Merritt Reaches Digital Inflection Point with SYSPRO

At a Glance

COMPANY NAME

Merritt Trailers, Inc. and Merritt Aluminum Products Company

REGION

United States of America

KEY CHALLENGE

Reduction of human error; a need to improve customer experience

KEY BENEFIT

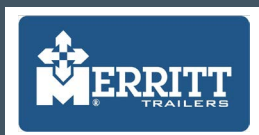The enhancement of customized services

INDUSTRY

Industrial machinery and equipment

END USER MARKET

Trucking and Agricultural Industries

SOLUTION

SYSPRO 8

Company Profile

Established in 1951, Merritt Trailers, Inc. and sister company Merritt Aluminum Products manufacture market-leading livestock and commodity trailers as well as aluminum parts and accessories for the trailer/trucking industry. The company grew its business reach throughout the U.S. and Canada, and today continues to offer world-class trailer and related aluminum parts manufacturing, superior service and access to its products via a wide dealer network.

The Business Challenge

Merritt's need to digitally transform was accelerated to meet the needs of a changing customer-preference world. With its existing solution unable to adapt, Merritt required a technology solution that was tightly integrated with its business plans to customize orders and handle tens of thousands of parts rather than hundreds of parts as in the past.

The Solution

Merritt uses a full suite of SYSPRO 8 applications spanning financial modules, Bill of Materials, Quotations & Estimates, Requirements Planning, Factory Documentation, Lot Traceability, Product Configurator, Forecasting and Reporting.

The Outcome

SYSPRO met Merritt's digital transformation customization and market growth requirements. Importantly, it was easy to learn and use, which helped employees adapt to the new system. In addition, SYSPRO delivered the flexibility needed to support future growth and innovation.

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> *The reason we upgraded to SYSPRO 8 is because we refuse as a Company to fall behind on our installed applications ever again. We now stay as up to date as we can on all of our applications and we are taking the end users with us.*
>
> **- David Wilson** – Systems Programmer, Merritt
> "

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CASE STUDY

Changing Industry Requirements

Merritt began in 1951 as a small automotive and welding shop in Portland, Oregon, where customers would bring in steel truck bodies and other transportation machinery for repairs. Seeing an opportunity for better designs on both the truck bodies and trailers, the company founders innovated and built the world's first all-aluminum livestock trailer.

By the end of the 1960s, Merritt was making a wide range of livestock trailers, commodity trailers and what was comically termed 'headache racks' that offered storage on the back of a big rig's cab.

In the 1970s, the company relocated to Henderson, northeast of Denver, to better facilitate operations from a more central U.S. location. In the ensuing decades, Merritt slowly and steadily built an impressive reputation and network within the transportation and agricultural markets by focusing on superior quality of design and better construction.

The highly successful 'American Dream' stylized company grew its business reach throughout the U.S. and Canada, and today continues to offer world-class trailer and related aluminum parts manufacturing, superior service and access to its products via a wide dealer network.

In previous years, Merritt relied on simplified manual systems for order-taking. Most of the systems were paper-based and the business relied heavily on MRP systems designed for mass production. With customer needs continuously evolving, industry requests and the subsequent orders shifted from turnkey requests that could be facilitated via a mass production environment to customized order requests.

The need to digitally transform was therefore accelerated to meet the needs of a changing customer-preference world where individual specifics and selectivity became the norm for each order. In striving to keep up with this drastic change to its business model, Merritt found itself in a tough position: its existing Syteline solution couldn't adapt.

Setting Priorities Beyond Technology Alone

While company management knew it needed to upgrade its ERP solution in a reasonable time period, it had achieved market leadership through proven traditional values and principles and avoided making a hasty decision. The company had two distinct requirements: acquiring an ERP solution that was flexible enough to take the company into whatever future opportunities might arise and finding the right qualities in its ERP vendor partner.

Merritt wanted to streamline an interface for the company's salespeople to handle the new order entry requirements and secondly to ensure that the Bill of Materials system interfaced seamlessly to those orders.

"We are a company with some employees that have been with us 20-25 years or more and we needed to have a solution that would make this ERP technology transformation as seamless as possible," said David Wilson, Merritt's Systems Programmer. "Sure, the technology had to meet our new customization and market growth requirements, but it also had to be easy to learn and use, or we weren't going to get employees to use it."

Merritt's thorough ERP industry evaluation led it to SYSPRO. Quickly discarding the large ERP industry giants because management did not see a cultural or personalized fit, the company's experience with SYSPRO during the initial review cycle and subsequently through the nearly 10 years after deployment is giving the company exactly what it wanted as well as the means to support future growth and innovation.

From a cultural perspective, Merritt also values its business relationships as much as its bottom line and it was clear to management that the larger ERP software companies were not on the same page. "We are a family-oriented business; we care about our employees, customers and partners, and we want our technology and other suppliers to hold us in this same high regard," Wilson said.

He sees similarities between Merritt and SYSPRO: "It was clear at the start that SYSPRO is like us and shares our values; we are both successful, privately-held, family-oriented businesses that are focused on doing things right. We are maintaining market leadership against much larger competitors because we have SYSPRO ERP capabilities. Our solution could not keep up, and we didn't like what we saw/heard from larger companies, like Oracle, in the sales process. We can say with certainty almost 10 years after selecting SYSPRO that we made a great choice, and their cultural values of doing the right thing match ours."

Reaping the Digital Rewards

SYSPRO's ability to enable customization by keeping track of quantities of materials has given Merritt full visibility of its organization. This has shortened development time and enhanced operational efficiency across the two companies with their different brands and manufacturing philosophies.

Based on a combination of a great user interface and the system's ability to interface with other Merritt solutions easily, processes and reports that once took a week or more to complete are now executed in five minutes or less. Even though the company is facing competitive challenges from much larger industry players, Merritt is maintaining both profitability and market leadership.

Through SYSPRO, Merritt was able to implement a warehouse slotting process, reducing the time taken to organize inventory in the warehouse or distribution center by 90%. Operational efficiencies were also achieved; for example, the automation of serial numbers reduced production time from a matter of hours to minutes. SYSPRO has therefore played a significant role in Merritt's ability to achieve its digital innovation goals, which focus on increasing revenue and saving both money and resources.

With the aim of distributing products through digital channels, Merritt will make the shift to place its products on an e-commerce site with a built-in configurator. This will reduce costs and take Merritt's business model regarding customized services to the next level by giving customers the opportunity to configure their own products online.

About SYSPRO

SYSPRO is a leading, global Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software provider, specializing in key manufacturing and distribution industries. Our Industry-built solutions and services are designed to make things possible.

SYSPRO's ERP solution empowers customers to take the next step – whether it is expanding into new territories, adding new product lines, transforming business processes, or driving innovation. Through our ERP software, customers gain access to solutions, processes, and tools to assist in the management of data for key business insights and informed decision making. The solution is scalable and can be deployed in the cloud, on-premise, or both, and accessed via the web on any device to provide customers with choice and flexibility.

As a trusted advisor, SYSPRO remains focused on the success of partners and customers. With a strong commitment to channel partner growth, SYSPRO customers are backed by a team of global experts that drive maximum value out of IT systems and business solutions. We are committed to addressing the unique needs of our customers, enabling them to easily adapt and remain resilient. Our evolving solutions are aligned with industry trends and leverage emerging technologies that will enable partners and customers to secure a digital future and to gain a competitive advantage.

Learn more about SYSPRO's distribution solutions for the Industrial Machinery and Equipment industry. **Click here** or contact us on info@us.syspro.com

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