

COOLSPOLS

By Ariadne Software

Kelly Spicers buck the trend: a story of business growth in testing times.

How CoolSpools provided the key to flexible remote working.



For Claudia Estrada, Application Development Manager at Kelly Spicers, a robust Disaster Recovery plan was always essential. Many are the hours she has spent analysing risks, planning contingencies, testing and refining strategy – hoping all the while that her efforts would never have to bear fruit.

Because DR is like life insurance: you get the best possible plan in place, but you hope it never pays off.

Then, in 2020, COVID handed us all an unwelcome reminder that disasters really can happen, bringing unprecedented disruption to businesses around the world. For many companies, lockdown was a challenge they were simply not prepared for. The exceptions were those businesses better placed to move to remote production.

Kelly Spicers

The Client: Kelly Paper

Kelly Spicers is a major independent paper and packaging distribution company with ten regional warehouse locations and 35 retail stores serving the Western US and Hawaii.

Business Sector: Paper & Packaging Distribution

Kelly Spicers' core business is commercial printing papers, but in more recent years it has diversified into growth areas such as wide-format, digital products, janitorial & food services supplies and industrial packaging.

Background

Kelly Spicers use INFOR ERP A+ to control all core business processes, from accounting and sales to warehouse and service. They use the full CoolSpools suite to produce all their reports, with output in Excel, PDF, text and CSV formats.

The Challenge

With lockdown looming, Kelly Spicers needed to ensure business continuity by switching to remote production. Fast.

Businesses like Kelly Spicers.

For Kelly Spicers, the changes to their business operations were significant but relatively painless, with the culture for remote working and digital reporting being adopted very quickly.

How did they achieve that?

In a word, CoolSpools.

Already an integrated and pivotal part of Kelly Spicers' INFOR ERP A+ solution, CoolSpools now became a key element of the new remote working strategy. As Claudia explains, the need to distribute up-to-date, accurate data was critical – both to the business and, more importantly, the customer.

On their website, they promise their customers to “make doing business with us easy.” It's no idle boast. “We use CoolSpools for every ERP report we generate,” Claudia explains, “Daily Sales, Pick/Pack, Purchasing Reports, Customer Reports... and that makes it easy to keep that commitment to our customers.”

She goes into detail with an example. “For the Replenishment Report we have a bunch of columns we convert to Excel using CoolSpools, and the Purchasing Department analyses and makes decisions based on that data.”

So, what is it that sets CoolSpools apart?

“It saves time, it’s flexible, it’s user friendly. And the final product is amazing – it gives us great presentation every time. There’s other software out there, but when CoolSpools converts data it’s like, no question – the Excel sheets, the PDFs are always perfect. So, we don’t have to rediscover the wheel every time we generate a report.”

“...when you install CoolSpools life gets much, much easier.”

When Claudia joined the company, CoolSpools was already up and running in some of the systems. But any misgivings she may have had were quickly allayed. “It was the first time I had seen CoolSpools, but it was really easy to get up to speed and understand how it works. I remember how hard it was to email using the IBM SMTP, or to make database comparisons. Without CoolSpools you had to create a program for that. So I can tell you, based on previous experience, when you install CoolSpools life gets much, much easier.”

There’s no doubt that it has helped give Kelly Spicers the agility they needed to respond to the challenge of COVID. When the pandemic started, Claudia quickly identified around eight or nine reports critical to the business operation that still needed to be converted. “It took us maybe three or four days to convert them and send them to the users.” And now they’re there being generated every day and for future use.

“That’s the thing I love about CoolSpools. If you get the setup right, you’ll have no issues. It’s not like I wake up in the morning and see emails from managers or customers saying, ‘We didn’t receive a report. CoolSpools doesn’t give me that kind of headache.’”



Which is just as well because life at Kelly Spicers rarely stands still. When COVID arrived, rather than batten down the hatches and waiting out the storm, they seized the opportunity to buy two companies, making them now the one of the biggest paper and packing distribution companies on the West Coast of the US – with diversified sales at higher levels today than pre-pandemic. For Claudia Estrada this means a complex ERP integration project and a host of new CoolSpools users to train. But she has no doubt what is most important. “When I bring a new consultant on board, their first priority is to learn how CoolSpools works,” she says. “The learning curve is very fast. But after that it’s super easy.”



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Claudia also has her own personal training goals. “Every time I upgrade, I notice CoolSpools has a lot of functions I don’t use.” Needless to say, as a confirmed fan she hates the idea of missing out on any functionality that might improve day to day business operations further. “I’m very interested in learning how to use CoolSpools to generate XML.”

At the time of writing, Claudia has been working from home for just over a year. But she reckons she’s been more productive than she was in the office, back in more conventional times.

“Right now, we have virtually all workers operating from home – except of course the warehouse and drivers, because obviously somebody needs to put the product in the truck and deliver it. But everyone else – Customer Service, Sales, IT, Accounts Payable, Receivable, everyone – is working from home. So basically, remote working has to work. And CoolSpools is a big part of that.”

Doesn’t fear of another disaster keep her awake at night?

Claudia smiles. “It’s not fear of disaster that keeps me awake, but fear of disaster without a DR plan.”



Try CoolSpools FREE for 30 days!

The complete collection of CoolSpools software, including Converter, Email, Database and Admin is available free to evaluate.

CoolSpools for IBM i (AS400, iSeries) is an Information Management Solution which converts spool and database files to PDF, Excel and other formats, enabling you to move away from paper-based documents and save time and money by distributing information automatically in electronic formats.

Download the software free for 30 days.

At the end of your trial, you will be able to purchase a license with 12 months maintenance included for free.

Please see our pricing page for more information.

About CoolSpools

CoolSpools automates the sharing of data and documents for employees, customers and suppliers using the IBM i platform. It’s highly flexible, allowing end-users and ISVs to build seamless integration with both standard and bespoke software.

It’s reliable too. Whether for email, intranet or EDI, CoolSpools is precise and robust, converting database and spool files into a range of formats, including:

- PDF
- XML
- HTML
- Text
- Excel
- CSV
- ...and more.

CoolSpools provides the genuine means to go paperless, making internal processes more efficient, increasing productivity and saving time and money. And all that functionality comes at an incredibly low cost.

Many of the world’s most trusted brands have been using our software to gain competitive advantage for more than a decade. Our solutions span a diverse set of industries including Finance, Retail, Government, Pharmaceuticals, Manufacturing and Distribution.

CoolSpools’ creators are Ariadne Software, a team of IBM i specialists with Silver Business Partner status and a combined experience of over 200 years in product development and support. We have more than 900 customers in 50+ countries and are regularly commended by our customers for the quality of our products and customer service.