

# HOW ACE MAKES PROGRESS



## MEETING GROWING CUSTOMER AND MARKET DEMANDS WITH EPICOR

ACE Clearwater Enterprises (ACE) is a family-owned manufacturer of sheet metal products, specializing in complex formed and welded assemblies for the aerospace, automotive, and power-generation industries. The company operates with 170 employees at three facilities in southern California.

In recent years, the organization faced several significant business challenges in meeting the needs of its customers. "Our customers wanted shorter lead times for products, they expected annual price reductions for the products, and they wanted to be able to tap right into our systems so they could track their orders on a real-time basis," explained King Lum, director of Progress at Ace.

With notable customers including Boeing, Honeywell, Lockheed Martin, General Electric, the United States Government, and several foreign aerospace companies, it was critical that ACE have the agility and flexibility to meet their



### **CHALLENGE**

*Support the accelerated pace of the manufacturing business with timely information access*

### **SOLUTION**

*Implemented the Vantage ERP solution from Progress Application Partner Epicor using a SOA*

### **BENEFIT**

*A competitive advantage due to greater efficiency and flexibility, including an easier response to the changing needs of its customers*

evolving needs. However, ACE's antiquated ERP system could not provide timely information access to keep up with the accelerated pace of the manufacturing business and its customers' ever-changing requirements.

Its legacy UNIX-based ERP system operated with multiple databases running in the background which often caused user problems and wasted time transferring data between applications. And because it was a "store and forward" system, the data was not real-time.

Lum is in his eleventh year at ACE and says customer expectations and need for speed and agility grow each year. The organization quickly realized that it required a new, flexible, integrated solution if it was going to remain competitive.

## CHOOSING A SERVICE-ORIENTED ARCHITECTURE (SOA) TO IMPROVE BUSINESS AGILITY

ACE developed several key criteria by which to select its next ERP system. First and foremost, it wanted a system that would aggregate and distribute real time data to users across the entire company for analysis and decision-making. The organization required an ERP system that would fit into ACE's discreet made-to-order manufacturing environment. The new system also needed to offer user-friendly installation, upgrades and maintenance, a lower total cost of ownership and simpler overall system administration.

After researching various solutions in the market, ACE chose a Progress-based ERP solution called Vantage, developed by Progress Application Partner Epicor. Epicor Vantage 8.0, the industry's first manufacturing software solution based on a 100 percent service-oriented architecture (SOA), enables continuous performance initiatives, real-time connectivity between supply-chain applications and partners, and greater business agility.

Vantage is an easy-to-use solution designed to meet the needs of progressive made-to-order and mixed-mode manufacturing companies. Based on the Progress® OpenEdge® integrated business platform, Vantage is platform independent, offering the extensibility required to integrate with a variety of existing and future solutions and across a distributed environment.




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***"Our old system was essentially like a Model T. Right now we are running the Starship Enterprise. Our customers love it. By increasing our efficiency we are now able to deliver a quicker product for our customers."***

Gary Johnson  
Vice President  
ACE

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OpenEdge provides the flexibility and robustness to scale with and sustain the evolving needs of ACE's customers.

"We selected Vantage because it best satisfied our selection criteria. It is a fully integrated system which means everyone in our company can use it," explained Lum. "Epicor has an excellent reputation in the industry and we were really pleased with the professionalism of all the Epicor staff we dealt with. Also extremely important—we knew Epicor would stand behind the product and continue to implement new features and innovations."

## SMOOTH AND RAPID IMPLEMENTATION

ACE started testing a beta version of Vantage 8.0 in the fall of 2004 and began the implementation process in February 2005. To plan the implementation, eight three-person process teams were formed, including operations, purchasing, contracts and accounting. Training was conducted at all three facilities on a team-by-team basis.

When it came time to convert the databases, ACE's programmer coordinated the data transfer with team leads and worked with an Epicor consultant to fine-tune configurations within Vantage. In the week before conversion, the teams inventoried and collected open orders from the shop floors. System data was downloaded on Wednesday, verified on Thursday, and uploaded into the new Vantage system on the Friday before the Memorial Day weekend.

Teams worked on Saturday and Sunday to recreate all open orders, completing the conversion process by Sunday afternoon and leaving Memorial Day free for parades and barbecues. On Tuesday morning, ACE was off and running on Vantage 8.0.

## OPTIMIZING ITS SUPPLY CHAIN WITH INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY

### Accelerating Its Business

ACE established several benchmarks for Vantage, and according to Lum, it hit them all. "Epicor has really allowed us to support the acceleration of our business by just cutting an enormous amount of time out of the

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front-end of our business,” explained Gary Johnson, vice president of ACE Clearwater Enterprises. “Our old system was essentially like a Model T. Right now we are running the Starship Enterprise. Our customers love it. By increasing our efficiency we are now able to deliver a quicker product for our customers.”

