



Business challenge
Brownells Inc. needed the ability to quickly adapt to the firearms industry's stringent and dynamic regulations and rising customer expectations for e-commerce convenience.

Transformation
Brownells and IBM Business Partner Salient Process deployed IBM Operational Decision Manager software to optimize business rules management, processing every regulation that could affect the buying experience through the company's rules engine.

Business benefits

300%
increase
in regulated item throughput

Supports
compliance
with current regulations pertaining to firearms sales

200%
decrease
in order fulfillment times

Brownells Inc.

Automating business rules to improve customer service with IBM Operational Decision Manager software

Founded in 1939, [Brownells Inc.](#) supplies firearms, accessories, gun parts, gunsmithing tools, survival gear and archery products. It serves gunsmiths, gun owners, law enforcement and military organizations. The company is headquartered in Montezuma, Iowa, and has a second facility in Grinnell, Iowa. Brownells processes over 1 million orders every year.

"We want to be the go-to place for highly regulated small package items. Operational Decision Manager will be important in achieving that goal."

—Curt Graff, Director of Technology, Brownells Inc.



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Keeping pace with regulations

The firearms industry is one of the most regulated in the US. Rules are not only many but also stringent, with random auditing by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Infractions can bring fines of as much as USD 1 million. Compliance is also a moving target, with laws frequently changing and varying from state to state.

In addition to regulatory compliance, Brownells faces rising customer expectations. “People’s perceptions of e-commerce are, ‘I put an order in, and I should get a package at my door the next day,’” says Curt Graff, Director of Technology at Brownells. “In a regulated industry, that can’t happen as often. And because our e-commerce site didn’t talk to our legacy business system from a rules perspective, customers would send orders to us electronically and we’d have to tell them we couldn’t ship it because of regulations. We needed to be more flexible and adaptable.”

Optimizing business rules management

Working with IBM certified personnel from IBM Business Partner Salient Process Inc., Brownells deployed IBM Operational Decision Manager software. Salient Process led the requirements gathering process, then helped Brownells implement Operational Decision Manager software first on premises and eventually as a service in the cloud.

The IBM solution captures, automates and governs the business rules directing customer-focused processes, such as online order processing. “Business rules are ultimately how we differentiate ourselves from competitors,” says Graff. He describes Operational Decision Manager software as a clearinghouse of sorts, processing every regulatory item through the company’s rules engine.

Extending industry leadership

Brownells now provides near real-time feedback to customers. In fact, regulated item throughput has increased by nearly 300 percent, while customer wait times have decreased by 200 percent. “Customers get a better experience on the website. They know what they can buy,” says Graff, who explains that future plans include extending the IBM solution to filter merchandise based on customer location, so they don’t see items they can’t buy.

According to Graff, plans also include publishing application programming interfaces (APIs) to the company’s Operational Decision Manager software environment to provide an as-a-service channel for other organizations in the firearms industry to access current regulatory information.

“We want to be the go-to place for highly regulated small package items. Operational Decision Manager will be important in achieving that goal,” he says. “We want to be that place where people go for answers.”

Solution components

- IBM Operational Decision Manager
- Salient Process Inc.

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To learn more about IBM Operational Decision Manager software, please contact your IBM marketing representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website: ibm.com/software/products/odm.

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