well as many employees across over 750 locations nationwide. In addition, it was essential to have a system that could perform calculations and validations to prevent mistakes.

Lewin researched and presented several options to Troy Wesselius, Operational Controller at Barnes & Noble College. They selected Caspio, which exceeded their initial requirements and expectations. "A major reason we chose Caspio was because we could easily use calculations, conditional formatting, validations, and other functions similar to spreadsheets," Lewin says. "Also, the pricing was right."
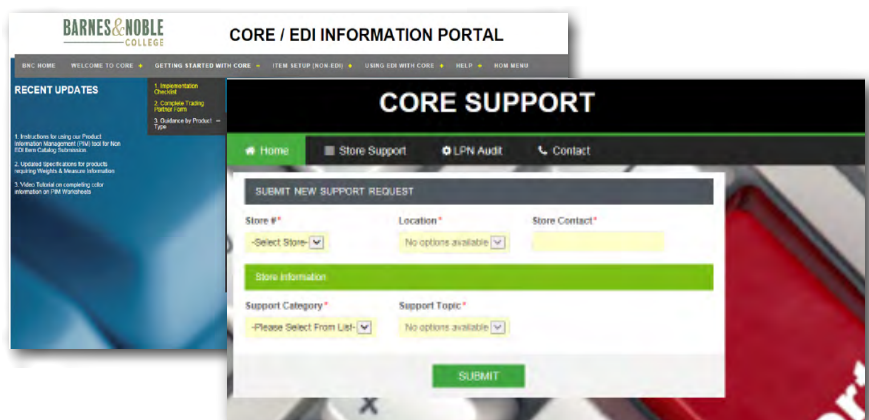
Barnes & Noble College uses Caspio for an EDI informational app used by over 750 locations.

Barnes & Noble College Streamlines Operations

Lewin was able to quickly create a custom application to fit the company's needs, without any prior knowledge of HTML or JavaScript. The new Caspio-powered system helped streamline diverse critical tasks within the Inventory Control department. Processes that previously took days or weeks and involved a number of manual steps are now automated and immediate.

Cloud Applications Transform Operations

As word of Lewin's success with Caspio spread across the organization, other areas began looking to Caspio as a solution that would reduce dependency and workload placed upon the project management and IT teams. Management was looking for better visibility and reporting across store locations, which Caspio could achieve.

Liz Mooring, Accounts Receivable Supervisor, spearheaded efforts to move the management of tens of thousands of grant and scholarship providers out of the filing cabinets and into the cloud. Prior to using Caspio, Mooring relied on third-party survey tools to collect information from the bookstores several times a year. The information was manually collected, entered into Microsoft Access and then moved into Oracle PeopleSoft. This method required follow-up emails, calls, and significant manual data input; therefore leaving the resulting process prolonged and susceptible to errors.

Mooring estimates that the Caspio application helped her team cut processing and reporting time in half. The process, which previously took six weeks, now takes only three weeks with a 25% reduction in errors. Users overwhelmingly declared the Caspio application a success, with providers and store employees commenting on how much more efficient the process has become. In addition, management is enjoying the real-time reporting visibility that helps them make timely decisions.

Mobile Applications for the Field

With the Accounts Receivable and Inventory Control projects showing immediate and impactful results, the Operational Finance Department soon reached out to Caspio in search of yet another business-critical application. Jose Acta, Director of

> **Caspio allows ordinary people to do extraordinary things; it has been transformational for our organization.**
>
> **Troy Wesselius,** Operational Controller, Barnes & Noble College

Operational Finance, needed a mobile application that would allow his team of field auditors to perform onsite store audits and quickly share the results. Their original process involved collecting data using Microsoft Word, and then transferring the data into Microsoft Access. This process took days to compile and weeks to report out.

With limited internal resources to undertake this project, Acta worked with the Caspio Professional Services team to develop a tablet-friendly application to help auditors record onsite observations while visiting locations. After the audit data is captured onsite, management can immediately review reports online and/or download PDF files, thus significantly streamlining the entire process for all involved. Consequently, they now have historical comparative reporting tools at their fingertips.

More Advanced Applications

Over the years, the intricacy of Caspio usage at Barnes and Noble College has flourished as knowledge of the system developed. To help manage an EDI project he is leading, Steve Schatten, Process Improvement Manager, used Caspio to develop a comprehensive vendor portal complete with unique user IDs and passwords. The portal helped create a centralized source for communications and tracking related to this important project, yielding overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Looking forward, the team at Barnes and Noble College sees no limits to Caspio's potential and plan to take their respective applications to transform other departmental processes even further. "We have many more projects we will be bringing online because the whole company is talking about using Caspio," Lewin says.

About Caspio, Inc.

As a leader in cloud database and platform-as-a-service technology, Caspio (www.caspio.com) helps organizations shrink the development time of custom business applications from weeks to hours, and from thousands of dollars to a small monthly fee. Caspio's point-and-click cloud platform powers applications for thousands of customers including Fortune-500 companies, America's largest newspaper websites, educational institutions, government agencies, nonprofits, and healthcare organizations around the world.