

# FROM TIMBER TO TECH: A LOGGER'S LEAP INTO THE WORLD OF SOFTWARE

BY TERESA HANNAH

In the big, broad forests of Northern Wisconsin, a small logger named Wesley Bushor has blazed a trail like few other loggers. That trail has led to one of the very few business management technology tools built specifically for small logging contractors in the US.

A logger turned “software geek,” Wesley Bushor went from managing a multi-crew stump-to-mill logging operation to designing and helping to build StumpGeek, a business management software system tailored for timber harvesters. He built a solid client base concentrated in Wisconsin, but extending to states across the northern and southeastern US.



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## **Necessity: The Mother of Invention**

When Wesley Bushor took over his father's logging business with his brother, Wayne Jr., in the 1990s, they made a conscious decision to closely track all their data. Over the years that followed, Bushor chose to buy his own stumpage rather than be a contract logger for other companies. He quickly realized when he began logging that the only way to be successful was to understand his averages.

"It's all about averages," Bushor says. "I had a hard time convincing my father that it was ok to make less money on the pulp wood on a tract than we used to as a pure service contractor because if we merchandised the wood right, we could make more on the sawtimber than we could as a service contractor. And as long as the weighted averages worked out as we estimated, we'd come out ahead." The key, of course, was to ensure that the actuals worked out consistently with the estimates.

To buy timber successfully and profitably on any scale, Bushor needed an efficient way to estimate his averages before he bid on contracts, and then to monitor his actuals against those estimates along the way.

Bushor had been using computers from a young age, so he seldom used the "old school" methods of pencil, paper, and a calculator like many other companies. He had always tracked his volumes and costs through spreadsheets. That worked well but required many complicated formulas which became tedious to maintain. He found himself spending more and more time trying to stay on top of the numbers at night and on weekends while out on the job by day. "Many companies in that boat simply go on a hope and a prayer that their gut instincts, coupled with hard work, will make it all work out in the end. But I wasn't comfortable with that. I needed the peace of mind that the numbers were working out," he says.

That discomfort, along with a desire to provide a tool for fellow forestry professionals, is what led to a conversation in 2012 with his good friend, Greg Dirx, a computer software engineer by trade. They decided to work together and build a tool to automate and streamline the data collection, manipulation, and analysis he was trying to do in his spreadsheets.

## **A Logger's Concern Transforms into a Vision**

The plan from the beginning was to create an affordable easy-to-use tool for timber professionals who do not have the time to create the complex spreadsheets that had taken Bushor 20+ years to create. Bushor had a lot to learn about software and Dirx had a lot to learn about the timber industry.

"It's been obvious to me for many years that there is a real gap in our logging industry's approach to business management," says Bushor. "A lot of loggers point to cyclical challenges of weather or high stumpage fees and low mill rates as the reason they have trouble making money in the business. But the weather has always fluctuated and so have stumpage fees and mill rates. That's just a reality in the logging business. The real problem, it

seems to me, is our failure to run our logging operations as an actual business, and not just an expensive hobby."

Hearing how others were frustrated with the time-consuming and inefficient nature of their paperwork, Bushor's primary goal was to provide loggers with the tools necessary to manage their businesses more efficiently, focusing on understanding and utilizing the "power of averages" so they could make informed decisions. A secondary goal was to help them present a more professional persona, whether it be in the accuracy and appearance of the statements provided to landowners, the payment paperwork shared with contractors, or the cost and production data loggers share with the mills during rate negotiation.

## **StumpGeek: A Solution by a Logger, For Loggers**

StumpGeek was borne out of Bushor's 35 years of hands-on experience, combining practical knowledge with technical expertise from his partner and software developer, Dirx. The software is designed for small logging operations to help manage their business like a business: it can track load tickets, manage financials, and optimize operational efficiency.

One of StumpGeek's core strengths is its ability to make the complex simple. It caters to small loggers, those moving 10 to 30 loads a week who need a straightforward and affordable system for managing payments and tracking business economics without the bulk and complexity of more comprehensive systems. It even includes unique features like a "Work Log" for tracking non-load-based work and a "Money Log," which functions as an electronic checkbook.

After the StumpGeek launch in 2015, the software has been received favorably by other companies in Wisconsin, which was where Bushor focused his sales efforts. But thanks to the Internet, it has also benefited companies across the country, from Maine to Oregon, south South Carolina to Arkansas.

Jacob Pendleton, a logging contractor and wood broker with a half dozen employees in Hope, Maine, implemented StumpGeek a few years ago. The software has been a valuable business tool for helping him use his time wisely and manage the economics of his business.

He says that it has streamlined the time-consuming processes of contractor and landowner payment, revenue reconciliation, and Harvest Notification reporting required by the Maine Forestry Service. It has also helped him monitor and manage his efficiency on each job and track his volumes and average costs much more easily. "I have to confess, I didn't really want to spend the time learning something new, but I'm so glad I did."

