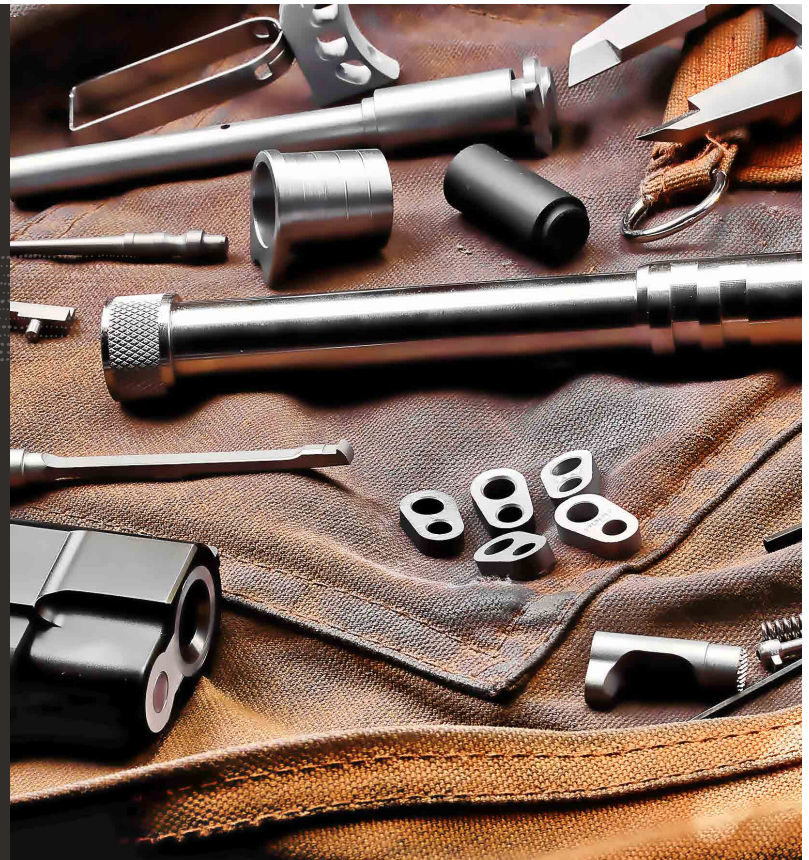




BTM Global and Nighthawk  
Custom Firearms

## Custom Firearms Company Uses NetSuite to Accelerate Growth and Automation



*Having outgrown QuickBooks, Nighthawk Custom Firearms works with BTM Global to implement NetSuite and gain visibility into its manufacturing processes, get its data in one place and eliminate the need for spreadsheets and clipboards.*

Firearms companies that didn't have a unified business management system in place before the recent surge in demand for their products<sup>1</sup> are now facing major operational challenges. The ones that relied on a combination of proprietary software, on-premises solutions and separate inventory management systems are in a particularly tight spot.

Founded in 2004, Nighthawk Custom Firearms designs, produces and sells high-end, custom-built pistols. Based in Berryville, Ark., the 80-employee company makes firearms based on the "1911" platform created for the military.

*"NetSuite pretty much encompasses anything that we'll ever need to grow the business and to make things easier. Having all of that in one package was a big reason behind our decision to implement NetSuite."*

William Goodwin, IT Project Manager,  
Nighthawk Custom Firearms

<sup>1</sup> [Guns in America: Nearly 40 million guns were purchased legally in 2020 and another 4.1 million bought in January](#)



The company offers roughly 40 different customizable base models and also builds custom pistols according to its customers' specifications.

"What sets us apart is the way we produce pistols; we don't have assembly lines or mass production, everything is built by a single gunsmith," said William Goodwin, Nighthawk's IT Project Manager. "Our slogan is, 'One gun, one gunsmith.'"

### **Supporting a Multifaceted Business Model**

Nighthawk makes about 3,600 pistols every year and sells them through a network of retailers, sporting goods stores and specialty firearm stores. The company creates all gun parts in-house, an unusual approach in an industry that tends to outsource a degree of its production.

"We're very vertically integrated in terms of supply," said Goodwin. For example, a single gunsmith will build and hand-fit the pistol, which results in a product that has superior reliability and that will last for generations. "We offer a no-questions-asked lifetime warranty on every pistol that we build," he explained.

With an average price of \$3,700 for its firearms, Nighthawk has additional revenue streams that include serving as the exclusive U.S. distributor of imported revolvers and shotguns for two different European manufacturers. It also sells parts, accessories and Nighthawk merchandise via its ecommerce platform and runs an onsite customer shop.

### **Outgrowing QuickBooks**

A QuickBooks user since 2014, Nighthawk needed a system that would provide visibility into its production processes and bring all of its data onto a single cloud-based platform. The company explored several ERP platforms. It specifically looked for a system that could manage its roughly 16-step pistol manufacturing process, which starts at the order receipt and ends when the gun is shipped to the customer. It found what it was looking for in NetSuite.

"Previously, we weren't doing much tracking or collecting of metrics on that [manufacturing] process," said Goodwin, who worked with NetSuite Alliance Partner BTM Global to implement the system. BTM configured all 16 steps in NetSuite, eradicating the many Excel spreadsheets used to track business operations. "We had a network server drive filled with folder after folder," said Goodwin, "each department was tracking its own stuff independently."

Nighthawk is currently using NetSuite's Advanced Manufacturing, Work Orders and Assemblies and WIP and Routings modules, but also plans to use the ERP for payroll and integrate it with a third-party billing app in the near future.

### **From Clipboards and Spreadsheets to Automated Processes**

Using NetSuite, Nighthawk has gained better visibility into its production processes. Previously, employees used spreadsheets and clipboards to

track orders and give customers updated delivery times. Using the Advanced Manufacturing module, account managers can easily look up work orders, find out where pistols are in the production process, track the progress and provide accurate lead times to customers. NetSuite also helps Nighthawk review the time and effort spent on every pistol and allows it to more accurately plan and schedule builds based on available parts and components.

Nighthawk needed a centralized location to store various data which NetSuite fulfilled within its single database. This is a vast improvement over the company's previous approach, which relied on disparate spreadsheets and folders across siloed departments. There was a lot of work involved to go in and merge the available information to become actionable across the business.

"We even had some departments that were using paper logs for checking things in and out," said Goodwin. "We were definitely excited to have all of that in one place and take a lot of the load off our employees."

With QuickBooks, Nighthawk couldn't do much demand planning for parts or forecasting for its future needs. "We made it work, but the process still required a lot of manual work," said Goodwin. As supply chain shortages continue, being able to do more accurate demand planning and forecasting has been a major "win" for Nighthawk. "We needed a higher level of automation," he added, "and forecasting tools to help our purchasing department."

## Not Just Another Vendor

From its new ERP, Nighthawk also wanted a scalable solution that would grow right along with the company. "We experienced tremendous growth—especially since the start of the pandemic last spring," said Goodwin. "We're very excited to have NetSuite in place and to know it's going to be reliable. We can actually use the system for what it's designed to do, rather than trying to fix it every day."

Asked how BTM Global will continue to support Nighthawk's future growth, Goodwin said the NetSuite Partner exceeded expectations from the point of initial discovery, where all of the business requirements were gathered, right through to post go-live.

"We're in partnership with BTM Global, and they're not 'just another vendor' that we work with," said Goodwin. "I definitely feel like BTM Global has the best interest of Nighthawk in mind across everything that they do."



### Company Snapshot

**Company:** Nighthawk Custom Firearms

**Location:** Berryville, Ark.

**Industry:** Manufacturing



**Partner name:** BTM Global

**Location:** Minneapolis, Minn.