

Optical Cable Focuses on Long-Term Vision with SYSPRO Software

The development of a long-term growth strategy led Optical Cable to seek out and purchase a reliable ERP software system that could streamline critical processes, grow with the business and help optimize customer service.



■ The Company

Optical Cable Corporation (Nasdaq GM: OCCF) is a leading manufacturer of fiber optic cables primarily sold into the enterprise market and the primary manufacturer of military ground tactical fiber optic cables for the U.S. military. Founded in 1983, Optical Cable Corporation pioneered the design and production of fiber optic cables for the most demanding military field applications, including the development of extremely strong, lightweight, rugged and survivable fiber optic cable for military tactical field use.

Optical Cable is the second largest manufacturer of fiber optic cables for the enterprise market in North America selling its products worldwide in over 70 countries with tens of thousands of end-users. Optical Cable's products address most short- to moderate-distance fiber optic communication applications, and have a reputation for high reliability and outstanding performance characteristics. The company manufactures its products to exacting quality standards at its ISO 9001: 2000 registered, and MIL-STD-790F certified facility in Roanoke, Virginia.

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- John Ferguson
Vice President and CIO, Optical Cable

■ The Challenge

In recent years, Optical Cable realized that one necessary component to facilitating its planned long-term growth was the need to install a comprehensive enterprise resource planning software solution. According to Neil Wilkin, president and CEO of Optical Cable Corporation, "Our long-term growth strategy required investments in upgrades to our systems, production lines, business processes and management personnel. These upgrades are essential to create the scalable business model required to facilitate our planned growth and to continually improve the outstanding customer service that we provide our customers. The installation of new enterprise software is an essential component to the execution of our strategy. Further, as a publicly traded company, we required software sophisticated enough to allow us to comply with our reporting obligations to the Securities and Exchange Commission, as well as compliance with the new Sarbanes-Oxley requirements."

The development of this long-term growth strategy led Optical Cable to seek out and purchase a reliable ERP software system that could streamline critical processes, grow with the business and help optimize customer service.

■ AT A GLANCE ■

COMPANY

Optical Cable Corporation

INDUSTRY

Communications Equipment Manufacturing

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

50

THE CHALLENGE

- SOX Compliance
- Narrow visibility into inventory
- Limited forecasting capabilities
- Excessive production costs
- Labor-intensive record-keeping
- Small-business ERP budget

SOLUTION & SERVICES

- Scalable to growing business
- Scanning system for easy tracking
- Fully-integrated system
- Receiving and inspection functionality
- User-friendly CRM
- e.net solutions
- Affordable ERP solution

THE BENEFITS

- Increased operational efficiency
- Improved visibility
- Reduced labor requirements
- Accurate, up-to-date record-keeping
- Enhanced customer relationships through CRM
- Real-time data processing
- Superior customer service





■ The Solution

An extensive search led Optical Cable to select SYSPRO Enterprise Software from SYSPRO USA in Costa Mesa, Calif. Because SYSPRO software is modular, Optical Cable felt it could tailor the specific functionality needed from the variety of interactive manufacturing, accounting and distribution modules in the SYSPRO offering. Most importantly, the SYSPRO software was scalable and could easily grow with the company and help it to realize its long-term vision. Another big plus, the software supported bar coding integration.

John Ferguson, Optical Cable Corporation's Vice President and CIO, states, "SYSPRO is facilitating the business strategies we are pursuing. Optical Cable is using the SYSPRO software feature set to drive its business model." The SYSPRO Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software, for example, is "... another way we hope to enhance customer service and improve customer support," says Ferguson.

Ferguson makes it clear that Optical Cable operates in a very competitive marketplace with Optical Cable's business model requiring not only product diversity and breadth, but also outstanding customer service. They selected SYSPRO because it supported those needs. "Optical Cable's plan is to use SYSPRO to enhance customer response time and customer service," he says.

According to Ferguson, "Optical Cable will do things for our customers that competitors won't do, such as build products to customer specifications." Towards this end, Optical Cable

also employs the SYSPRO Product Configurator, enabling order takers to custom configure cables over the phone at the time the order is taken.

■ The Result

Optical Cable also utilizes a highly sophisticated scanning system for location tracking and transaction entry, replacing labor-intensive record keeping, and at the same time, providing managers with real-time job tracking data to facilitate accurate decision making. The hand-held scanners utilize SYSPRO e.net components to process data to the SYSPRO ERP system in real time. As a result, operators can move around the factory floor unencumbered and capture transactions as they occur enabling the SYSPRO system to track inventory in real time. In this manner, management is always presented with an up-to-date record of inventory and work in progress. Ferguson says this process is another key way that the SYSPRO software provides the foundation for superior information management. "It gives us the data we need to perform better business analysis."

In addition, the SYSPRO Advanced Planning and Scheduling (APS) module helps Optical Cable to provide superior customer service by speeding order turnaround. The module gives a real-time "snapshot" of the manufacturing floor at any time, permitting Optical Cable to view and manipulate planned factory workloads within specified planning periods. Consequently, the company can accommodate rush orders, eliminate bottlenecks and balance workloads against the capacities of each cell within each manufacturing work center.