For Jack Rozelle, a single-man log hauler and wood broker from Kenduskeag, Maine, peace of mind can come from something as simple as being able to keep track of the necessary paperwork that comes along with running his own show. Some of his woodcutters want a check for every two or three loads he delivers, and others want a check every week. Landowners may want a single check at the end of the job. And mills pay him on a variety of different cycles. It's a lot to keep track of, even with his small volumes relative to larger companies. Rozelle says, "The nice thing is, I don't have to worry about remembering

**Wesley Bushor doing what he loves best: working in the woods.**

which loads I paid last week and to whom, and wasting time looking back through old files to figure it out. The same goes for which loads I've been paid for by the mills. Now StumpGeek remembers for me.”

Rozelle runs a lawn-cutting and landscaping operation during the summer months when logging is slow, and even found StumpGeek flexible enough for invoicing his lawn service customers. He uses the Work Log portion of the software, separate and apart from the Timber Ticket section, to keep up with each lawn-cutting visit. “It was especially nice for those customers who just wanted to be billed at the end of the season. And I believe the Money Log will allow me to let go of my expensive Quickbooks license,” says Rozelle.

### Coming Full Circle

Through Bushor’s years as a logger and software “geek,” he came to realize that bigger was not better for him. StumpGeek allowed him to keep such close tabs on the hours it took to produce a cord of wood, and the cost of doing so, that he realized he could make more money with less risk by going back to a single crew.

Some loggers enjoy the challenge of increasing the size of their operations and making more money by moving more volume. They thrive on the risk vs. reward. Bushor realized over

the years that was not for him. “I have many other interests that I want to pursue,” he says. “One of them was building StumpGeek to both improve my business and the businesses of other companies like me. But I also really enjoy woodworking and teaching others how to express themselves through that art, and I wanted more time for those pursuits.”

While Bushor very much enjoyed the process of designing and building the software and offering a useful product, he realized that he wanted to focus on other new projects, as well as continue with his logging business. So, in the spring of 2023, he sold the software product to Caribou Software.

### Legacy and Looking Forward

For Bushor, the sale of his software to Caribou was more than just a business transaction. It was an opportunity, while continuing his passion for logging and woodworking, to focus on new projects. Just last year, Bushor returned to the woods, but this time on a smaller scale, allowing him time to pursue other passions that round out his solo time in the woods.

Wesley Bushor’s story is not just about a logger who saw beyond the trees to the broader forest. It’s a story that demonstrates the good that can be done when someone uses their creativity and talents to benefit not just their own business, but the businesses of others in the industry they know and love. **NL**

## **NOTICE OF A CLASS ACTION LAWSUIT**

### **If you purchased Super S Super Trac 303 Tractor Hydraulic Fluid, Super S 303 Tractor Hydraulic Fluid, CAM2 Promax 303 Tractor Hydraulic Oil, and/or CAM2 303 Tractor Hydraulic Oil between December 1, 2013, and December 31, 2021, you may be a member of a class action that has been certified by a Federal Judge**

A Federal District Court has recently certified claims in seven states to proceed as class actions on behalf of all purchasers of Super S Super Trac 303 Tractor Hydraulic Fluid, Super S 303 Tractor Hydraulic Fluid, CAM2 Promax 303 Tractor Hydraulic Oil, and CAM2 303 Tractor Hydraulic Oil, in Arkansas, California, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, New York, and Wisconsin who meet the class definition and who purchased in the time period of December 1, 2013, through December 31, 2021. The Court also certified claims in Missouri to proceed as a class action on behalf of all purchasers of CAM2 Promax 303 Tractor Hydraulic Oil who meet the class definition and who purchased in the time period of November 5, 2014, through December 31, 2018. The lawsuits are part of a Multi-District Litigation that is pending in the United States District Court for the Western District of Missouri and that is captioned: ***In Re: Smitty’s/CAM2 303 Tractor Hydraulic Fluid Marketing, Sales Practices, and Product Liability Litigation***, MDL No. 2936, Case No. 4:20-MD-02936-SRB (U.S. Dist. Court, W.D. Mo.).

The Class Plaintiffs in each of the states have sued Smitty’s Supply, Inc., and CAM2 International, LLC, (“Manufacturer Defendants”), alleging under various state laws that (1) the Manufacturer Defendants were negligent in regard to the manufacture and sale of the products; (2) the Manufacturer Defendants breached express and/or implied warranties with regard to the products; (3) the Manufacturer Defendants were unjustly enriched; and (4) that the Manufacturer Defendants violated certain state consumer protection, deceptive practices, and product liability statutes. Specific claims vary from state to state. The Manufacturer Defendants have denied the allegations and all claims of wrongdoing. A jury has not yet decided which side will prevail. Trial of the Missouri Class is set for August 26, 2024 in Kansas City, Missouri. Trial dates have not yet been set for the other state classes.

A Long Form Notice for each of the with states certified, as well as more information on the lawsuit, can be found at [www.cam2supers303tractorhydraulicfluidclassaction.com](http://www.cam2supers303tractorhydraulicfluidclassaction.com). Class Members do not need to do anything to remain in the class. Anyone wanting to exclude oneself must take action and send in an exclusion request by July 1, 2024. For an exclusion form and details on how to exclude yourself, see [www.cam2supers303tractorhydraulicfluidclassaction.com](http://www.cam2supers303tractorhydraulicfluidclassaction.com) or the Long Form Notice for your state. You can also request a Long Form Notice for any of these eight states be mailed to you by calling (866) 742-4955.