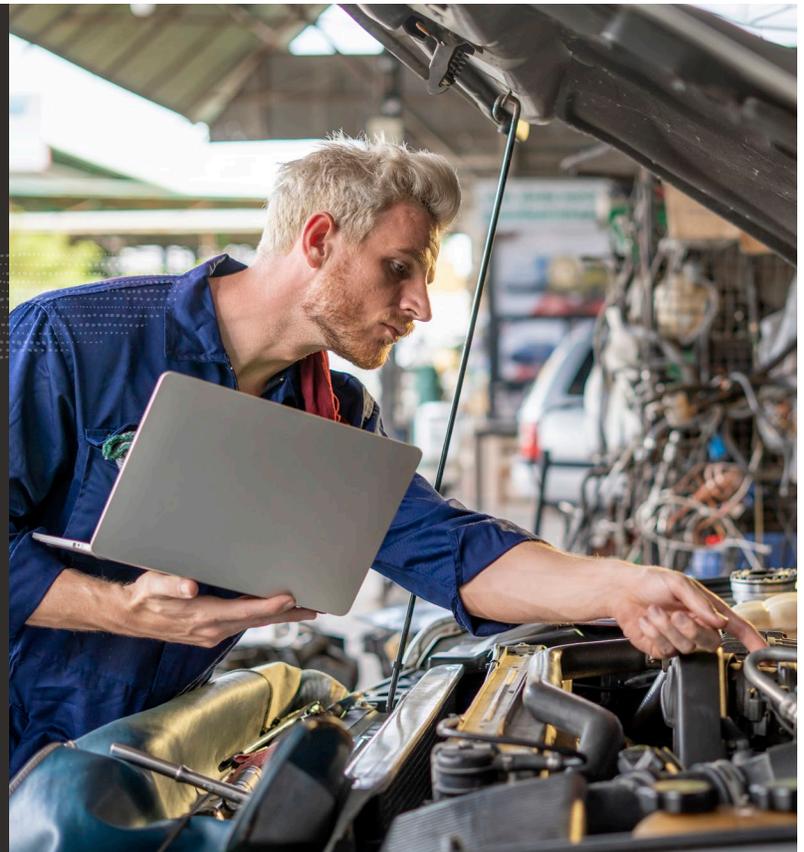




Starling Solutions and ECP Incorporated

Diversified Auto Supplier Uses NetSuite to Manage Manufacturing, Sales and Marketing



On track to hit \$100 million in sales by 2022, ECP Incorporated works with Starling Solutions to adopt NetSuite's cloud ERP and Starling Solutions' Blend ERP to create a unified system that handles manufacturing, sales and marketing on one platform.

In business for more than five decades, ECP Incorporated of Woodridge, Ill. offers a diversified line of products and programs through new car dealers in the U.S., Mexico, Canada, Puerto Rico and South Africa. Its products include appearance protection products for new, used and leased vehicles, optional protection products, customer appreciation programs and a full line of detailing, prep, service and facility chemicals and supplies.

“Starling Solutions walked us through everything that needed to be done, and educated us on how everything would work in NetSuite.”

Mike Heraty, Vice President and General Manager,
ECP Incorporated



“NetSuite was a leading candidate since it had added full manufacturing capability and batch and formula management through Blend ERP.” Mike Heraty, Vice President and General Manager, ECP Incorporated

Founded in 1969, the company relies on a network of qualified agents and distributors who are situated worldwide that help ECP expand into new markets, introduce new products and provide professional training on its products and services.

\$100 Million in Five Years

Spun out of a company that was started in 1935 as a supplier to original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) in the automotive sector, ECP discovered a niche supplying car dealerships with an array of services and products that its customers were asking for. Since 1992, the company has grown its sales from about \$6 million to a current \$85 million. It's now on track to reach \$100 million within the next one to two years.

About 95% of the company's products and services are sold through new car dealerships, with commercial car wash operators as a secondary customer market. “We're also looking to branch off into other areas, including expanding through acquisition,” said Mike Heraty, ECP's Vice President and General Manager. Beyond manufacturing and distributing its own products, the company also provides a variety of vehicle warranty programs.

