EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COMPANY:
Spark R&D®
Bozeman, Montana
www.sparkrandd.com

OWNER/CHIEF DESIGNER
Will Ritter

INDUSTRY:
Splitboard Bindings and Accessories

BUSINESS CHALLENGE/NEEDS:
• They had an informal and closed system in place to track what inventory was in stock and what needed to be reordered
• Orders weren’t able to be fulfilled on schedule
• No one had access to the big picture and there was insufficient communication about inventory needs between departments

SOLUTION:
• Fishbowl Manufacturing®

RESULTS:
• Each department has access to inventory and ordering data so they can track orders and stay on the same page
• Fishbowl’s integrations with QuickBooks® and Magento® dramatically improve the order fulfillment process
• Fishbowl® is scalable, so it can handle their needs right now and far into the future

SPARK R&D TURBOCHARGES ITS PRODUCTION PROCESS WITH FISHBOWL MANUFACTURING

Snowboarders struggle with the ascent up a mountain, which is what splitboards and their bindings are designed to make easier.

Splitboards allow snowboarders to more easily ascend mountains and forge new trails away from ski lifts to reach untouched powder. Will and Becca Ritter enjoyed snowboarding down mountainsides, but they didn’t enjoy how difficult it was to carry a snowboard uphill. Splitboards have existed since the 1990s, but the binding systems were mostly subpar because they were just regular snowboard bindings used with adapters.

Will Ritter was determined to solve this problem by designing a splitboard-specific binding. His prototype was built using plywood. It wasn’t ideal, but it demonstrated the potential of his idea. Thus, Spark R&D was born. Before

FISHBOWL PROVIDES THE #1 REQUESTED MANUFACTURING & WAREHOUSE MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS FOR QUICKBOOKS!
long, Ritter was using laser-cut aluminum and CNC-machined plastic parts to make binding systems that fit perfectly on splitboards.

In the last 10 years the Bozeman, Montana-based business has grown from a small startup to a thriving enterprise with 35 employees. Spark R&D continues to grow and be a leader in the niche market of splitboard bindings. And Fishbowl is right there with it, helping its employees with their daily tasks and ensuring everyone is on the same page with their inventory quantities and other important data.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE & NEEDS

Will Ritter notes that the company he founded has grown a lot from its humble beginning and now has more complex needs. “The very start was like, we’ll figure out how to make one. That’s awesome, we have one. All right, now how are we going to make 10? How would we make 100? We’re not building rocket ships here, but even for our bill of materials, it’s very challenging to get everything here at the same time.”

As Spark R&D built its customer base and sold more splitboard bindings, they learned that their order fulfillment system was lacking. “We just kept having delivery problems,” Ritter says. “Back in the day we were aiming for September 1, but we were not getting anything out the door until the middle of October.”

The problem was that there were bits and pieces of accurate information, but no one had a clear picture of the whole inventory system. “You can’t just have your one guy with his amazing spreadsheet that no one else gets to look at,” Ritter explains. “You need visibility across what turns into departments over time.”

Spark R&D’s Machine Shop Manager Ryan Leadbeater adds, “We had no way of keeping track of our suppliers, our vendors for various products. All the products moving around were kind of a mystery. It wasn’t possible without some sort of inventory management software.”

This realization that they needed a more advanced inventory tracking system is what led them to Fishbowl.
THE SOLUTION

“...my wife, Becca, went on the hunt for something that could handle all of the sales order through manufacturing,” Ritter says. “And she came across Fishbowl.”

Fishbowl Manufacturing proved to have all of the manufacturing, order fulfillment, and inventory tracking features they had been looking for. Plus, it allowed the whole company to get on board with managing their own inventory.

“We opened the floodgates for everyone to get involved with Fishbowl,” says COO Matthew McKee. “A lot of different people, a lot of different hands in there. And we gave people the power in their own departments to manage their own inventory and kind of broke the shop up into bits and pieces.”

THE RESULTS

Each department found Fishbowl to be extremely useful in different ways. Marketing Manager Dan Ventura says, “The biggest part of Fishbowl, for me, is managing my promotional fleet of bindings, which we use for marketing purposes. I’m always tracking where my bindings are, how many bindings I have left. Fishbowl’s a way for me to track my inventory in real time.”

Fishbowl provides the #1 requested manufacturing & warehouse management solutions for Quickbooks!
The sales side of the business benefited from Fishbowl’s integrations. “Personally, I was on the sales order side of things,” says Sales Manager Luke Dale. “But when you really dig into all the integrations and some of the modules there’s just a lot of stuff that you can do. It connects with QuickBooks and it connects with Magento and it connects with all these other software systems that we’re using.”

Order fulfillment became much faster and more consistent with Fishbowl’s help. “In my job, what I’m using Fishbowl for is the shipping side of things,” notes Adam Wright, Spark R&D’s Shipping Operations Manager. “So I’m going into sales orders and picking and packing the orders, fulfilling the orders, and then shipping them through Fishbowl. Fishbowl’s more efficient than what I’ve used in the past – definitely less steps and less paperwork, which I think is good for the company and the environment.”

The company’s production has never been better. They are able to keep up with growing demand, thanks to Fishbowl’s comprehensive manufacturing features. “On the day to day, I use multiple modules of Fishbowl pretty regularly, so the Bill of Materials, Manufacturing module and Manufacture Order module,” explains James Black, Spark R&D’s Production Manager. “You have accessibility between certain modules that makes our job a lot easier and more efficient. There’s really no other program that would allow me to do what I can do. I’ve never even really thought of Fishbowl as a time-saving tool; I’ve thought of it more as a necessary tool that we need to have in place in order to keep track of day-to-day operations.”

Best of all, now everyone in the company is on the same page about their inventory situation. Ryan Leadbeater reasons, “It’s really nice to be able to go into Fishbowl, get a snapshot of how much extrusion or how many pieces of our raw material we have left where before it was like, ‘We’re out of it!’ ‘What do you mean we’re out of it?’ You know? Now everyone has access to that information.”

Not only is Fishbowl an ideal solution for Spark R&D right now, but it looks to be there for them for many years to come. “I have nothing but confidence that Fishbowl is going to continue to suit our needs now and in the future as we grow as a company,” says Dan Ventura. Will Ritter adds, “It really has helped us mature and turn into something that can scale. This has been our most calm production season ever.”
Visit [www.sparkrandd.com](http://www.sparkrandd.com) to find a huge selection of splitboard bindings and other related accessories and gear. In addition, you can view the [video case study](http://www.sparkrandd.com) of Spark R&D here.

**ABOUT FISHBOWL**

*Fishbowl*’s business automation platform is the No. 1 requested manufacturing and warehouse management solution for QuickBooks users, and it is also a popular standalone solution for organizations or enterprises looking to track assets. For QuickBooks users, it provides the same advanced features and flexibility larger organizations enjoy, but at a fraction of the cost.

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