Sears Trostel Lumber and Millwork

Sears Trostel leverages Epicor BisTrack for higher margins and better cost control in millwork and distribution business

Company Facts

▶ Location: Fort Collins, Colorado
▶ Industry: Lumber and Building Materials
▶ Specialty: Manufacturer and Distributor
▶ Sales Profile: 59% Wholesale, 25% Contractor, 16% Retail
▶ Number of Locations: 1 store, 1 manufacturing
▶ Web site: www.sears-trostel.com

Sears Trostel
LUMBER & MILLWORK

Success Highlights

Challenges
▶ Find a business management system consistent with and supportive of lean manufacturing practices

Solution
▶ Epicor® BisTrack™

Benefits
▶ Lean business processes consistent with lean corporate thinking
▶ Effort of one FTE eliminated by visibility in Journey Planner
▶ 6–8 times faster purchasing/transfer replenishment, fewer stock shortages
▶ Reduced freight charges by combining multiple orders into purchases
▶ Three-point retail margin increase using individual item margin control

Sears Trostel has a reputation for delivering exceptional customer service and high quality lumber and millwork throughout the mountain states region. The company manufactures at its Airpark location and sells a wide variety of mouldings, lumber, sheetgoods, and flooring from its Riverside location.

BisTrack selected for lean processes

Curt Viehmeyer, one of the owners and general manager at Sears Trostel, says that they selected Epicor BisTrack in part because its design is consistent with the "lean thinking" pervasive throughout the company. "We do lean manufacturing, so we look at how smoothly processes go, how you can eliminate waste," explains Viehmeyer. "We had been on DMSi, and one of the big deals about BisTrack was you could get where you wanted to go without wasting time maneuvering around the system. All the areas in BisTrack software are interconnected, so it's easy to get the information we need quickly without backing out to a main area and coming back in a different path."

Integrated Dispatch Delivery saves one FTE

Viehmeyer gives an example of how the interconnections in BisTrack software save one full-time equivalent responding to inquiries about order deliveries. "Dispatch Delivery is excellent. Anybody can find out the status of a delivery. You can see what truck it's on and where else they're going on that day. Before we'd have to call the dispatch people," Viehmeyer explains. "It's a huge time saver. It probably saves us a person a year."

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Intuitive data analysis drives optimization

Viehmeyer says that BisTrack software's data analysis and Business Intelligence tools are easy and intuitive to use. "I'm not a SQL guy, and I can still create SmartViews," says Viehmeyer, referring to the simple Microsoft® SQL Server® query tool that lets you quickly filter and sort data. He describes how he used a SmartView to avoid costly mistakes with C.O.D. orders. "I created a SmartView of scheduled C.O.D. deliveries where there's still money outstanding. The sales team sees it and knows they need to call that customer to get credit card payment over the phone. And the delivery people know to check with the sales guy before they take it."

"The Cubes provide some really good information where you can really drill down and analyze the data," says Viehmeyer. "We used Cubes to determine the minimum and maximum inventory levels for Suggested Orders. We pulled sales histories for items that helped us calculate min and max. It was done by a temporary employee who knew how Windows applications should work but had never seen BisTrack, and he just flew through it."

The result: Fewer stock shortages due to real-time replenishment alerts. Stock on hand that more closely matches historical demand. Plus, time to prepare for and create purchase orders dropped from two hours to 15–20 minutes.

Operations at peak performance

BisTrack has helped reduce the costs of fulfilling special orders. Viehmeyer explains: "Special orders appear on an assistant manager's Dashboard as a Purchase Order for Approval. He can see what the customer is looking for, and combine it with other purchase orders to meet minimum quantities and get better freight rates. It's helped reduce our freight costs."

Viehmeyer also appreciates that he can see the work orders at each location and scheduled delivery dates at a glance. "We meet our delivery dates 98% of the time," Viehmeyer reports proudly. "Having access to our order delivery schedule gives me a better idea of when I can get something done for them. And when another sales person has put in the order, I can confidently say the delivery date that's on the ticket and know that's the date they're going to get it."

Margins up three points on BisTrack

BisTrack has also helped improve margins in two ways—monitoring margins in real time and adjusting prices on an item-by-item basis.

"Margin exceptions pop up on my Dashboard," says Viehmeyer. "It flags the stuff I need to look at. I'll go talk to the sales people, or check if my selling price is wrong. That helps hold the margin up. There was huge downward pressure on margins on the wholesale manufacturing side during the recent slow period, but BisTrack helped us manage that."

"The other part is being able to set margin on individual products. Making sure the competitive ones stay competitive, and looking for opportunities to take a little more margin on other products. BisTrack allows you to do that," says Viehmeyer. "In retail, our margin percent is up three points over 2008, which was a pretty good year, so BisTrack has helped us increase margins."

Love your computer system

Viehmeyer sums up the impact of Epicor BisTrack within their organization by saying, "Ask yourself, how many times have you said, 'I love my computer system'? With BisTrack, I say it all the time."

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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