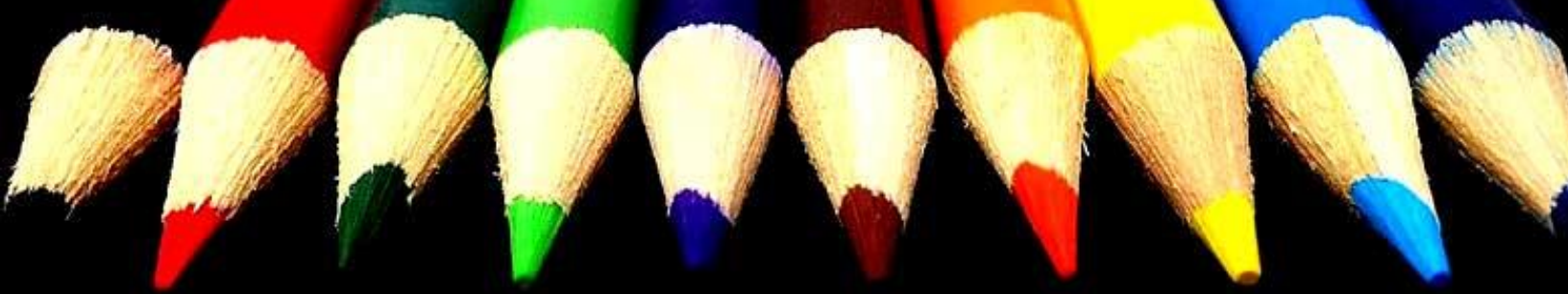


## SchoolKidz Case Study





## School Supply Company Turns to Hitachi Solutions to Help Make the Grade

### Customer Profile

Based in Woodridge, Illinois, SchoolKidz provides school supply kits containing school materials and tools according to the specifications of a school, teacher, parent, or other organization. A business unit of global office retailer Staples, SchoolKidz delivers its products to thousands of schools nationwide.

### INDUSTRY

Consumer Goods

### LOCATION

United States

**“Our customers are seeing a brighter, sharper image with our website compared to prior years. With our new, sharp site, customers are impressed not only with the appearance but with the functionality. The overall user experience was what we were striving for to begin with, and it has been a major benefit that we received going with Hitachi Solutions .”**

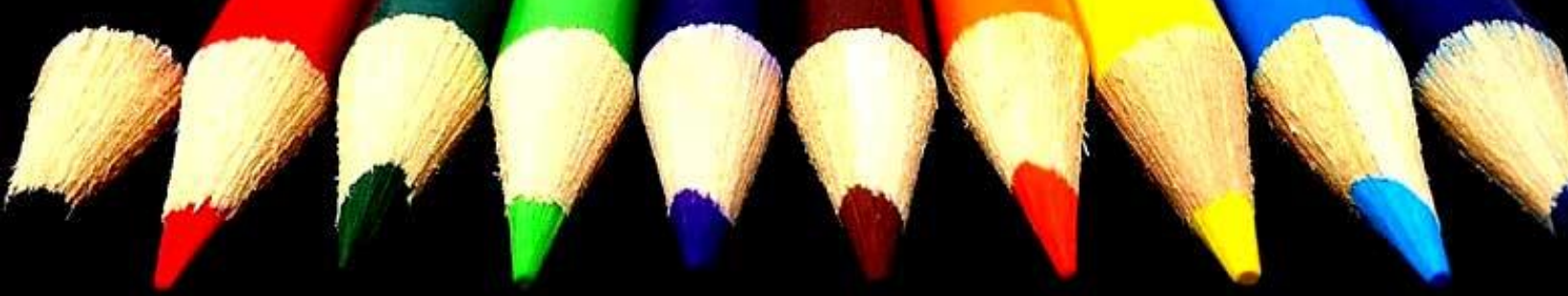
### Joe Grlica, IT/IS Manager for SchoolKidz

Based in Woodridge, Illinois, the SchoolKidz company – a subsidiary of the world-renowned office products supply company, Staples - provides pre-made school supply kits to thousands of schools across the nation. SchoolKidz believes in providing the highest quality materials and educational tools to children through three different online ordering programs – Teacher Tailored Kits, Build-A-Kit, and Kits for Kidz – with each of the programs operating as its own business function. With three different online stores needing to be overseen, SchoolKidz wanted a one-stop solution that could run all of their school supply programs on a single platform, fully integrated with their Microsoft Dynamics GP system, that could provide their customers with a rich user experience. Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce proved to be the answer, enabling SchoolKidz to efficiently manage and oversee its online stores with an end-to-end Web-based system that provides the necessary ecommerce capabilities and Microsoft Dynamics GP integration.

