



**ANALYSIS &  
INFORMATION SERVICES**

Expert Automation with Integrity

**Flexible Accounting &  
ERP Software Solutions**

**Distributor Case Study:  
Softland International**

**Supporting 20 Years  
of Growth  
with Continuous  
Improvements in One  
AccountMate System**



# Supporting 20 Years of Growth with Continuous Improvements in One AccountMate System

Softland International, a large Baltimore distribution company, specialized in rack jobbing. They bought non-durable goods like books, games and CDs by the pallet, then resold the items individually to retail Base Exchanges on military bases and naval ships throughout the US and overseas.

The company's CEO wanted to solve problems while positioning his company for ongoing growth. AIS designed a flexible accounting and ERP system, and pinpointed which customizations would make the biggest impact to their bottom line—by overlaying the CEO's objectives with the results of an AIS Technology Impact Assessment of their business.

## Why Softland continued investing in changes to their system

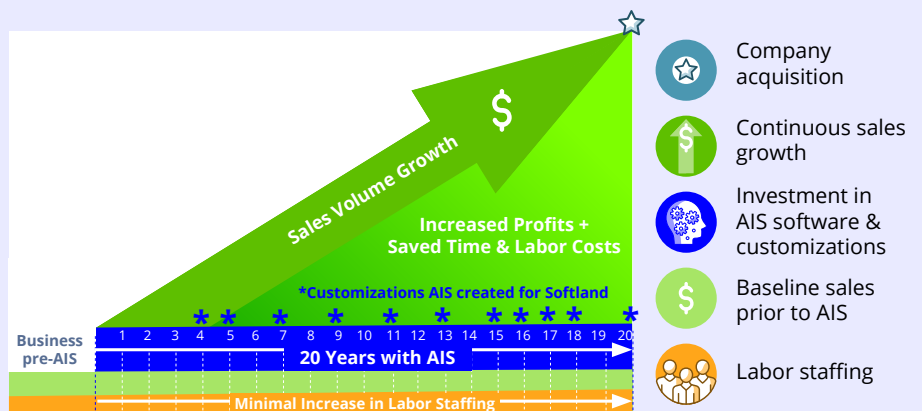
The CEO invested on average \$25,000 per year on enhancements to their system as their company grew from \$35M to \$100M. AIS modified just about everything to fit their growing business. The focus was on optimizing distribution, sales and customer service.

Their flexible AccountMate system and the expertise from AIS provided value to their business far exceeding the cost. It resulted in:

- Volume growth
- Increased profit
- Greatly improved customer service
- Increased speed and efficiency
- Fewer mistakes and less cost
- Improved working environment

Implementing AIS software and customizations helped Softland enjoy continuous success, growing into a \$100 million business over 20 years—without headaches, without much additional labor staffing, and fulfilling the company goal to eventually be acquired.

Investing in AIS software and customizations also saved the distributor both time and labor, resulting in increased profits.



## A need to respond to rapidly changing marketplace trends

*"We have to stay on top of the constantly changing inventory of the entertainment business plus the local price factors of the market and competition. Not an easy task."*

► Sharon Clark,  
Operations Officer



## Examples of automations added by Softland

### Shipping validation

#### *Stop mis-shipping items*

Due to large and repetitive orders, warehouse pickers were shipping wrong items. It got to a point where half of all orders shipped were inaccurately picked.

This created several costly problems. Field reps had to manage returns and re-orders. Customer service had to process returns and re-orders. Warehouse workers had to restock. Retail store workers were frustrated, and stores lost money when they didn't have the correct items on hand to sell.

#### **SOLUTION**

AIS created a validation tool. After workers picked orders, the tool revalidated the items before boxing and shipping to ensure that the correct items are being packed for each order.

#### *Mis-ships were cut from 50% to 0%*

This is a great example of technology being used to easily reframe and then solve a problem. Growth in the company had created a situation that felt unsolvable since workers could never catch up and were too buried to look for solutions. AIS assessed the problem with fresh eyes and provided Softland an easy solution.

### Automated purchase orders

#### *Automatically restock low inventory in retail stores*

A growing transaction volume made it difficult to keep up with changes like inventory data for new products. The lack of data about remote store stock levels was crippling. If an item sold out and wasn't on the shelf in the retail store, they were losing money until it was replenished.

#### **SOLUTION**

AIS added functionality to their system that built the sales orders for them. It automated POs and purchasing based on what inventory was committed and what orders were standing, so that a human didn't need to walk around to look for what was low.

The system checked sales history to see what was selling well at that retail store location and generated a purchase order to restock when it got low. Then it would prompt the purchasing manager for "Any special orders?" and to review the order.

The proactive, automated restocking of low inventory for each store removed the need for retail store staff to manually count and report inventory, while ensuring that sales opportunities were maximized. This resulted in increased sales and higher productivity.



