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MERRITT TRAILERS

Merritt Rolls Past Complexity and Competitive Challenges Using SYSPRO ERP

Trailer/Trucking Industry Leader Wins Against Larger Competitors Via SYSPRO's Leading-Edge Interface and Order Customization Support

AT A GLANCE

Key Challenge

Industry evolution requiring new sales, manufacturing and service complexities. Could not be supported by the incumbent Syteline software.

Key Benefit

The ability to maintain an industry-leading position and profile against much larger competitors that are 10 to 50 times larger in revenue – using SYSPRO ERP's leading edge software capabilities.

Organization

Merritt Trailers, Inc. and Merritt Aluminum Products Company

Industry

Trucking and agricultural

End User Market

Trucking and agricultural industries

Customer Profile

Merritt Trailers, Inc. and Merritt Aluminum Products, based in Henderson, CO, and Fort Lupton, CO, respectively, are two companies that originally operated as Merritt Equipment and together have approximately 300 employees. They manufacture market-leading livestock and commodity trailers; and aluminum parts and accessories for the trailer/trucking industry. Originally founded in 1951, the businesses focus on the agricultural and transportation needs, and have sales, service, parts and accessories operating units. Recently, the company opened a full-service branch in Fremont, Nebraska and has commodity and gooseneck trailer dealers located throughout the U.S. and Canada. Merritt's aluminum products include items such as tool and storage boxes, and high-quality fender mounting systems.

The Challenges

Changing trailer/trucking industry dynamics have transformed what once was simplified order-taking and manufacturing, into a customer-preference world where individual specifics and selectivity are the norm for each order. This new business complexity quickly makes traditional MRP solutions, which were built for mass production, obsolete. With customized orders altering bills of materials from what once was hundreds of parts….to now, tens of thousands of parts … only the most leading-edge, state of the art ERP solutions can support this type of transformation. Merritt's previously installed Syteline solution couldn't keep up.

The Solution

Merritt's thorough ERP industry evaluation led it to SYSPRO, after a two and one-half year search. Quickly discarding the large ERP industry giants because management did not see a cultural or personalized fit, the company's experience with SYSPRO during the initial review cycle and subsequently through the nearly 10 years after deployment is giving the company exactly what it wanted, and the means to support future growth and innovation. Merritt uses a full suite of SYSPRO ERP applications, including a full spectrum of financial modules, Bill of Materials, Quotations & Estimates, Requirements Planning, Factory Documentation, Lot Traceability, Product Configurator, Forecasting, Reporting, etc.

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Pat Biggs - Merritt
Computer Systems Manager

The Outcome

Based on a combination of a great user interface and the system's ability to interface with other Merritt solutions easily, processes and reports that once took a week or more to complete are now executed in five minutes or less. Even though the company is facing competitive challenges from much larger industry players, Merritt is maintaining both profitability and market leadership.

Changing Industry Requirements

Merritt began in 1951 as a small automotive and welding shop in Portland, Oregon, where customers would bring in steel truck bodies and other transportation machinery for repairs. Seeing an opportunity for better designs on both the truck bodies and trailers, the company founders innovated and built the world's first all-aluminum livestock trailer. By the end of the 1960s, Merritt was making a wide range of livestock trailers, commodity trailers and what was comically termed "headache racks" that offered storage on the back of a big rig's cab.

The company relocated to Henderson, northeast of Denver, in the 1970s to better facilitate operations from a more central U.S. location. In the ensuing decades, Merritt slowly and steadily built an impressive reputation and network within the transportation and agricultural markets by focusing on superior quality of design and better construction. The very successful "American dream" stylized company grew its business reach throughout the U.S. and Canada, and today continues to offer world class trailer and related aluminum parts manufacturing, superior service and access to its products via a wide dealer network.

Beginning about a decade ago, industry requests and the subsequent orders moved from turnkey requests that could be facilitated via a mass production environment, to individualized, customized order requests. Trying to keep up with this drastic change to its business model, Merritt found itself in a tough position: its previously-installed Syteline solution couldn't adapt.

Setting Priorities Beyond Technology Alone

While company management knew it needed to upgrade its ERP solution in a reasonable time period, it had achieved leadership through proven traditional values and principles, and avoided making a hastily-considered decision. The company had two distinct requirements: acquiring an ERP solution that was flexible enough to take the company into whatever future opportunities might arise, and finding the right qualities in its ERP vendor partner. The sales cycle lasted more than two years.

Merritt wanted to streamline an interface for the company's sales people to handle the new order entry requirements and secondly to ensure that the bill of materials system interfaced seamlessly to those orders. "We are a company with some employees that have been with us 20-25 years or more and we needed to have a solution that would make this ERP technology transformation as seamless as possible," said Pat Biggs, Merritt's Computer Systems Manager. "Sure, the technology had to meet our new customization and market growth requirements, but it also had to be easy to learn and use, or we weren't going to get employees to use it."

From a cultural perspective, Merritt also values its business relationships as much as its bottom-line and it was clear to management that the larger ERP software companies were not on the same page. "We are a family-oriented business; we care about our employees, customers and partners, and we want our technology and other suppliers to hold us in this same high regard," Biggs says.

