

Case Study

North Alabama Fabricating Company Chooses InfoSight Metal Tags and Printer

InfoSight Corporation
20700 US Highway 23
Chillicothe, OH 45601
740-642-3600
www.infosight.com

North Alabama Fabricating Company
4632 Richard Arrington Jr. Blvd. North
Birmingham, AL 35212
205-561-5554

Summary

North Alabama Fabricating Company (NAFCO) initially chose a less expensive tag and printer system to identify their structural steel products. This less expensive choice became more and more expensive as they experienced continual problems with the printer and found they needed to use multiple tags per piece. After making the change to the InfoSight Labelase® 1000 Printer and InfoSight Tags, they have experienced reliable operation from the printer and have reduced tag usage to one tag per piece. NAFCO Production Manager, Owen Parrish concludes, "We are happy with the InfoSight products and service. They perform as promised and have made creating tags and tracking products easier and more accurate."

Case Study

This is the story of how North Alabama Fabricating Company (NAFCO) decided to pay a little bit more for a product that works as promised and saved big in the long run. NAFCO is a company that specializes in engineering, fabrication, and installation of heavy structural steel, bins, tanks, and industrial ductwork for complex projects around the world. Their commitment to delivering projects on time, to specification, and within budget requires precise and accurate tracking of pieces during processing and fabrication, as well as finished products.

InfoSight is a manufacturer of industrial marking machines, metal tags, metal tag printers, barcode readers, and custom machinery for manual and automatic identification and traceability applications worldwide. In 2001, InfoSight introduced the KettleTag®PLUS, which is the only metal tag with text and bar codes that survives the entire galvanizing process.

Soon after InfoSight introduced KettleTag®PLUS, NAFCO took note of InfoSight and the new tag, but initially, the tags seemed expensive. Indeed, a tag that can deliver the “one and done” durability the KettleTag®Plus promises costs more than a standard metal tag. NAFCO opted for a less expensive stainless steel tag from a different tag manufacturer.

The tags NAFCO chose did not include bar codes. The vendor promised to develop a 2D bar code with scanning equipment, but never delivered. Eventually, it became necessary for NAFCO to use three (3) tags per piece during fabrication and to identify the shipped product. The printer was slow, and as their production increased, the printer became the limiting factor. To make matters worse, they experienced regular problems with the printer. It was unreliable.

Eventually, NAFCO decided to make a change. For a large galvanized job, they decided to purchase identification tags from the galvanizer instead of using their own tags. The galvanizer used KettleTag® Plus, and the tags performed well for this particular job.

In 2016, Kathy Parrish, now retired Vice President of NAFCO, approached InfoSight at NASCC – The Steel Conference – North American Steel Construction Conference. Bob Speer from InfoSight worked with Parrish to determine the best printer and tags for their processes, which include both galvanizing and painting. He recommended the KettleTag®PLUS for pieces that would be galvanized and ShotTag™ for pieces that would be blasted and painted. He also recommended the LabelLase® 1000 printer. Before the show was over, NAFCO placed their first order.

Experience is a good teacher, and bad experiences teach lasting lessons. NAFCO was still hesitant to believe the InfoSight printer would be as reliable as promised and that the tags would hold up as promised. They asked for a maintenance plan to be included with the printer, and for some tags to test at the galvanizer and in their on-site paint booths. In their initial experience with the KettleTag®PLUS, it performed well at the galvanizer. During their additional testing, the KettleTAG®PLUS repeated its success. ShotTag™ proved to be a durable option, withstanding the preparatory

blasting for the paint booth. NAFCO was pleased to find intact, readable, scan-able tags after the initial testing for ShotTag™.

NAFCO put the LabelLase® 1000 into service, printing KettleTag®Plus and ShotTag™ as needed. The printer was immediately able to meet the demand for tags. There is one employee responsible for operating and maintaining the printer, and another employee trained for when she is on vacation. After nearly a year of service, InfoSight's Becky Dolan reached out to NAFCO to remind them of the service agreement. NAFCO had no issues in the first year of operating the printer, but they had the maintenance performed as a best practice. InfoSight supplied a printer to use while this service was performed. Since then, the printer has had to be serviced only one other time.

NAFCO strives to stay on the cutting edge of technology to improve efficiency. Because InfoSight's tags are so durable, NAFCO now only uses one tag per piece that survives the entire production process. The tags include bar codes, so when the fabricators in the shop pull a piece to work with, they scan it right into the system. Not only are they saving time from having to write down or key in which piece they are using, they have eliminated the risk of misreading handwriting or making a typo.

Because the LabelLase®1000 printer is so fast and reliable, and the KettleTag®PLUS and ShotTag™ are so durable, cost became a non-factor. The overall cost of the previous tag system was higher because of the issues they faced with the equipment and the fact they had to use three times as many tags. NAFCO's production has increased, and so has its demand for tags. They haven't had any problems with the printer meeting that demand. NAFCO Production Manager, Owen Parrish concludes, "We are happy with the InfoSight products and service. They perform as promised and have made creating tags and tracking products easier and more accurate."