GP Automotive Parts

COMPANY BACKGROUND

GP Automotive, established in 2001, is a small wholesale distributor of auto parts located in Washington State. Their customers are auto body shops that repair cars damaged in wrecks. Their niche in this highly competitive market is customer service – getting the right parts to the auto body shops quickly.

BUSINESS SITUATION

GP Automotive's inventory relies on Partslink®, a universal numbering system for the identification of aftermarket collision replacement parts. Parts numbers and their associated information are constantly changing as new parts are manufactured, prices are changed, and numbering formats evolve to accommodate new suppliers. Every month GP has to submit reports to a number of insurance companies on their level of inventory and its value. This required a monthly update of the changes to the Partslink data. It was a laborious process requiring manually filling Excel spreadsheets. It would easily consume 8 to 10 hours per month.

When they established the business, the distributor had acquired a basic accounting/inventory management package – but its functionality was severely limited and as a result, much work still had to be done manually. For example, although the software was used for receivables, they had to use Intuit's Quickbooks® for payables and to create reports. For a small business looking to grow, the software was constraining.

SOLUTION

In 2009, GP Automotive's owners decided that if they were going to maintain their high level of customer service and grow, they needed software that better fit their needs. Kay Salveson, a co-owner of the distributor, is responsible for the firm's back office operations. She was aware of how their lack of more robust accounting and inventory control software was creating inefficiencies that could potentially affect their reputation for speedy delivery of parts.

Given the wide range of choices available, Salveson knew that selecting the right software solution was going to be a daunting task. "I started by looking at a fairly large pool of ERP software vendors. Aside from having software that did what we needed it to do, I wanted to go with a firm that was large enough to have the resources to support us, but not so large that we were unimportant. I finally whittled down my list to 3 firms and conducted extensive interviews with each."

Affordable, Adaptable ERP Software

"The Fitrix team had a plan for my needs that impressed me. I was convinced that Fitrix had the functionality we needed and I liked that it was customizable because I knew there were some modifications we would need to fit our business. For manageability and efficiency I wanted one integrated system that could grow with us as we grew."

One of the first problems tackled after acquiring Fitrix was to eliminate the manual labor associated with Partslink® updates. The Fitrix support team wrote a program that allowed Salveson to update her database with all of the new Partslink® information with a few keystrokes. The monthly reports for the insurance companies, which all vary in format, are now quickly and easily produced. Information from Partslink® now populates their automated order entry via Fitrix. Today when an order is received, users can click on "details" and see every part by car model and year. Users check boxes for the parts they need and the order form is automatically created.

GP is currently using Fitrix for inventory, accounts receivables, accounts payable, and payroll. The adoption of the software has given the firm much more control of inventory. If the system indicates a part is on the shelf – it's actually on the shelf. Inventory is more organized so that when drivers come in the shipment is ready to go. Invoices now have full descriptions, insurance claim numbers, and any notes they want to add. Accounts receivables are far easier to read and track. Their entire operational process has been streamlined so the time required for ordering, delivery, and billing has been shortened.

GP Automotive uses an outside contractor to maintain their computer hardware and relies completely on the Fitrix team for software support. Salveson is pleased with the working relationship she has with Fourth Generation Software. "We wanted a firm that would work collaboratively with us to help us tailor solutions that precisely fit our needs. Because we use it to differentiate our business, we know customer service - and their service has been outstanding."

RESULTS

GP Automotive has witnessed how much the right piece of software can improve business operations. Updating Partslink® information takes less than a quarter of the time it used to. The automation and customization provided by Fitrix allows GP Automotive to process and deliver customer orders faster – thereby enhancing their reputation for great customer service.

By selecting Fitrix ERP software, they acquired an affordable package that could be easily modified to accommodate their operations. The firm now has a functionally rich system that can grow with them as their needs change and grow.