



## CASE STUDY DISTRIBUTION

# Ben E. Keith Company

Accounts Receivable

Accounts Payable

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Phil Brandt  
Manager  
Branch I.S. Operations

In dining establishments across the southwest United States, one name is synonymous with food service and distribution — Ben E. Keith. For more than 70 years, Ben E. Keith Company (BEK) has prided itself on going above and beyond in customer service and quality.

Today, BEK is the ninth largest full-line food service distributor and the largest independent Anheuser-Busch wholesaler in the country. With more than \$1 billion in sales on the food distribution side, BEK serves more than 12,000 restaurants and other dining locations via a network of six distribution centers.

As BEK continued its growth at a rapid rate, it became apparent that in order to keep pace with customer needs, the company had to streamline processes and boost efficiencies.

According to Jim Stone, vice president of information services, BEK battled a fundamental problem of paper — maintaining hard files of invoices and retrieving information from those files quickly in response to customer or sales requests.

### A More Effective AR Process

Company leaders recognized the value that a document imaging solution would bring to productivity and customer service. But BEK expected specific characteristics in an imaging system — obviously, it had to eliminate the paper chase. It also needed to tightly integrate with the PeopleSoft Financial Management application used by BEK’s accounts receivable and payable groups. And finally, it had to offer true flexibility, allowing BEK to add future documents from hard copy and electronic sources. After reviewing the options, BEK selected ImageNow® enterprise document management, imaging and workflow.

Phil Brandt, manager of branch I.S. operations, explains more, “When our distribution trucks make a delivery, the drivers take along a paper copy of the customer’s invoice in order to make adjustments if necessary and gather signatures. Once returned, all of these invoices were maintained by someone in a storage room, and when someone needed to see an invoice, finding and copying the paper took a long time.”

Using ImageNow, BEK automatically indexes 5,000 invoices daily (more than 10,000 pages) by printing a bar code on each upon receipt and scanning the paper into the ImageNow repository. Immediately, the imaged invoices are available to any authorized system user companywide. With a single click, salespeople, accounts receivable staff and even customers themselves can have immediate access to invoices anytime from anywhere.

“Our customers and sales representatives no longer have to contact our customer service department to get a copy of a particular invoice,” Stone says. “They simply sign on to the Internet and view their invoices securely.”

### Using the Power of the Web

Because of BEK’s wide area of service, requests for documents come from all over the Southwest. WebNow™, Perceptive Software’s browser-based solution, provides the ease and speed of anytime document retrieval, regardless of geographic location.

"WebNow has really revolutionized how we access information," Brandt says. "After one of our salespeople learned how to use WebNow, he said it was the greatest tool since laptops. That's a pretty big compliment."

Not just a tool for the sales force, WebNow puts power directly into the hands of customers, too. According to Brandt, a number of customers use WebNow to view their own invoices when a question arises.

"Or, if someone does call in, we can instantly bring up their documents in ImageNow or WebNow and e-mail a copy to them," Brandt remarks. "The process is so much better. Before, it could take up to two days to fulfill a request; now it's instantaneous."

### Integration With PeopleSoft

When BEK selected ImageNow, a key determinant in that choice was the proven integration of ImageNow with all Oracle and PeopleSoft applications. Not only could staff members access documents electronically, they could do it directly from their current PeopleSoft screen — dramatically reducing users' learning curve and saving a great amount of time in productivity.

"The tight integration of ImageNow with the PeopleSoft application in vouchering vendor invoices has significantly improved the payables process in our company," Stone says.

According to Brandt, integration allows BEK to move the vouchering process out into office branches while maintaining payment from the central corporate office, and that brought new levels of efficiency enterprise-wide.

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### Achieving Vendor Independence

A core design element of ImageNow is its unique ease of use and maintenance, which appealed to BEK's IT team. "One of the great things about ImageNow is our ability to maintain it ourselves," Brandt says. "We can tweak scripts or workflow or set up new processes on our own successfully."

In the past, BEK used a custom-built document imaging system in the AP department. "We couldn't change it unless we brought back the people who wrote it to modify it," Brandt explains. "But with ImageNow, it's so easy. We can brainstorm a new process and I can build it myself literally in a day or two. The product is extremely easy to use, but we've also received good training from Perceptive Software."

In fact, both Stone and Brandt are quick to point out the difference a strong vendor team can make in the success of an implementation.

"Our success with Perceptive Software further substantiates the importance of partnering with a company that has quality, A-team people who feel a sense of ownership and pride to meet the customer's expectations and deliver a successful project," Stone says.

### A Visible ROI

Ben E. Keith Company is a successful, growing business, and when challenged with sustaining a reputation for the highest quality and customer service, it turned to ImageNow for an immediate boost to productivity. The results are visible.

"Just in allowing our people to perform more strategic tasks, saving salespeople's time, saving the clerk's time and creating more satisfied customers," says Brandt. "The benefit of ImageNow is so obvious; we don't need to analyze it."

## Ben E. Keith Company

### Quick Stats

- Distribution Area: 6 distribution centers serving more than 12,000 restaurants and other dining locations
- Integration: PeopleSoft Enterprise Financial Management
- Products in Use: ImageNow, CaptureNow, WebNow
- Scan Volume: 10,000 pages daily

### The Challenges

- ▶ Paper copies slowed access to documentation and customer response time
- ▶ Required tight integration with PeopleSoft Financial Management application
- ▶ Remote workers and customers needed easy access to documents
- ▶ Wanted an imaging solution that required minimal maintenance

### The Results

- ▶ Scanned documents are immediately available companywide
- ▶ Easily integrates with PeopleSoft to deliver images directly from any screen
- ▶ Sales team uses WebNow to instantly view documents anytime from anywhere
- ▶ Ease of use and comprehensive training minimize maintenance costs

## perceptivesoftware

22701 West 68th Terrace  
Shawnee, KS 66226  
USA

toll-free +1 800 941 7460  
tel +1 913 422 7525  
fax +1 913 422 3820  
info@imagenow.com

Venture House  
Arlington Square  
Downshire Way  
Bracknell  
Berkshire RG12 1WA  
United Kingdom  
tel +44 (0) 1344 741070  
fax +44 (0) 1344 742877  
euroinfo@imagenow.com

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