Ryan Instruments

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MARKET: Importing tropical plants

CUSTOMER: Tropical Botanicals, of Medley, Fla.

PROBLEM: Tropical Botanicals imports and distributes extremely temperature-sensitive plants from Central America. Plants such as massangeana, dracaena and areca must be maintained at temperatures as close as possible to 59° F. Not only will temperatures below 50° F and above 70° F kill the plants, but temperature fluctuations within the 50-70° F range will gradually weaken and kill them. The plants grow on farms in Costa Rica and Honduras. Some are shipped to Amsterdam, The Netherlands, via a 15-day boat trip; others endure a 5 day boat trip to Miami.

APPLICATION: A Ryan time/temperature monitoring device (TTM) accompanies every boat shipment of tropical plants, from the time they leave the farm until they reach final destination. Each shipment is worth about $15,000; it costs $23.50 to put a Ryan TTM with the plants. Tropical Botanicals has been using Ryan Instruments for over four years.

BENEFIT: Temperature information from the Ryan TTMs allows the importer to pinpoint liability for temperature abuse. For example, in July, 1989, a plant shipment received improper temperature care. The Ryan TTM recorded unacceptable temperature fluctuations during distribution. When Tropical Botanicals filed a claim with its shipping company, it used Ryan temperature charts as the basis for its claim. The shipper acknowledged responsibility and paid the company for the temperature-abused shipment, according to Sergio Albert, Traffic Manager at Tropical Botanicals.

CONCLUSION: By using Ryan TTMs, Tropical Botanicals protects its investment at a low cost. "I don't know how we could ship without them," Albert says, "Otherwise we wouldn't know anything about how the temperatures were kept, unless we used a Ryan. We'd have no insurance as to what happened during the travel time."