Company Facts

▶ Location: Minneapolis, MN
▶ Industry: CNC machine tool and fabrication equipment
▶ Number of Employees: 200
▶ Web site: www.productivity.com

Productivity Inc.

Success Highlights

Challenges
▶ Help a large Midwest industrial machinery and equipment distributor improve accessibility, interactivity, and mobility among business data applications, as well as allow the creation of business rules and better visibility into processes.

Solution
▶ Epicor® Prophet 21® with Epicor ICE, DynaChange and Extensibility Series

Benefits
▶ Improve relationships with customers and partners
▶ Time savings from streamlined processes
▶ Cost savings from having information readily accessible in one place
▶ Support for ISO certification

Productivity Inc. is a CNC machine tool and fabrication equipment distributor based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Founded in 1968, the company has 200 employees in three locations, and provides machine tools, robots, and related equipment for manufacturing in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, and western Wisconsin.

Productivity Inc. went live on the Epicor Prophet 21 enterprise resource planning (ERP) system in May 2011. According to Systems Administrator Cathy Arbuckle, several departments had formed an ERP core selection team, and felt that Prophet 21 was the best fit for all concerned. Arbuckle joined Productivity Inc. one month before the go-live, and as one of her first tasks as Systems Administrator, she imported all contact information into the Prophet 21 database.

Most recently, Productivity Inc. has been making extensive use of the Epicor ICE business architecture, a modern and visionary technology developed by Epicor that enables Prophet 21 users with enhanced levels of mobility, accessibility, and interactivity among business applications. Epicor ICE acts as a connector and an application builder, providing distributors with access to the latest applications and technical capabilities while still taking advantage of the industry-leading distribution functionality of Prophet 21. According to Arbuckle, "Epicor ICE is the 'feather in the cap' of tools to customize Prophet 21."

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Creative applications of Epicor ICE

Every other year, Productivity Inc. hosts a three-day Oktoberfest open house event. In 2013, the company had 3,000 registered attendees, and by incorporating Epicor ICE, it was able to streamline the onsite registration process and enter all of the attendees as contacts in Prophet 21. "We use seven terminals for registration, and each contact must be linked to a 'Ship To' in the system," explains Arbuckle. "With Epicor ICE, we could easily look up existing records or create new ones on the spot; it really cut down on the number of data fields that our staff had to manually enter."

In another instance, Productivity Inc. took advantage of the ability of Epicor ICE to link to any database. Utilizing the Web access capability of Epicor ICE, Productivity Inc. wrote custom pages for its Kennametal partner supplier network, allowing the partners to insert their product spreadsheets into the Epicor Prophet 21 database and share information. In this way, everyone in the network can see dead stock and clearance pricing, to provide better service to customers via faster back order processing.

Currently, Productivity Inc. is about to deploy a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) module for its machine tools sales reps using Epicor ICE. The reps will be able to view all customers by "Ship To," bring up customer Web sites (where available) and access Google Maps of their locations. A CRM dashboard for opportunities can be updated on the road from the iPads that all reps carry, so they can request quotes to be created by the administrative staff back in the home office. "With Epicor ICE, we can open up data to certain users, and lock down data to others," Arbuckle states.

DynaChange Rules and Portals save time and money

Productivity Inc. is also tailoring Prophet 21 using the Epicor DynaChange Extensibility Series; specifically, DynaChange Portals and DynaChange Rules. The latter provides a Business Rule Engine that allows users to insert their own business logic into the Prophet 21 system code base without altering the application code itself, while DynaChange Portals provides customized visibility into day-to-day business processes at the transactional level within an organization.

"DynaChange Rules is a wonderful tool," says Arbuckle. "Now that we have it, we use it heavily to streamline the workflow and query the database. We currently have 25 rules in production. For example, we created a rule that if someone cancels an item, they must enter an explanatory note, and a checkbox on the front of the order indicates the note exists, so no one has to go into tabs."

She continues, "In Item Maintenance, we receive hundreds of new parts each week, and must track the bins, so we created a rule that double-checks it's not a duplicate bin. And for credit card orders, we automatically populate the invoice class field as to whether we should invoice that customer by mail, e-mail, or other means. We are seeing significant time savings from these streamlined processes."

In addition, the Tooling Department relies heavily on DynaChange Portals to check service orders, RMAs, vendor returns, and credits. There is also an A/R portal for Accounting, showing every account that is 60 days overdue. "Money is saved by having information at people's fingertips," notes Arbuckle.

Tools developed in response to customer input

For Arbuckle, the benefits of Epicor Prophet 21 and the related Epicor tools in use at Productivity Inc. are clear. "We appreciate the fact that everything is now tied together in one place, whereas before, we had different databases for different areas," she observes. "We are an ISO-certified company, and Prophet 21 supports this by helping to make our processes better."

She concludes, "We're also a technology forward-thinking company. It's important to keep on top of the Prophet 21 version updates. We have found that Epicor listens to its customers, so we participate in Prophet 21 user teams, focus groups, and beta tests. My recommendation to other distributors is to get involved; it can only benefit you in the long run."

About Epicor

Epicor Software Corporation drives business growth. We provide flexible, industry-specific software that is designed around the needs of our manufacturing, distribution, retail, and service industry customers. More than 40 years of experience with our customers' unique business processes and operational requirements is built into every solution—in the cloud, hosted, or on premises. With a deep understanding of your industry, Epicor solutions spur growth while managing complexity. The result is powerful solutions that free your resources so you can grow your business. For more information, connect with Epicor or visit www.epicor.com.

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