Biggs sees similarities between Merritt and SYSPRO: "It was clear at the start that SYSPRO is like us and shares our values; we both are successful, privately-held, family-oriented businesses that are focused on doing things right. We are maintaining market leadership against much larger competitors because we have SYSPRO ERP capabilities. Our solution could not keep up, and we didn't like what we saw/heard from larger companies, like Oracle, in the sales process. We can say with certainty almost 10 years after selecting SYSPRO that we made a great choice, and their cultural values of doing the right thing match ours."

About SYSPRO

SYSPRO software is an award-winning, best-of-breed Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software solution for on-premise and cloud-based utilization. Scalable for rapid growth, SYSPRO is acknowledged by industry analysts to be among the finest enterprise-resource planning solutions in the world. SYSPRO software's powerful features, simplicity of use, information visibility, analytic and reporting capabilities, business process and rapid deployment methodology are unmatched in its sector.

While SYSPRO customers represent all industry segments, rich extensions for food, medical devices, electronics and machinery companies, make SYSPRO the first choice for growing companies looking for a cost-effective ERP solution.

SYSPRO, formed in 1978, has earned the trust of thousands of companies globally for its suite of visionary software that enhances the competitive thrust of small and mid-sized manufacturers and distributors. SYSPRO's ability to grow with its customers and its adherence to developing technology, based on the needs of customers, is why SYSPRO enjoys one of the highest customer retention rates in the industry.
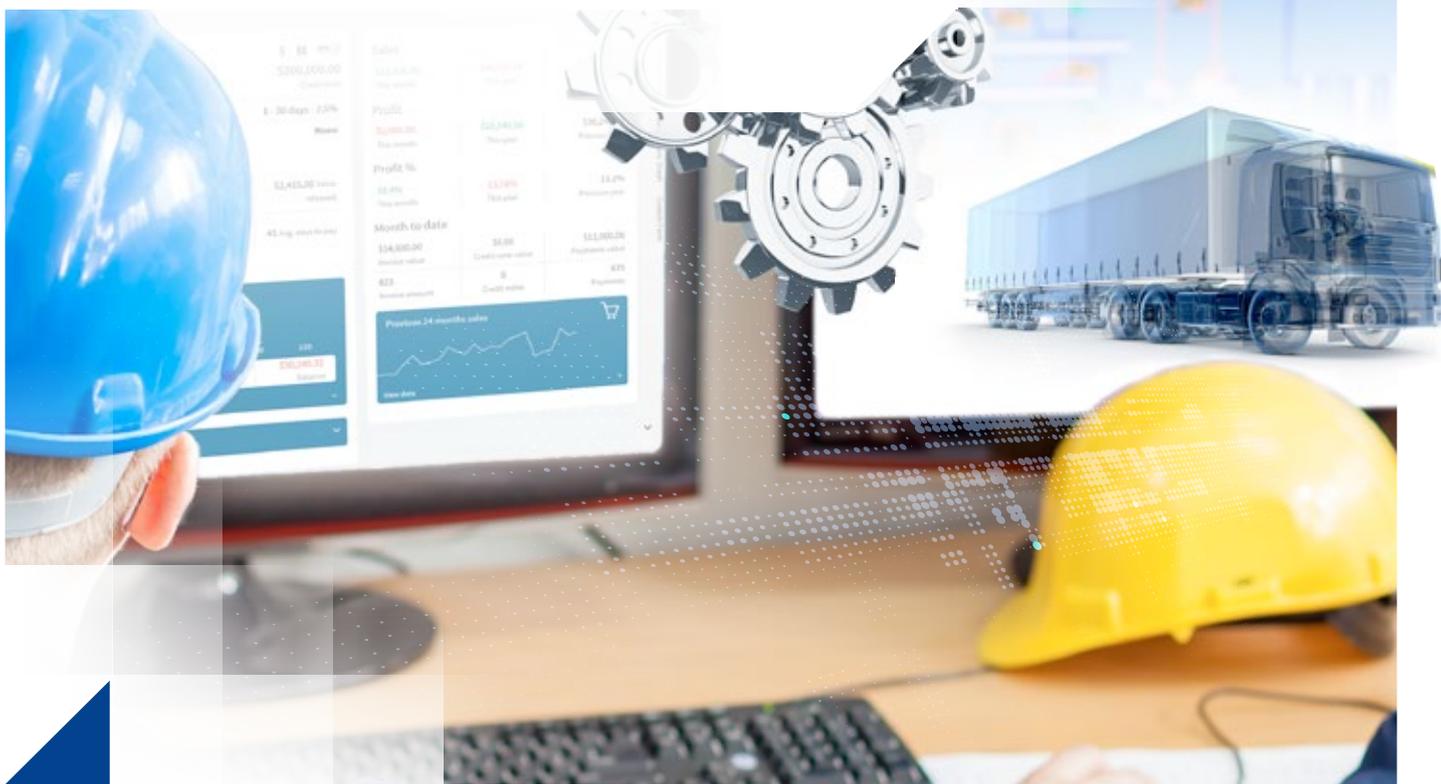
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