

Dixie Auctions

A Southern Success Story with PFW Auction Manager

In 1988, Tom Thornton founded Dixie Auctions in Jacksonville, Florida, and from 1989 to 1996 the company was the exclusive handler of bankruptcy sales in the northern part of the state. Dixie subsequently obtained state and federal government contracts, expanded into bank sales, and then formed a long-term relationship with the financial institution Wachovia. The first private company in the U.S. to handle a U.S. Navy contract, Dixie Auctions conducts sales of surplus equipment at naval bases in Jacksonville, as well as Charleston, SC.

Initially, Dixie's auctions were performed with the sole "technical" aid of a typewriter, and in one sale, Thornton and his son were required to type two-thousand invoices! Eventually, things turned "high tech" with the acquisition of a PC, and over the company's history several auction software packages have been implemented. Thornton says one of his goals is—through Dixie and by assisting other area auctioneers—to help grow the auction business in northeast Florida.

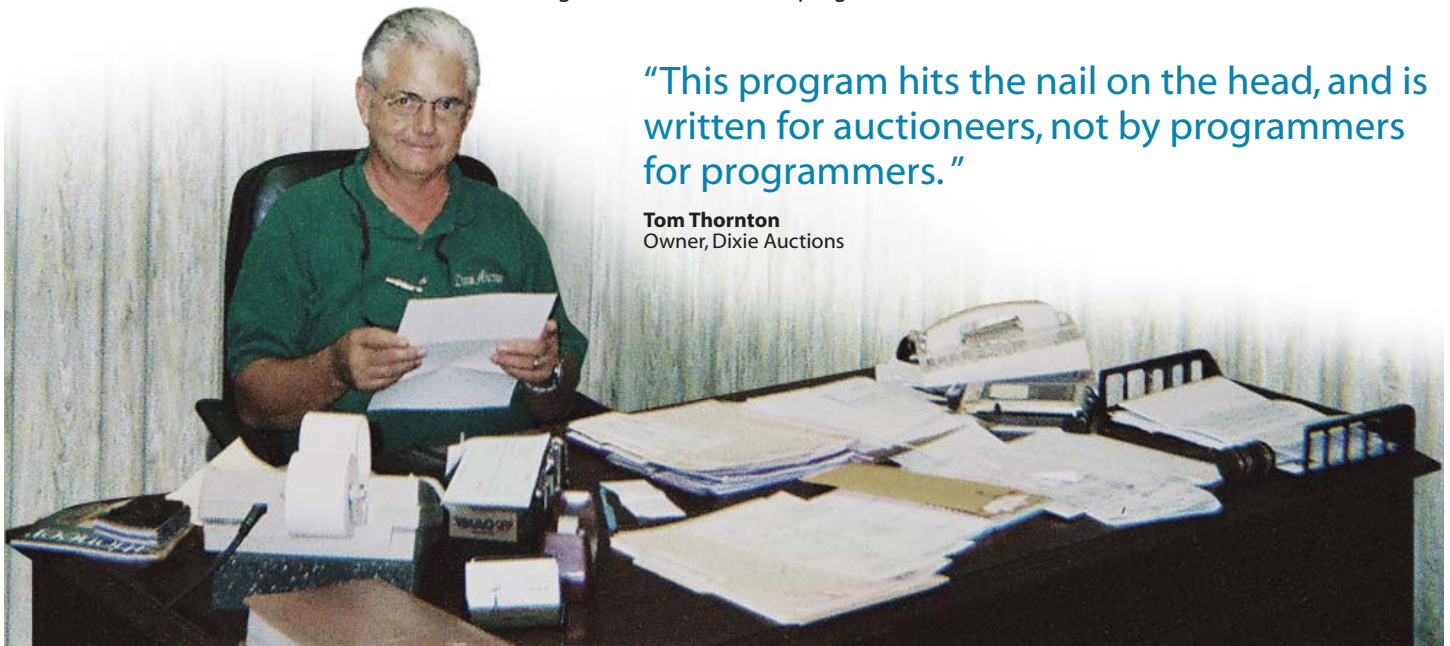
In 2002, Thornton was dissatisfied with Dixie's auction management software, as well as the wireless technology they had in place. He saw an advertisement for a wireless system that a division of PFW was selling at the time, and called to make inquiries. When he realized PFW was developing auction software, it piqued his interest and he investigated. He liked what he saw and Dixie Auctions consequently became a beta tester for PFW Auction Manager. According to Thornton, "The rest is a very pleasant history."

