

Business Customer Success Story

The Secret Chocolatier

Charlotte, NC

The Secret Chocolatier is a modern small business with old-world roots. Bill Dietz, a second-generation pastry chef, had found himself at a career crossroads after 40 years in the trade. Meanwhile, his son-in-law Andy Ciordia had been building technology businesses. In April 2009, the two men and their wives, Karen Dietz and Robin Ciordia, gathered around the kitchen table for a family meeting, and The Secret Chocolatier was born.

With an objective of building a self-sustaining family business, manufacturing and selling a premium quality product that delivers a blissful customer experience, they have found a “sweet spot” in their competitive niche. Today, The Secret Chocolatier does over \$300,000 in annual revenue through two outlets of their own, seven additional retail partners, and a growing business-to-business sales channel—not bad for a company with only four full-time employees, all of them family members.

The Secret Chocolatier began using Bill.com for payables in July, 2011 to simplify its back office operations. The solution helps the company pay bills quickly and securely, improve financial visibility and auditability, and simplify back office operations so the team can focus on getting sweet treats into the hands and mouths of their loyal customers.

Making payments more quickly

The Secret Chocolatier pays about 30–50 bills each month for everything from utilities and ingredients to packaging and production. In the past, this meant that Andy spent valuable time writing paper checks, scrounging stamps, and keeping the checkbook balanced. “We’re like ping pong balls distributing our product all around the area—I can’t be everywhere at once, and I can’t run to the mailbox every single day,” says Andy. “Coming from a tech background, when I need to solve a problem, I turn to digital solutions first, and that’s how we approached our bill pay systems.”



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Now Robin Ciordia and Karen Dietz use Bill.com to manage payments easily and efficiently. Incoming bills can be digitized quickly, then routed to Andy for quick online approval from wherever he happens to be, on any device. “We save so much time, and more people can be part of the process. And I don’t think we even buy stamps anymore,” he reports.



- › Confection retailer
- › \$300,000 annual revenue
- › 4 full-time employees, 6 part-time employees
- › Approx. 30–50 outgoing payments each month

Challenge: Family-owned company without a dedicated accounting staff needed a more efficient way to pay bills.

Solution: Bill.com for payables.

Benefits: Spend less time managing bill payments while gaining visibility into payment activity and status.

Gaining visibility into payment activity

Andy Ciordia had enough personal experience with the online bill pay services offered by banks to know that he needed a different approach for his business. “I never enjoyed the user experience with bank portals for my personal finances, and it was always a black hole in terms of the payment details and status,” he explains.

While he could set vendors up for payment, such tools failed to capture important information, such as how long bills had been outstanding, or whether any issues had arisen in the account. Now payment status is tracked and available at a glance. Digital versions of each bill are always readily accessible to provide full background detail for each payment, and notes stored within the same system provide a simple way to capture additional account information. “I like having an audit trail, which Bill.com gives you,” says Andy.



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At the same time, The Secret Chocolatier is getting its bills paid more quickly now, which helps the company maintain healthy supplier relationships that are so critical for small business continuity and success.

Simplifying back-office operations

With no staff dedicated to bookkeeping or other back-office processes, such tasks fall on Dietz and Ciordia family members, who already have their hands full. Andy Ciordia likes to quote a favorite saying: “The business of doing business is not the business you want to be doing.”

“I’d rather be helping make chocolate than having to sit down and do books or double data entry or buy envelopes or minutiae that slows you down,” he explains. “I don’t have the time for that. How can you make your life a bit easier with less headaches? Bill.com helps with that.” The solution integrates with the accounting software used by The Secret Chocolatier, eliminating the need for repetitive data entry while improving accuracy.



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Bill.com has become such an ingrained part of daily life at The Secret Chocolatier that Andy can’t imagine doing business any other way. “Bill.com helps us across the board. I enjoy it for the basic principle that it gets the job done well and I don’t have to think about it,” he says. “Bill.com is reliable, dependable, trustworthy, and secure—all the things you want to see in your finance chain.”

bill.com CONNECT

Bill.com® Connect is a powerful, business payments platform that places your bank at the center of your small and medium business customers’ payables and receivables processes. Visit bill.com/banks to learn more.