### CHALLENGE

SchoolKidz’s three separate online programs all primarily revolve around school supplies, but each provides services that cater to slightly different audiences. Through the Teacher Tailored Kits program, the core program of the company,





“Prior to Hitachi Solutions, we would not promote to our customers that we offered an online solution. But after seeing what Hitachi Solutions has done for us, we promote the fact that we have an online solution to all of our customers.”

Jim Mulder, Director of SchoolKidz

SchoolKidz takes the school supply list that the teacher sends home every year and then creates a custom quote for the school. If the school agrees to participate, they print up order forms to give to parents, who then decide to purchase a kit or go out to a retail store to get the supplies. “We find that approximately 30 percent of parent units end up participating,” said Jim Mulder, director of SchoolKidz. “They return the order form to the school, the school consolidates the orders, and then they send them to us.” Build-A-Kit was founded to work alongside the Teacher Tailored Program, allowing parents who miss the Teacher Tailored order deadlines to go to the site and build their own kits. Kits for Kidz is a program that caters to low-income families and communities, offering kits containing a preestablished assortment of items that are sold primarily through relief organizations and care agencies.

SchoolKidz recognized the trend of schools pushing parents toward an online path, but the software they chose to help them keep up with this trend was problematic. “Five years ago, SchoolKidz chose the most affordable solution, but we experienced many problems,” said Mulder. “Joe Grlica [the IT/IS manager] spent much of the time troubleshooting- trying to find out why the site was down, why the data that came through was inaccurate. It forced us to act.”

Their software program also was not integrated with the Microsoft Dynamics ERP and back office system, causing business operations to run with less efficiency. “We were doing a lot of manual entry prior to Hitachi Solutions with regards to orders coming into our ERP and Microsoft Dynamics GP system,” said Joe Grlica. SchoolKidz desired software that would allow them the ability to run all of their school supply programs on one platform; richer functionality with their online product catalogs and stores; seamless integration with their Microsoft Dynamics GP system; and an online credit card transaction solution that was secure and trusted by the customer.

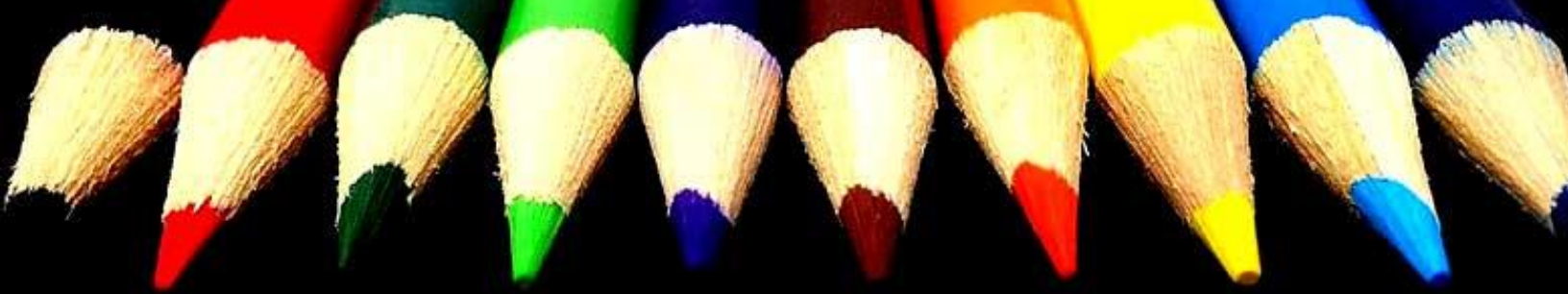
## SOLUTION

Because Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce provides a comprehensive system containing all the necessary ecommerce capabilities in addition to complete integration with Microsoft Dynamics GP, SchoolKidz determined that it was the best software for its business needs.

SchoolKidz leveraged Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce’s advanced merchandising capability, superior marketing functionality, and Business to Business functionality to provide a powerful and personalized user experience to their customers by tailoring the catalog to their unique needs. For example, SchoolKidz now has the ability to offer custom templates to Kits for Kidz customers who wish to run fundraising promotions for a certain school. “The customer can create a template with their own logos and call-outs specific to the organization,” said Grlica. “Hitachi Solutions gave us the ability to have these custom templates for the customer through the site.”







