Customer Profile

Western Wire brings savings, service to new heights with Infor Distribution SX.e

Facts at a glance

Product: ERP
Industry: Infor Distribution SX.e
Country: USA

"The bottom line is that we're carrying fewer dollars in finished goods, but we continue to improve customer satisfaction."

—John Blaskiewicz, Operations Manager, Western Wire Products

About the company

Located in Fenton, Missouri, Western Wire Products manufactures and distributes customized wire shapes and forms. Known for having developed an extensive line of fasteners, the company has added modern machinery and tools to some of its machines that date back almost to its founding. With a network of manufacturer's representatives selling to the government, distributors, and other manufacturers, Western Wire Products maintains a large customer base and continues to gain market share. The company's tradition of innovation and quality spans nearly 100 years. To learn more, visit www.westernwireprod.com

Setting the strategy

For decades, Western Wire Products has relied on information technology (IT) to automate its business processes and do more work at lower cost. When the company learned that its enterprise resource planning (ERP) software vendor had been acquired by Activant Solutions, it realized that support for its ERP system going forward would be an issue. Western Wire had a few meetings with Activant, but couldn't reach an agreement. "We knew we had to make a change," says John Blaskiewicz, operations manager at Western Wire Products.

Getting business specific

The company began a comprehensive search for a reliable ERP vendor. Blaskiewicz teamed with Debby Perrin, office manager at Western Wire, to select a new system. After polling managers across the organization to develop a priority list of capabilities to improve operational efficiency and profitability, they began their daunting task. Four vendors reached the final selection process, including Earnest & Associates (E&A), an Infor™ partner, which recommended Infor Distribution SX.e.

Perrin says, “We asked each vendor how we might enter an order, ship finished goods, and make inventory adjustments—an apples-to-apples comparison. We also asked each department across our operations to evaluate the products. The clear choice was Infor Distribution SX.e. It demonstrated how it could help us streamline our processes.”

Blaskiewicz adds, “Although we’re a manufacturer, we function more as a distributor because we stock the products we make. Infor Distribution SX.e had superior order-entry characteristics to handle our distribution business, and it was easier to use.”

> **"We have instant access to all relevant shipping information including tracking numbers. It's so much faster and easier for us and our customers."**
>
> **—Debby Perrin, Office Manager, Western Wire Products**

Seeing results

Infor Distribution SX.e has helped Western Wire Products develop a leaner, more competitive business. Benefits stem from several areas, but ease of use is a primary reason. Perrin says: "Using a Windows-based program makes it easier for us to enter orders while we're on the phone with customers. We can quickly access the database to view account profiles and purchase histories. We can see available stock quantities in inventory and quote prices for customers on the fly. In fact, we can capture all the details we need to complete the transaction in one call, including how the customer wants to ship."

Infor Distribution SX.e users can also convert quotes to orders when the customer isn't ready to buy on the first call. "This is helpful when we've previously quoted a job, but the customer calls back later to finalize the order," says Perrin.

"With Distribution SX.e, we've saved hours and reduced errors because we no longer need to rekey these orders. Because we can process orders more efficiently, our customers perceive greater value."

As the Western Wire Products front-office staff enters hundreds of sales orders into Distribution Business every day, the company's back-office team issues work orders to the shop floor. Before implementing Distribution SX.e, a big challenge was handling blanket orders. Blaskiewicz explains: "All of our sales orders show up in the replenishment report, and we review them weekly before issuing work orders. We decide how much to manufacture at a given time because now we have a much better view of the demand curve with Distribution SX.e. For example, the report might flag a part that's running low in our inventory, whereas other parts might suggest a larger batch. With a blanket order, when we know we've got requirements coming up over the next three or four months, we might decide to produce a larger batch up front."

Now that customer demand is synchronized with production processes, Western Wire Products has significantly reduced inventory, freeing up capital for other value-add activities. "We're not going to make half a million parts for a customer and allow the inventory to sit on the shelf for a year," says Blaskiewicz. "Instead, we might produce a couple hundred thousand to take us through the next three months and make more later. The bottom line is that with Distribution SX.e, we're carrying fewer dollars in finished goods, but we continue to improve customer satisfaction."

The company generates work orders using the Distribution Business Value Add module. A work order might indicate that a certain product requires additional in-house or third-party processing. "The work order includes fields for entering materials, labor, and additional finishing processes such as kitting, heat treating, or plating," says Blaskiewicz. "When we've requisitioned the wire and completed the labor, we simply use the drop-down feature in Value Add to create a purchase order for the process we need. The shipping department sends the PO to the vendor, who arranges to pick up the parts. After the finishing process is complete, the product comes back to our warehouse and put on the shelf for delivery to the customer. It's all very seamless."

Perrin underscores the point: "Before, we had boxes with all of the orders. When we received the finished goods, we had to thumb through the file to pull the ticket and match it up with the inventory. With Distribution SX.e, we no longer need to do that."

Distribution SX.e subsequently releases the finished goods for picking and packing at just the right moment. "We print the pick tickets late in the afternoon so that when our employees arrive the next morning, they're ready to go," says Blaskiewicz. "We don't print future orders until the date has arrived. By tightly controlling the release of work into our warehouse, we can better balance our workload, meaning we need fewer temporary workers to pick and pack jobs during peak demand times. We've seen labor savings of tens of thousands of dollars annually."

The shipping desk also uses automation. "Before, we hand-wrote everything," says Perrin. "If a customer called about an order, we physically went to the file cabinet and pulled the folder—if we could find it. Now, when our employees pack cartons for shipment, they simply enter the weights of each carton into Distribution SX.e. When customers phone to check their order status, we have instant access to all relevant shipping information including tracking numbers. It's so much faster and easier for us and our customers."

Since re-engineering its business processes with Distribution SX.e, Western Wire Products also has implemented a cycle counting program. "We used to shut down the plant and spend up to three days every year doing a complete inventory," says Blaskiewicz. "Today, we always use barcode scanners to cycle-count. With our robust inventory management processes, our accounting firm has agreed to eliminate the product counting task and keep the plant open for production year-round."

Distribution SX.e has helped Western Wire Products to:

- Gain annual labor savings in the tens of thousands of dollars
- Significantly reduce inventory while improving customer satisfaction
- Avoid the annual plant shutdown to count products
- Eliminate time-consuming manual processes
- Access all data and complete customer orders in one phone call

Doing business better

As the value of its business data continues to grow, Western Wire Products looks for more ways to improve its business processes. Blaskiewicz concludes, "Distribution SX.e has helped us be more efficient in so many ways, and it's made our lives easier. As our business grows and changes, we'll reach out to Earnest & Associates and Infor again to help us remain at the top of our game."

About Earnest & Associates, Inc.

Earnest & Associates, Inc. is a premier channel partner working with Distribution SX.e. To learn more, visit www.earnestassoc.com.

641 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10011
800-260-2640
infor.com

About Infor

Infor is the world's third-largest supplier of enterprise applications and services, helping more than 70,000 large and mid-size companies improve operations and drive growth across numerous industry sectors. To learn more about Infor, please visit www.infor.com.

Copyright© 2012 Infor. All rights reserved. The word and design marks set forth herein are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Infor and/or related affiliates and subsidiaries. All other trademarks listed herein are the property of their respective owners. This document is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute a commitment to you in any way. The information, products and services described herein are subject to change at any time without notice. www.infor.com.

INF1279932-1290624-EN-US-1212-1