

### **Optical Card Reader Initiative Furthers Customer-First Approach of Essex Brownell**

Adrienne Maurer, Georgianna Brown, and Celesta Smith collaborated across department lines on a project that is figuring to pay big dividends for Essex Brownell, if not parent company Superior Essex as a whole. The Optical Card Reader (OCR) is expected to save close to 1,000 annual hours of labor, make access to documentation simpler for employees as well as customers, and help modernize the company.

Maurer is a Senior Manager of Business Systems. Brown is a Manager of Inside Sales and Customer Service. Smith has a unique perspective of a Regulatory Compliance Analyst. Together, through OCR, the cross-functional group is digitizing and semi-automating what has historically been a labor intensive, and repetitive process. They aim to improve customer satisfaction while also eliminating wasted manpower.

It is another step in the process being made by Essex Brownell President Jason Krauskopf and his leadership team to re-focus the immediate mission of the brand while also continuing to work towards the future.

“You currently scan the document; load it into the repository. Then you manually enter each piece of information,” Maurer said. “You would literally have to find each data point on the physical piece of paper; then manually key it into the computer.

“These are all the pieces of information that a customer would want to search by and often ask us for. And all of that is just one document. It's not sustainable. You can't do that with thousands of documents.”

And now, no one will have to.

The project originated from a request to make more efficient the digitizing of thousands of faxed, flat, and rasterized docs that are otherwise not searchable. In implementing this tool, it will create a digital index. It will ease the pressure on both customer service as well as other warehouse staff who are often asked to provide detail to customers.

Brown estimated that she would receive close to 500 packets of documents to scan each week, with each packet being up to 10 pages long. It also created a situation that used to be manual from front to back.

The update will provide an immediate benefit to the customer as well, according to Smith.

“Once we clean up the process up front, it's going to save a lot of people extra time and in the long run continue a positive relationship,” she said.

With the help of the IT infrastructure team, Maurer said that optimism abounds.

“It makes the entire interaction exponentially easier for everyone,” she said. “If someone is looking for Chemical Composition or Certification of Composition on any product Brownell sells it will be, essentially, automated and there for them.”

Launching in the third quarter of 2022, the project aligns with Krauskopf’s approach to the business. It is a fringe benefit to the larger picture for Essex Brownell as this one OCR initiative can impact the whole of the company in support of its customer-centric mission.

“We've only talked about one particular department at this point in time, but long term, this software can learn how to store other documents across the company, and that gives us a lot of flexibility moving forward,” Smith said.

Essex Brownell is in the midst of a transformation within its own walls; it aims to be a modernizing force in the distribution warehousing industry. A project like the Optical Card Reader is just one in a series of steps to accomplish both.