



CASE STUDY

Tracking What Matters

How Huber Supply and Metalcraft Improve Cylinder Visibility and Asset Management

BACKGROUND

Since 1939, Huber Supply has provided industrial, medical and specialty gases to customers across Iowa and southern Minnesota. The fourth-generation family business serves a wide range of industries, from bars and restaurants requiring CO₂ to manufacturers using oxygen, nitrogen and argon for welding and laser applications.

For gas distributors, cylinders are among their most valuable assets. Huber Supply has more than 30,000 cylinders in the field, many of which cost hundreds - or even thousands - of dollars to replace. Knowing where those assets are, when they were delivered and when they need to be returned is critical to both customer service and operational efficiency.

OPPORTUNITY

About ten years ago, Huber Supply adopted TrackAbout cylinder tracking software to gain greater visibility into its cylinder inventory. Prior to implementing a barcode-based tracking system, the company relied heavily on manual recordkeeping.

"Before the barcodes was a lot of pencil and paper," said Cal Huber, President of Huber Supply. Manual processes make it difficult to maintain accurate cylinder records and created opportunities for errors when inventory was audited or cylinders were exchanged in the field.

The company needed a durable identification solution that could support its tracking program while withstanding the demanding environments gas cylinders encounter every day.

SOLUTION

Through its relationship with TrackAbout, Huber Supply partnered with Metalcraft to implement serialized barcode labels across its cylinder fleet. Each label connects to tracking data that records every stage of a cylinder's lifecycle, from filling and loading to delivery, pickup and return. The system provides detailed visibility into asset locations, rental activity, customer transactions and medical gas compliance records.

Durability was equally important, as cylinders are routinely exposed to harsh outdoor conditions and extreme temperatures throughout Iowa and Minnesota. As Huber explained, "We needed a reliable tag that stayed on."

RESULT

The combination of TrackAbout software and Metalcraft barcode labels has given Huber Supply greater visibility into its cylinder inventory while reducing the challenges associated with manual tracking. Employees can now quickly access delivery histories, customer records, fill information and asset locations with a simple scan.

The durable labels have also performed well in demanding environments. Huber noted that many labels remain intact despite years of exposure to weather, transportation and daily handling. "The thing about the Metalcraft one is it's on there, and until you put a blade on it, it's staying on," he said.

The tracking system has also helped support business growth. Huber pointed to the company's expanding forklift propane business as an area where improved inventory visibility has made a significant impact. With accurate cylinder data, the team can better manage inventory levels and ensure customers have the cylinders they need when they need them.

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Cal Huber

- President of Huber Supply



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