## Automated pricing controls and labeling

### *Tweak pricing to stay competitive and show customers their savings*

Each store location used different pricing to maximize competitiveness in localized markets. For example, a store in an urban market near a Walmart might need to discount more to be competitive and sell products. With constant price adjustments, heavy transaction volume was making it difficult to manually update multiple pricing files and generate updated labels.

### **SOLUTION**

AIS built Softland a label generator tool that printed the list price, retail price, our price, and the competitor's price. This eliminated manual data entry, resulting in huge time savings and improved accuracy. The tool also reported real-time pricing and profitability trends.

In heavily competitive markets, displaying current pricing comparisons on product labels resulted in customers shopping more often and purchasing more, instead of purchasing from competitors. Each store could easily keep their pricing and their marketing promotions tuned to their localized markets.

### **It's about staying competitive**

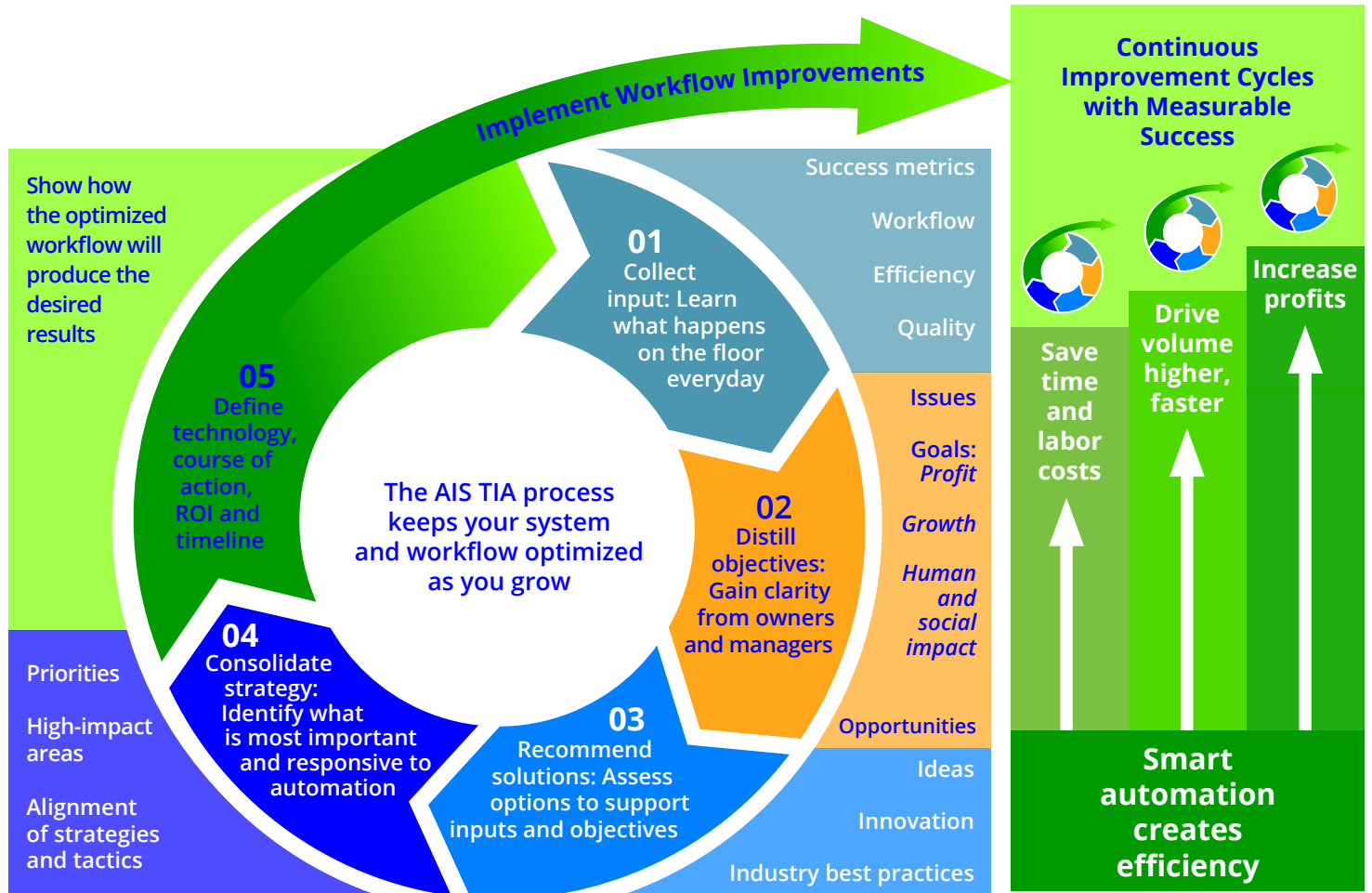
*"The bottom line is that our highly customized software lets us offer more value to our customers faster than our competition."*

► Patrick Nugent, CEO



## The AIS Technology Impact Assessment Process

We take a fresh look at your workflow with you and each of your departments annually to clearly define what's changing in your business. Then we pinpoint the technology, training and automations that will deliver the highest value benefit, and update your technology roadmap and priorities.



