

CASE STUDY

SDB

PRODUCTS

Customer Profile

Contract personal care products manufacturer with a focus on affordable, mass market hair shampoo and conditioner (90%) and body lotion.

- Start-up January 2019 in Round Lake Park, Illinois
- 12 salaried employees, 40 to 60 contract/seasonal employees
- 40,000 sq. ft. onsite plant/warehouse with 10 production lines
- 42,000 sq. ft. offsite warehouse with 4 production lines
- 600+ finished products
- 800+ raw ingredients
- 25 customers in 2020, up from 15 in 2019

Challenges

- Sister company's software lacked scalability, flexibility, user-friendly interface
- Manage raw ingredients & schedule production based on orders
- Quickly and accurately locate 800+ ingredients in two warehouses
- Instant access to ingredient tests, formulas, packaging specifications/availability
- Manual QuickBooks data entry (inefficient, error-prone)



Mar-Kov Helps SDB Meet Pandemic Demand for Hair Care Products Faster

When the pandemic hit, SDB Products' shampoo and conditioner sales soon doubled and proved the company's commitment to Mar-Kov was the best possible choice.

"There is no way we'd be able to handle the volume increase without Mar-Kov and its ability to adapt as our priorities shifted," says Beth Parsons, senior project manager, SDB Products.

Scalability and flexibility with a user-friendly interface were clear must-haves for SDB's owners based on their experience with their sister company's software.

"We're smaller with a real focus on quicker turns, so if our sister company's software didn't work for them, there was no way it would work for us," says Beth. "Our owners looked at a lot of software and Mar-Kov had the capabilities that make accurate, efficient production possible."

Accountability, Traceability & Transparency

SDB recognizes the importance of accountability, traceability and transparency start to finish. As a result, they understand their customers' need for certificates of analysis on the bulk chemicals and compounds that confirm everything from gravity to viscosity and pH levels. Mar-Kov's software monitors and records the results of the micro-tests so that SDB and its customers know the ingredients meet specifications.

"Customers insist on the documentation – it's mandatory, not optional, because recalls are hideously expensive and bad for the reputation – ours and our customer's," says Beth.

SDB recently ran a mock recall using Mar-Kov and got it done in less than an hour.

"We needed Mar-Kov to track every lot for every chemical, then where that finished product was shipped and when it actually arrived," says Beth. "Manually, it's overwhelming."

One of SDB's sister companies relies on Excel to track and record micro-test results and they've had to dedicate an entire team to those reports.



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Solution:

- Mar-Kov's batch control and MRP (material requirement planning) software.

Results:

- Scalable, flexible, user-friendly software
- Accurate, real-time material resource planning
- Precise, current tracking of 800+ ingredient inventory
- Transparency with traceable, trackable tests, formulas, packaging
- Automated data export to QuickBooks



"Without Mar-Kov, we'd be doing it manually and we'd have to hire a fulltime employee for that role," says Beth. "Manual systems are error-prone and incredibly inefficient."

The **SY**stem saves every recipe, tracks who made each revision and adds a timestamp. Authorized users can also specify which revision is published and available to operators. In addition, the system indicates which version of the recipe was used to make a specific batch.

"Mar-Kov offers instant access to the most current recipes and specifications to help prevent compounding, production and packaging errors so that we're meeting customers' quality and scheduling expectations," says Beth.

Material Resource Planning – In or Out of Stock

Once SDB receives an order for shampoo, conditioner or lotion, the SDB teams rely on the software to check the customer's liquid formula/recipe against the 800+ raw ingredients. Mar-Kov verifies the special and standard chemicals are onsite in the right quantities. It also tells employees exactly where to go to find everything they need, from which warehouse to the aisle, shelf and section on that shelf.

"Across the company, we all have access to the same information and at a glance, we know which chemicals, components and packages we need to fill an order. If they're in stock, it tells us where we go to find them," says Beth. "If we're out of stock, the system shows us how much we need and we simply click to place the order."

“Without Mar-Kov, we'd be manually tracking and recording micro-test results and we'd have to hire a fulltime employee for that role.”

Beth Parsons,
senior project manager, SDB Products

Packaging to Customer Specifications

Each shampoo, lotion or conditioner has to be poured into the correct bottle and topped with the proper cap to meet customers' specifications. As a result, the software checks packaging SKUs and bar codes against SDB's customer-supplied inventory. It confirms availability and makes sure operators load the right bottles and caps into the machines. It's a vital step in the process because although customers see their packaging as unique, the shapes and colors of bottles and lids/caps can look remarkably similar to everyone else.

"Customers ship their packaging to SDB, but the onus is on us to make sure the shampoos, conditioners and lotions end up in the correct bottles and caps," says Beth. "Mistakes are prohibitively expensive because we can't salvage or recoup the product/liquid, bottles/caps or the production time."



CASE STUDY

SBD Products



Tracking & Locating Inventory

Because all bar-coded ingredients and packages are scanned upon receipt, the system knows exactly what's onsite and where it's located. Without the software, it would take hours, even days, to search paper or digital records let alone a total of 80,000 sq. ft. of warehouse space at two separate locations. Delayed production, packaging, shipping and delivery affects customer satisfaction and SDB's reputation.

"Imagine trying to find the special ingredient specified in a customer's formula in a 200 gm container without Mar-Kov," says Beth.

Controlled Substances

In the next year, SDB may need to handle and manage high-value, active ingredients and controlled substances such as CBD. As a result, senior leaders appreciated the fact Mar-Kov has the technology and experience required to support this requirement.

"We wanted to make sure our new system had those capabilities and Mar-Kov fit the bill," says Beth.

Mar-Kov can track a product's movement through the warehouses, then precisely weigh and record usage. Mar-Kov meets legal requirements, ensuring a second employee confirms and time- and date-stamps the activities.

"The system is ready whenever we are," says Beth.

Ready to Scale

When SDB first started production back in 2019, the company's owners and senior leaders had no idea what lay ahead. The pandemic hit in early 2020, and Mar-Kov helped make SDB's rapid and unexpected growth possible.

"Mar-Kov adapted with us as our regular summer to early fall business season became 12 consecutive months of busy," says Beth. "With Mar-Kov, we're prepared for whatever comes next."

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