"It's extremely easy to teach someone this program," Thornton observes. "When our part-timers come in once or twice a month, there's now an easy transition. Because PFW Auction Manager is so purely logical, I can teach someone how to use it in 20 minutes of training. PFW has taken the time to build easy-to-use screens, and has integrated familiar Windows pull-downs as well. You don't have to commit anything to memory, so PFW Auction Manager is not a brain-tease program."

He goes on to say that "I've been delighted to no end working with PFW in helping develop the software. This program hits the nail on the head, and is written for auctioneers, not by programmers for programmers. I have a programming background and a sense of how applications flow and work. With PFW Auction Manager there is a fluid use of the program that our previous systems' developers didn't want to address. For example, I don't need to close out a screen or sub-menu to make an invoice change; I don't need to go around my elbow to get to my fingers—there's no digression."

Thornton also notes, "We are liquidators, so we might have 40 consignors in one sale, therefore tracking consignors is key—tracking reports are important to us for bankruptcy courts and banks, and not all software can handle that—PFW Auction Manager can."

For Dixie Auctions, PFW Auction Manager has streamlined processes. As an example, Thornton recalls, "The sales tax structure in



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Owner, Dixie Auctions

For More Information

Visit <http://auction.pfw.com> for more information. To contact PFW call (519) 474-3300 or send an e-mail to auction@pfw.com.

PFW Systems Corporation

PFW Auction Manager is developed and supported by PFW Systems Corporation. PFW, a privately-owned company based in London, Ontario, Canada, provides automated dealership solutions for industrial and agricultural equipment dealerships throughout North America. As an authorized IBM Premier Business Partner and an IBM Certified for eBusiness Business Partner operating in Canada and the United States, PFW develops, markets, installs and supports dealership management software for the IBM eServer iSeries family of business computers. In addition, PFW continues to introduce new software technologies, such as browser-based CRM solutions, online parts ordering, Business Intelligence tools, manufacturer and product interfaces and wireless applications.



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Florida was a horrendous problem for us: there is a surtax applied to the first \$5000 of a sale, as well as the fact that counties have different tax rates. PFW Auction Manager can handle these problems and it saves me hours on breaking out these taxes.”

“Every problem we faced regarding variable rates and consignors and sellers is now gone. There is the greatest flexibility in PFW Auction Manager’s commission structures—I can’t imagine a way that the software doesn’t work with regard to commissions. Whatever makes you and the customer happy—any commission combi-

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nation—is available. I’ve changed our commission structures as a result of the options available within PFW Auction Manager, and I feel like the program was written just for me: it gives me things I never thought about before.”

Dixie Auctions frequently changes the whole method of how a sale works. Thornton explains that they turn parameters around, depending on whether a sale is in-house or not. Thornton notes, “For Navy sales, we adjust the system in terms of fee and expense structures. Flexibility has been built into this program, so all sizes of auction houses can use this system.

“At the end of a Navy sale, I’m often asked if the sale totals match—and with

the Consignor Monitor feature, I can give them that answer instantly. It’s phenomenal to get an instant running total.” Illustrating the system’s impact, Thornton recalls that “because a customer was impressed with the flexibility and clarity of the software, I was called back to conduct a sale—solely because of PFW Auction Manager.”

Thornton feels industry-specific processes have been considered: “PFW Auction Manager lets us pre-sort a sale by consignor and buyer numbers and that’s important—we don’t deal with names before a sale—and then, after the sale, we need to be able to sort by name, so both sorting methods are necessary. The system doesn’t alter the preferences of anything but that particular auction—I like that. If you have to change auctions, when you change back, you don’t need to make any alterations—the system is foolproof.

“With regard to product support, there is no comparison with our old support package,” he notes. “Our former vendor touted that there was 24-hour-a-day support, and there was—if you could get a hold of them. With PFW you get what you pay for: excellent support—expedient is the word that comes to mind—and the attitude of the people there is great. There is a willingness to solve a problem and program changes are discerned in terms of urgency—PFW doesn’t back away from important changes. I’ve never heard a ‘no’ for issues critical to my business—that’s the best part of dealing with PFW.”

The “pleasant history” being created as a result of the relationship between Dixie Auctions and PFW Auction Manager seems indefinite, and Thornton sums up his feelings by observing, “PFW has gone to the auction companies in order to find what we need auction management software to do.” Thornton says Dixie Auctions finally has, with PFW Auction Manager, “an auction management system the way we want it.”