## Ongoing assessment

### How AIS ensured that technology made it possible for Softland to do business their way

AIS created a personalized road map for Softland showing how software would best optimize the workflow in their departments as they managed change, addressed problems, prepared budgets and mitigated risk. This Technology Impact Assessment (TIA) clearly defined problems, solutions, and a course of action to optimally automate their success. As technology experts who understand business processes and accounting, we led a yearly process with Softland's team to identify where their workflow had bottlenecks and problems, and where new capabilities were needed.

Then we recommended additions and customizations that were specific to how they wanted their workflow to operate. Each project was connected to a measurable return on investment.

This beneficial process was the foundation for a flexible, integrated ERP solution that allowed Softland the ability and freedom to do business exactly the way they wanted to—year after year for two decades.

## Additional customized solutions that AIS created for Softland as their company grew

1	Added AP automation to manage EDI
2	Enhanced CRM functionality for order speed
3	Altered GL reports to give more granular analysis
4	Built handheld functionality for field order entry
5	Added automatic inventory price updates from vendors
6	Enhanced location-based profit analysis
7	Automated PO and AR for EDI
8	Expanded EDI vendors
9	Modified inventory detail metrics and label details
10	Added additional sales configuration automation
11	Expanded management functions for retail locations to make inventory replenishment faster

## Softland got the critical technology improvements they'd been wanting

Softland had unique, mission-critical processes in their business. They were handling these special needs manually, at a high cost, because they hadn't been able to find a technology solution that could adapt to the way they needed to work.

These manual processes reached breaking points and caused problems that dominated most workdays, ultimately holding them back from making progress on their aspirations to test new ideas and improve their customers' experiences.

AIS helped Softland over and over again for years—implementing incremental changes department by department via automation, with functional solutions that improved their processes cost-effectively.

**Our technology experts optimize long-lasting software to best enable your team's ongoing success**

*"It's not all about the technology. We have a brilliant service organization. But the technology lets our people offer the best service which makes the difference to our customers. Since you never stop getting better, it's good to have technology that supports you. When you combine good business planning and practices with the right technology and expert help, the results are impressive."*

► Sharon Clark, Operations Officer

## AccountMate: Accounting software that's *fully flexible*

"When we partner with innovative managers, that's when we make the biggest impact for clients," said Mark Hambleton, Founder of AIS. "Innovative managers have a lot of ideas to grow their businesses and they're action-oriented."

A continuous drive to innovate is key for a distributor like Softland. They had a heavy transaction volume with a lot of location-specific information; complex inventory in motion around the world; and a need to keep their retailers happy while staying competitive in price and service."

Most accounting software is limited because it's only partly flexible. AIS specializes in AccountMate because it comes with the source code, making it 100% flexible. Every aspect can be changed to fit your business.

This flexibility means we can affordably add unique capabilities that would be impossible for other companies to implement quickly or well. We can fully respond to changing business environments and an innovative manager's ideas, to help bring their vision to life.

*"People don't expect it, but once they see what's possible, they generate business ideas on a higher level."*

► Mark Hambleton, Founder, AIS



## **AIS: A technology partner that lowers your cost and risk**

AIS uses software to build a structure, or system, that allows people to respond to what happens in their business in a way that's designed to be easily modified anytime.

AIS experts first listen to people at all levels of a company before designing anything. They compare the current process to what it could be, mapping business pains to positive solutions. That assessment is the human part.

With this personalized assistance plus flexible technology, companies can have their wish lists fulfilled.

Low cost, low impact changes bring benefits. People can try things with their data without making a huge commitment, without signing contracts they can't get out of. They're able to experiment and explore. Modular tools are available that snap in, if and when they're needed. A flexible system lasts for decades.

Many AIS clients were burned by previous mid-tier or high-end solutions that cost them millions or took many months or never delivered a positive result. With AIS and AccountMate, people soon discover that they can stop hesitating and start moving their business forward faster. Powerful changes and innovations can be implemented quickly for thousands of dollars, not a fortune, in weeks or a few months, not years.

*Let's start a conversation about your custom automation solution*

**Analysis & Information Services, Inc.**

**Timonium, MD**

**(410) 561-0778**

**[info@ais-web.com](mailto:info@ais-web.com)**

Please [click here](#) to  
schedule a 30-minute  
consultation with AIS