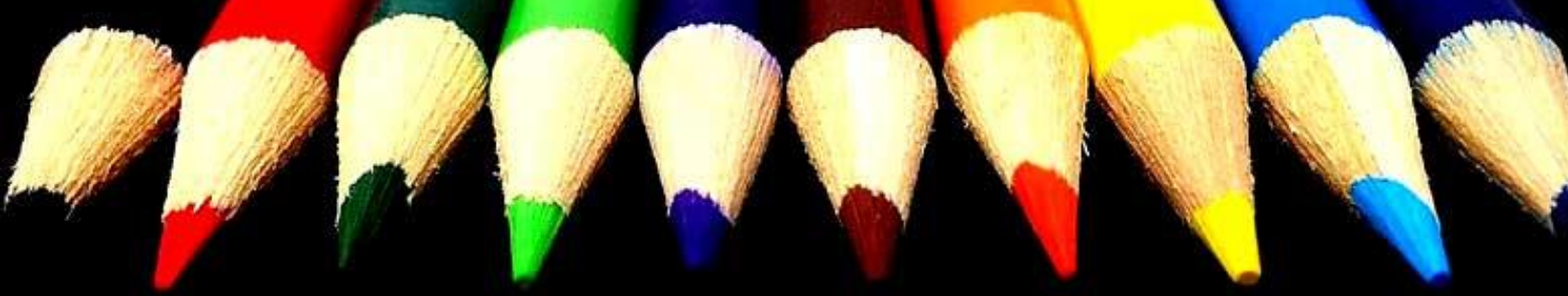
Through the Merchandising Management Module, SchoolKidz is able to efficiently organize and manage the product catalogs for its three stores using a single interface, as well as utilize important features that significantly impact the company's day-to-day operations. Features like product catalog import utilities help the company immediately refresh school supply kits and products for thousands of schools, offering an instant insight into inventory needs and availability, and the opportunity to quickly address product demands. "With data import, we can create catalogs within the shopping cart, and create and import a Microsoft Excel template that automatically creates everything in the cart," said Grlca. "Without that functionality, we wouldn't be where we are right now."

In addition to product catalog import utilities, features such as the Multi-Store Order Management Desk and Marketing Campaign Management are valuable in assisting SchoolKidz with running the inventory and sales processes across all three of their online programs, further enhancing the company's business resources and remedying their previously disjointed and ineffective inventory and order processing system. "Before Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce, I had to commit three or four employees to processing and to making sure that the data we were providing to customers was accurate," said Mulder. "But now with Hitachi Solutions we only need one employee as opposed to four. We appreciate not having to get bogged down with this process any more."

Revitalizing the site with a fresh, new design was crucial for SchoolKidz, and SchoolKidz team member Anthony LaPorte, the company's E-Business IT/IS specialist, provided Hitachi Solutions sharp site designs that were successfully turned into code. "Our customers are seeing a brighter, sharper image with our website compared to prior years," said Grlca. "With our new, sharp site, customers are impressed not only with the appearance but with the functionality. The overall user experience was what we were striving for to begin with, and it has been a major benefit that we received going with Hitachi Solutions."

Fulfilling another important efficiency requirement, Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce's integration with the Microsoft Dynamics GP system through the ERP Integration Module allowed SchoolKidz to keep track of and maintain all order and processing information without the need of manual intervention. "With our Teacher Tailored site we are able to run reports based off of live order data coming to our side through integration," said Grlca. "It's valuable information when you know it's 100 percent reliable, and you can also be more strategic when looking at data because it's residing on your side. Data is basically at your fingertips."





“I think Hitachi Solutions is at the top of their class with regards to their skill set in the technology field that they’re working in. The knowledge of their web team and data architects has provided us a lot of different options. We are very pleased with how they turned our vision into a reality.”

Joe Grlica, IT /IS Manager for SchoolKidz

## **BENEFITS**

### **Separate Programs Running Smoothly**

Because Build-A-Kit, Teacher Tailored Kits, and Kits for Kidz offers school supply products to users with different purposes, these three online programs are essentially three separate business entities. With these three programs operating essentially as three different business functions, SchoolKidz needed software that would not only offer each individual program an efficient management system, but would also give SchoolKidz an overarching system that would effectively maintain the operations of all three stores simultaneously. “Before, we had to manage each of our three programs on three different databases,” said Grlica. “But now, Hitachi Solutions’ Software as a Service (SaaS) model allows all three programs on one database and management section.” By uniting the three stores on a single platform, Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce provided SchoolKidz with the solution toward creating more coherent and effective organization.

