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Jeff Loewer
IT Manager
Sonnax

Sonnax Industries Modernizes and Enhances Customer Service with Sage ERP X3 Enterprise Software

Vermont-based Sonnax Industries, Inc., designs, produces and supplies components to the automatic transmission aftermarket. The company utilizes a unique collaborative professional network of design engineers, technical experts and shop technicians to analyze mechanical problems in existing units and respond to them with innovative, durable, cost-effective replacement parts. Sonnax has built its



reputation on quality and customer service. Its 800 customers nationwide depend on fast delivery of replacement parts to get their customers' cars out of the shop and back on the road as quickly as possible.

Business Challenges

By the end of 2000, the enterprise software that Sonnax had installed almost 10 years ago was straining to keep up with its steady growth and meet its requirements for fast turnaround of more than 40,000 shipments a year. Sonnax knew that the system would not be able to handle the increased demand for aftermarket parts that it saw coming in the next decade or process orders quickly enough to keep its customers satisfied.

Updating that system to the current version would require a major investment in hardware, software and integration. Investigating alternatives, Sonnax realized it would be more cost-effective to replace the system with new technology. It wanted software that offered:

- Tightly integrated applications that would provide a quick turnaround for customer inquiries and ensure that an order was ready to ship within no more than six hours after receipt
- Scalability and ease of customization to support Sonnax' rapid growth
- Advanced functionality to enhance the outstanding customer service on which Sonnax' reputation is based

Identifying a Solution

To determine the best enterprise solution for its business, Sonnax contracted a consultant from the Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center (VMEC), a not-for-profit center that assists small to medium-sized manufacturers. VMEC recommended using SoftSelect, an enterprise resource planning (ERP) and business software planning site that helps businesses select the right system and provides up-to-date, objective software data for businesses.

Sonnax' management team utilized SoftSelect to compile data to:

- Define its current software requirements
- Identify enterprise vendors in the large, fragmented middle market
- Narrow its vendor search to the vendors that came closest to what it wanted

"After comparing Adonix with other ERP vendors in the mid-market, the Sage ERP X3 enterprise system offered superior technology that met our business objectives, but more importantly, Adonix would partner with us," said Jeff Loewer, information technology manager at Sonnax. "It was imperative that we work with a software provider who was not only committed to implementing the software, but interested in having a long-term relationship with us, as our business grows."

Sage ERP X3 met Sonnax' requirements for tight integration, ease of customization, and advanced functionality.

Many enterprise software packages consist of separate products bolted together from different sources. Every time information has to travel through an interface to get from one application to another, some efficiency is lost as processing slows. No matter how much work the software vendor does to eliminate redundancies and synchronize data files, disparate systems always produce idiosyncrasies that cannot be resolved. To the user, this can mean a long learning curve and more work, e.g., unnecessary data entry, and more opportunities to make mistakes.

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"Sage ERP X3 is clearly not a patched-together system – its modules are well integrated and work together seamlessly. Adonix offers a package that will see us through the long term. The product gives us the ability to easily personalize transaction data screens," said Loewer. "In other systems we looked at, adding fields and tables was problematic, but Adonix has provided a way to simplify personalization, both for users and for managing customer relationships."

Experienced Results

"Before we integrated Sage ERP X3, we had to price products for our customers manually. Now we can pull up pricing in one system instead of two as we did in the past," said Melissa Matthews, vice president of distribution at Sonnax. "We can respond to customer queries more quickly and more accurately now."

Sage ERP X3 gives Sonnax a competitive edge with its advanced pricing functionality. For example, the Sage ERP X3 product contains robust pricing functionality that calculates prices and discounts at multiple levels.

"The ability to respond quickly to marketplace developments with competitive prices or promotions can make or break a small to medium-sized business like Sonnax," said Jeff Law, manager of implementation services for Adonix. "Companies can easily set a wide range of pricing parameters

with Sage ERP X3 that enables them to differentiate themselves in each market and reward loyal customers."

With Sage ERP X3, Sonnax' business processes are now streamlined and automated, enabling its staff to process order-entry inquiries in real-time; check product availability, determining available-to-promise dates, and customer credit status while speaking with the customer on the phone. These tools are decreasing the order cycle time while providing their customers the same quality service to which they are accustomed.

Sonnax maintained its high level of customer services throughout the implementation.

"From the very start of the implementation, it was paramount to our business to be able to process orders without any interruptions," said Matthews. "We were able to ship products daily, without missing a beat, and Adonix' support team was critical in keeping our operations running smoothly when we went live."