

Miles Kimball Company



About the company.

Miles Kimball Company, a division of Blyth Inc., has been a leader in the direct marketing catalog industry for over 70 years, mailing more than 75 million catalogs annually. With operations in Wisconsin, Nevada, and Colorado, the business consists of distinct catalog units including Christmas Cards by Miles Kimball, Miles Kimball, Exposures, The Home Marketplace, and Walter Drake.

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DANA GILMAN, VP, PLANNING & CONTROL,
MILES KIMBALL COMPANY

Setting the strategy.

Miles Kimball bought Infor™ PM Business Process Applications (BPAs) software in late 2002. The initial goal was to get data out of their existing CRM system and into the hands of decision-makers on a daily basis. Now able to see how the business is working on both a high-level and detailed basis, Miles Kimball is applying Infor PM BPAs across other applications and functional areas to streamline company-wide analysis and decision-making.

Getting business specific.

The implementation of Infor's BPAs is in its third phase, and Miles Kimball's use of the solution continues to expand and grow. Phase One created a process called Daily Business Analysis reporting.

"We got an immediate bang for the buck with the first phase," notes Dana Gilman, vice president of planning and control at Miles Kimball. "We could now look at how our campaign was performing by channel, by product line, by specific product, or by catalog campaign. We had been having trouble getting data out of our existing CRM platform, but now it's much easier to get that information right away into the hands of decision-makers."

Phase Two revolved around the implementation of Infor's BPA for budgeting. The budget process at Miles Kimball had previously been owned primarily by the controller but required a lot of work from line managers to estimate the number of workers, or FTEs, during heavy seasonal times, an important but cumbersome metric. There was a lot of duplication of effort since managers would re-key marketing forecasts into their spreadsheets or whatever system they were using. The process could take months.

Now, with Infor's application, FTE numbers are derived automatically whenever the marketing forecast is changed, which has greatly streamlined the process. Managers can concentrate on reviewing their performance targets in terms of orders filled per hour, calls answered per hour, or other metrics. The budgeting process, which is shared by 12 different vice presidents and company leaders, now takes weeks instead of months.

Says Gilman, "We saw some tremendous efficiency improvements—not necessarily true cost savings, because we didn't eliminate positions—but we did spread

facts at a glance:

> company	Miles Kimball Company
> solution	Infor PM
> product	Business Process Applications
> database	Microsoft® BI Platform
> industry	Direct Marketing
> country	USA

ownership of the budgeting process across our leadership team. Now it's not one person's budget; it's everybody's budget. We have the forum now to be able to review and challenge the budget because we have an easy, centralized system where everyone is using the same numbers and can drill down, look around, and make recommendations."

The focus of the third phase is implementing Infor's BPA for strategy management, which will allow Miles Kimball to prioritize new opportunities against strategic goals. Previously, the company focused on daily plans but didn't do a lot of strategic planning.

"This module is forcing us to plan on a more measurable basis," said Gilman. "We can better identify true tactics and actions that support our goals. Rather than focusing on pie-in-the-sky ideas, it's helping how we talk and how we focus. We're honing in on and planning things that are truly measurable."

Seeing results.

According to Gilman, Infor PM BPAs have helped save a tremendous amount of time and turned the company's focus from data entry to data analysis. In early 2004, Miles Kimball acquired a company about two-thirds its size. The company was integrated within 90 days, using very few resources, and Gilman asserts that Infor's performance management solution was a big reason for that.

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“The application made our people far more efficient so that we could take on additional work,” Gilman says. “In the finance area, for example, we’ve added two head count and those head count have higher skills than what we’ve had in the past. With the efficiencies we’ve gained, we now need more people to analyze and understand our business instead of just collect and key in the data. So in terms of payback or ROI, it’s really been more cost avoidance for us. We essentially doubled our business with very few permanent head count staff, and we’re seeing great savings as a result of the integrations we’ve accomplished.”

Doing business better.

Miles Kimball continues to develop ideas about where else they can apply the Infor solution’s capabilities. The company plans to work their balance sheet and cash flow forecasting into the product. They also intend to use the software to allow the P&L to be re-projected at a high level when assumptions are changed.

“Infor PM BPAs, across any application or functional area in which they have been employed, have really made a difference,” said Gilman. “We’re not relying on spreadsheets anymore. We’re letting that data help drive our decisions and our analysis. It’s allowed us to analyze our business instead of spending our time creating the information.”

About Infor.

Infor acquires and develops functionally rich software backed by thousands of domain experts and then makes it better through continuous innovation, faster implementation options, global enablement, and flexible buying options. In a few short years, Infor has become one of the largest providers of business software in the world. For additional information, visit www.infor.com.

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Customer Profile

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