### **Hosted and Secure**

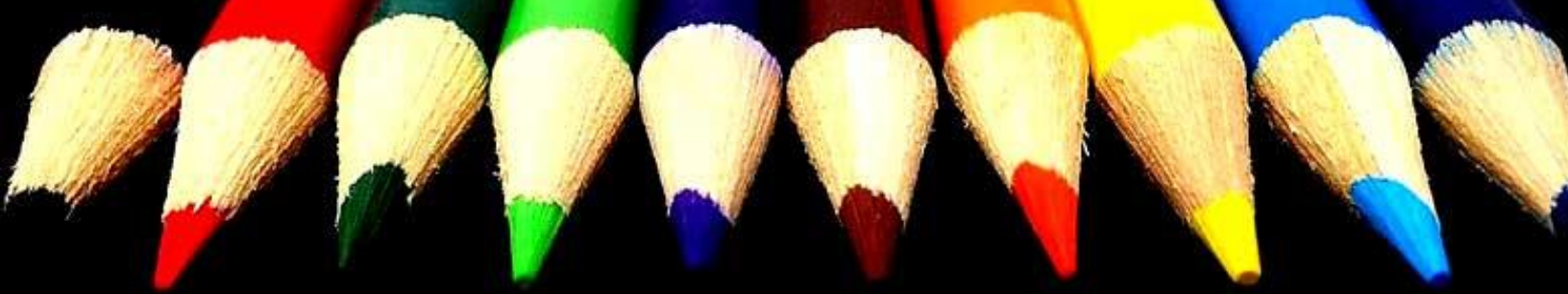
With all of the different business operations that require the attention of the company, having to focus on the maintenance of their computer software and hardware infrastructure would not be an optimal use of their time and resources. Recognizing the importance of delivering a fully functional, straightforward software model, the SchoolKidz Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce is implemented on a Software as a Service (SaaS) model. The Software as a Service offering frees up SchoolKidz to focus on running its business without having to worry about IT and PCI compliance issues. “Hosting on the Hitachi Solutions cloud has allowed us to not have to dedicate resources on our end to server maintenance and day-to-day server operations,” said Grlica. “They’ve taken away that headache by hosting everything.”

Another headache that SchoolKidz does not need to be concerned about is PCI compliance, which was one of their foremost requirements when searching for a solution. Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce software is not only PCI compliant but also PCI certified on the PA DSS 1.2 Standard by the PCI Standards council, thus providing SchoolKidz the highest security level of security possible from an ecommerce platform.

### **Easier Query and Reporting Activities**

Since the different online stores receive many users seeking to order from the company’s extensive selection of products, SchoolKidz required software that would make searching and organizing orders by category quick and effortless. Hitachi Solutions enabled SchoolKidz to automatically create a catalog category for its Teacher Tailored Kit store by uploading a spreadsheet containing the items for the custom catalog/category, and when the catalog category is created SchoolKidz can query by category/school for reporting purposes. This ensures that when orders for a particular school are being tallied, SchoolKidz can run a report that specifies





## **WHY HITACHI SOLUTIONS?**

Hitachi Solutions is one of the largest, most qualified and highly experienced Microsoft Dynamics consulting firms across the globe, capable of handling complex tier-one displacement projects. Our company's caliber of expertise and commitment to customers is evidenced through our consistent recognition from both Microsoft and industry analysts. Contact a Hitachi Solutions expert to discuss how our Microsoft Dynamics Solutions can help improve your productivity.

exactly which product and how many were ordered for that school.

## **Streamlining Operations**

By integrating SchoolKidz with their Microsoft Dynamics GP system, Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce allowed the company to abandon the time-consuming process of manually entering sales orders and customer information. Everything is tied together through the ERP Integration: customer account information, sales orders, invoices, inventory, and inventory price. When a customer chooses to buy a product on one of the online stores, the customer's credit card is charged automatically, and the order is shipped directly from the warehouse. SchoolKidz no longer needs to charge the customer's credit card individually, or manually integrate the customer's information. Because all of this information is connected together, it saves SchoolKidz time and allows their order flow management to run with increased efficiency.