“This places a stronger emphasis on sales and marketing tools and also helps differentiate us from other suppliers,” said Heraty. This multifaceted business model poses challenges when selecting Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software, which typically focuses on either manufacturing or sales and marketing.

“From the sales and marketing perspective, we're different than a lot of the manufacturing companies that typically just make and sell products,” Heraty said. “A lot of technology systems aren't built to do both, but we really need something that does both.”

Counterproductive Upgrades

Since the early-1990s, ECP relied on an AS/400 platform from Harris Data to run its growing business. After going through a few system upgrades over the years—primarily when Harris Data pushed out a “big fix” for the system—ECP decided to stop upgrading because it was interfering in its software customizations.

“The upgrades were very burdensome,” said Heraty, “and many times didn't even work because we'd done so much custom programming. Doing the upgrades became counterproductive.”

In 2012, ECP began looking for a replacement for its AS/400 system. Wanting a system with an integrated manufacturing model, it implemented Global Shop Solutions (a job shop software application). “This wasn’t a complete replacement because it didn’t handle sales and marketing,” said Heraty, “so we had to go back to the drawing board.”

Making the Cut

ECP revisited its technology evaluation in late-2017, at which point it put NetSuite at the top of its list.

A family of SuiteApps developed by Starling Solutions, Blend ERP is the first and only NetSuite application to be purpose-built for batch manufacturing, formula/recipe management, and HAZMAT documentation. It allows companies to address their unique manufacturing requirements—and the intricacies of their production and shipping processes—within NetSuite, and without the need for external software or ad hoc manual workarounds.

Working with Starling Solutions, ECP implemented NetSuite in a well thought out, methodical manner that Heraty really appreciated, having been part of three previous ERP implementations.

Knowing that its customer was coming from a highly-customized software environment, Starling Solutions also helped the ECP team understand the value of NetSuite’s native functionalities.

“Looking back, we really appreciate this approach, because that’s what makes sense and that’s the way it should be,” Heraty said. “If you’re not leveraging the product features, and if you’re simply customizing everything, you may as well just be developing your own software.”

Managing Manufacturing and Marketing

Today, ECP uses Blend ERP to manage its batch manufacturing and formula management. Using the system’s Hazmat Bill of Lading module, ECP automatically generates a bill of lading complete with hazmat information. To manage shipments, the company uses the Kuebix transportation management system (TMS), which transfers data back and forth between NetSuite. It’s now looking to integrate FedEx and UPS WorldShip into its ERP.

“This has saved our shipping department a lot of time,” said Heraty. “Being able to combine multiple sales orders into one shipment has been fantastic. The process that we set up is much easier than what we were previously doing.”

Because NetSuite is cloud-based, ECP was able to pivot quickly in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic forced many of its employees to work remotely. And because its new ERP can handle both its manufacturing and its sales and marketing activities, the company has an up-to-date technology that it’s been seeking since 2012.

Moving from an on-premises, AS/400 system alone has been a major boost for ECP and its global operations. “We’ve seen a huge benefit to being on the cloud, which has made working remotely a lot easier,” said Heraty, who added that both office and manufacturing staff members have been using the system to log in, process transactions and collaborate with one another.

“Not having to deal with signing in through a VPN, which was slow and hard to manage, has been great,” said Heraty, who is looking forward to expanding ECP’s reporting capabilities with NetSuite. “We’re creating new report types based on the new data that we’ve been collecting.”

For example, the company used to manually review average purchase prices in order to adjust its cost modeling. That process has since been automated in NetSuite.

More to Come

Looking ahead, Heraty said the company plans to explore more of its ERP's native functionalities and begin using those that make the most sense for its operations. "We'll dedicate some time to further explore the power of NetSuite," he added, "and go beyond just using the business processes and reporting we migrated over from our previous system."



Company Snapshot

Company: ECP Incorporated

Industry: Automotive Services

Location: Woodridge, Ill.



Partner Name: Starling Solutions

Location: Nova Scotia, Canada