



B & J Parts and Machine

Company Facts

- Location: Port Coquitlam, British Columbia
- Industry: Automotive
- Number of Stores: 1
- Employees: 22 full-time; 9 part-time

Repositioning, Restructuring, Renewal for Family-Owned Business

There was a time when the auto parts business was as predictable as the rising sun. Today, by contrast, the only constant is the steady drumbeat of change, reports Scott Sallstrom, who along with his brothers Kurt and Drew owns B & J Parts and Machine in the Vancouver, B.C., suburb of Port Coquitlam. "SKUs that flew off the shelves just a few years ago hardly even move today," he says. "It's up to us to stay ahead of these changes and position ourselves for long-term growth."

Founded in 1968 by Scott's parents, Bill and Joyce Sallstrom, B & J remains a leading provider of replacement components for automotive, fleet, industrial and marine applications. Yet for a nearly four-year period ending in 2008, the business experienced little or no growth and ever-tightening margins. It was time, Scott explains, for the family to take a hard look at what was working and what wasn't. "We've spent the past four years really working on the business—identifying constraints and finding new ways to operate more efficiently and with a stronger focus on customer service," he says. "One of the first decisions we made was to find a fully integrated computer system that would put us back on the leading edge of technology."

An Early Adopter Gains Competitive Advantage

The leading edge is hardly new to the Sallstroms, whose parts business was among the first in Canada to embrace electronic cataloging in the 1980s. B & J also was an early adopter of Epicor Series 12 platform and, in 1999, implemented the Epicor Eclipse solution, which helped support consistent sales growth. Then the market began to change, bringing new challenges that required a more robust approach to managing the business.

"We knew it was time to replace Eclipse and spent a lot of time looking at a large number of systems from multiple vendors. Some had great back-office tools and accounting, but only Epicor Eagle had the complete package we were looking for. At the end of the day, we knew we could make more money and be far more competitive with Eagle," states Scott.

The investment in the Epicor Eagle system opened the door to significant improvements in several areas, from counter operations, to purchasing, to pricing strategies,

"We've changed our thinking. We've restructured the business for stronger growth by eliminating service limitations and giving our employees the best tools. Epicor Eagle is a big part of this process."

Scott Sallstrom, Partner | B & J Parts and Machine

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Scott Sallstrom, Partner

to delivering a far more modern, efficient and pleasing customer experience. B & J went live with the new solution in October 2009 and, thanks to a recession-driven spike in aftermarket activity, posted a significant sales increase by year-end.

“This system is so comprehensive that we’re still implementing some of the tools,” Scott says. “But there’s no question that we’ve raised the bar in nearly every area of the business. We’re faster. We have access to much more information about our daily operations. And we’re managing customer services more effectively.”

One area of dramatic improvement is in the receiving department, where the Eagle system’s RF bar coding module helps save time and improve accuracy.

The store’s retail and wholesale counter people, as well as B & J’s machine shop staff, utilize Eagle terminals equipped with the revolutionary Epicor LaserCat 3 electronic catalog, which helps speed part identification through a highly refined, Microsoft® Windows®-based user interface.

Mastering the ‘Last Frontier’

Skilled counter people, great cataloging and a deep inventory can only take a parts business so far; the speed and reliability of its delivery service often can make or break many customer relationships. Scott says B & J’s integrated Epicor Dispatch and Delivery System™ has closed the loop on service excellence by providing real-time tracking of every delivery.

The store now has a large flat-screen monitor mounted on the wall of its wholesale call center to track every step in the delivery process. “When the customer calls, I can tell them exactly where the part is and, more importantly, when they can expect to receive it,” Scott explains.

Also enhancing the customer experience is the Eagle system’s integrated Epicor iNet module, which enables professional accounts to quickly access invoices and statements via a Web portal.

This helps increase customer satisfaction while freeing up store employees to focus on sales. B & J’s Eagle system also features Epicor’s Document Management module, which stores documents as electronic files that can be emailed to customers.

Excelling at Excel®

Scott tells the story of compiling data from the store’s previous system for use in a comparatively simple report on machine shop services. Some 2.5 hours later – after Scott was forced to manually combine separate pieces of data in a Microsoft Excel file – the job was done. Today the same report is created in mere minutes and can be rerun at any time, thanks to the Eagle system’s Epicor Compass analytics. “I can print reports to Excel, send updated pricing to customers via e-mail and manipulate data in almost any way imaginable.

The reporting tools on Eagle are incredibly strong and easy to use,” he says. As the Sallstrom brothers implement the ever-growing portfolio of Eagle tools, they’re no longer reacting to market changes. Rather, they’re already planning a new round of growth initiatives. “We’re looking at new ways to service our existing customers and attract new ones. We feel we’re back on a path that will help us grow over the long run,” Scott says.

About Epicor

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