Innovation plays a huge role in ACE’s business. “We are a build to data shop, used to be known as build to print shop, otherwise known as a job shop. We don’t have a product. There are two types of companies in our industry. There are the innovative companies and the dead companies. We very much like being on the innovative side of it, and the Progress-based system from Epicor has really allowed us to do just that,” explained Johnson.

With Vantage, ACE will enable its customers to tap into its database on a real time basis. “This is really exciting,” says Johnson. “I have traveled around to all our key customers—the Lockheed Martins, The Honeywells, the GEs, and when I tell them we are getting ready to let them access our database and check on their own parts in real-time it’s a huge plus in our behalf. It has really helped us to market our company because we are now on the cutting edge with Epicor.”

## USER-FRIENDLY AND RESPONSIVE

Every department at ACE uses Epicor, including Estimating, Contracts, Engineering, MRP planning, Operations, Purchasing, Quality, Stores, Shipping/ Receiving and Finance and Accounting.

“We’ve found Vantage 8.0 to be easy to learn and very user-friendly,” said Lum. “For example, I was able to train a manufacturing intern to use the manufacturing planning module within an hour.”

Because OpenEdge has the flexibility and openness to work with Microsoft .NET, Epicor’s Vantage leverages the best platform for business logic plus the de facto standard for user interface technology to deliver an application that is extremely responsive, user friendly and low maintenance. ACE’s existing Windows platform and TCP/IP infrastructure eliminates the need for propriety hardware and infrastructure. ACE also found that Epicor’s

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technical support was very responsive, “They are the best I’ve experienced in the industry,” noted Lum.

## **INCREASED OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY AND REAL-TIME VISIBILITY**

The integrated Vantage solution means less paper-pushing, a goal ACE first established five years ago. For example, Vantage gives ACE online, real time visibility of contract review requirements for ISO quality certification. Previously, paper was shuffled between separate tracking systems and databases. Furthermore, quality documentation is now incorporated directly into Vantage, rather than ACE personnel recording bad parts on separate paper forms.

With Vantage, ACE users now share information across applications with analytical tools, which Lum calls “a tremendous time-saving benefit.” Reports can be easily modified and special business activity queries (BAQ) written to deliver real time data to ACE users. For ACE’s purchasing staff, Lum says Vantage reports and BAQs give them critical information and optimal visibility in managing the company’s supply chain.

“Customers today also want immediate visibility on the status of their orders—they don’t want to wait,” Lum says. ACE plans to offer its customers Web-interface capabilities in the near future, through Vantage’s Web service capabilities. States Lum, “This will be another competitive advantage.”

## **EPICOR AND PROGRESS: A PARTNERSHIP FOR INNOVATION**

Epicor leads in the manufacturing market by offering its customers field-proven, best-of breed manufacturing solutions. For the fourth consecutive year, Epicor, has received honors from Progress due to its ability to quickly adopt the most innovative Progress technology.

Epicor has participated in Progress’ Business Empowerment Program focused on developing strategic business practices and cultivating collaborative opportunities to increase market share.

## EPICOR SOFTWARE CORPORATION

Epicor is a global leader dedicated to providing integrated enterprise resource planning (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM) and supply chain management (SCM) software solutions to midmarket companies around the world. Founded in 1984, Epicor serves over 20,000 customers in more than 140 countries, providing solution in over 30 languages. Epicor leverages innovative technologies like Web services in developing end-to-end, industry-specific solutions for manufacturing, distribution, services, retail and hospitality that enable companies to drive efficiencies throughout business operations and build competitive advantage. With the scalability and flexibility to support long-term growth, Epicor's solutions are complemented by a full range of services, providing a single point of accountability to promote rapid return on investment and low total cost of ownership. Epicor's worldwide headquarters are located in Irvine, California with offices and affiliates around the world.

For more information, visit the company's Web site at [www.epicor.com](http://www.epicor.com).

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## PROGRESS SOFTWARE

Progress Software Corporation (NASDAQ: PRGS) is a global software company that enables enterprises to be operationally responsive to changing conditions and customer interactions as they occur. Our goal is to enable our customers to capitalize on new opportunities, drive greater efficiencies, and reduce risk. Progress offers a comprehensive portfolio of best-in-class infrastructure software spanning event-driven visibility and real-time response, open integration, data access and integration, and application development and management—all supporting on-premises and SaaS/cloud deployments. Progress maximizes the benefits of operational responsiveness while minimizing IT complexity and total cost of ownership.

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