

Affordable ERP Brings Sought-after Functionality to Stone Manufacturer



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OVERVIEW

With a manufacturing facility in Minneapolis and distribution centers in Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Texas, Boulder Creek Stone is a family-owned, premier manufacturer of stone and thin brick veneer. The company also offers stone installation services and gas and wood-burning fireplaces and stoves from five manufacturers through its retail showroom, Condor Fireplace and Stone. For years, the family ran its separate lines of business using a hodgepodge of different systems that was hard to manage. Faced with upgrading one of those legacy systems, Boulder Creek decided instead to centralize on Acumatica’s ERP, which not only saved the organization thousands of dollars but also brought business functionality that was previously out of reach.

SITUATION

For years, Boulder Creek Stone relied on a combination of systems to run its business. An aging version of Sage ran inventory, sales order processing and accounts receivable while Microsoft Dynamics handled the General Ledger, payroll and accounts payable functions, according to Scott Starkweather, President. Migrating data was done manually using Excel spreadsheets while Crystal Reports provided some business reporting.

“Certain information was important to one system and other information was important in another, and it was extremely difficult to have any consistent accountability,” Starkweather says. Running accounting from two unconnected systems was inefficient; especially when manually entering some 700 accounts payable bills from one system to the other monthly, adds Glenda Starkweather, Co-Owner and Vice President.

As the company grew from its manufacturing roots into offering installation services and later selling fireplaces and accessories, they found it difficult to track the different lines of business efficiently. Deep dives into company data to spot trends or operational deficiencies were nonexistent. The staff wasted a lot of time checking for double entries, verifying accuracy among multiple paper documents and reconciling them when questions arose.

Operating with “laymen’s IT”, even small customizations were difficult in Sage, which meant Boulder Creek had to spend thousands of dollars in IT consulting fees when it wanted to customize Sage to conform to the way the company did business.

Because Sage was so difficult to upgrade, and support was so poor, Boulder Creek ran a 3-year-old version. Starkweather knew the company wanted a centralized, more efficient way to run accounting and business operations.”

COMPANY

- **Location:** Headquartered in Minneapolis, MN
- **Industry:** Manufacturer of stone and thin brick veneer
- **Application Replaced:** Sage, Dynamics & Salesforce

SOLUTION

- Acumatica Financial Management
- Acumatica Manufacturing Edition
- Acumatica Customer Relationship Management

KEY RESULTS

- Streamlined operations with a newly centralized system
- Saved thousands of dollars with an affordable CRM
- Eliminated manual, double entries, saving time
- Gained high level of product support

SOLUTION

At the suggestion of their IT solutions provider, BHE Consulting, they looked at what Acumatica had to offer, liked it, and went live with Acumatica Cloud ERP. "BHE really understood our business and has done an excellent job for us," Scott Starkweather says.

Acumatica provided an affordable ERP that could handle multiple facets of its business, including CRM, while also automating and centralizing many of its manual paper-based processes.

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– Scott Starkweather, Boulder Creek Stone President

BENEFITS

More Efficient, Productive Staff

Boulder Creek Stone has streamlined many business processes, making the staff more efficient and productive now that everything is run through Acumatica. Not only has the team recouped unproductive time, but Acumatica's flexible, easy-to-use interface and programming has saved the company money.

"What I really like about Acumatica is how much is configurable," Starkweather says. "I really learned the difference between 'customize' and 'configure'. In Acumatica, so much is configurable whereas in Sage, everything was an expensive customization. For a small/medium business, farming stuff out at \$150 to \$200 an hour can be expensive. Now we can do that configuration in-house without laying out all that cash."

"I love, love, love the generic inquiries we can build," he adds. "It gives us better data for analysis of our business processes, so we can see what we are doing well and take a deeper dive where we need to improve."

Universal Search Speeds Data Retrieval

The company's controller is the newest Acumatica user, and she found the ERP system as easy to learn as the rest of the staff. "I came from using Dynamics for 15 years, which was a pretty big switch, but Acumatica's navigation is easy and drilling in is really helpful," says Jean Eiden.

Starkweather praises the universal search bar for its ability to search across nearly all modules, making it much easier to find transactions. "Duplicate order entry is nearly impossible now," he adds. "When we go to business accounts, it lists all orders, so we can quickly qualify if an order exists. We were doing quite a bit of duplicate order entry before."

Starkweather looks forward to launching the Payroll module and hooking third-party applications, such as the HubSpot marketing automation tool, to Acumatica's flexible platform. "When we talk about Acumatica, it's not just about accounting but about where we do all our business. We work in Acumatica and don't need to leave."

Affordable CRM Streamlines Communication

Acumatica's integrated functionality and ease of use allowed Young Boulder Creek Stone discontinued Salesforce, electing to use Acumatica's CRM to streamline communication between its sales and customer service. "Salesforce had too many bells and whistles for a company our size to manage," Starkweather says. "Acumatica CRM has good guts that can effectively manage the sales staff and connect them to the data they need without bothering customer service."

The company's manufacturing sales staff doesn't write orders; instead orders are entered through customer service, a process that involves a lot of coordination between the two groups. With Acumatica's automated notifications, they are creating triggers that alert sales when an order occurs, eliminating multiple phone calls.

"The pricing on Acumatica CRM is way better than Salesforce," Starkweather adds. "Acumatica is at least four times less, to be conservative."

Platform for Growth

"With the automation we can now put in place, as we grow we won't need to add incremental labor to execute back office tasks," Starkweather says.

Likewise, Acumatica's unlimited user pricing allows them to focus on growing the business, not worrying about additional per user costs. "When you have to pay an extra couple thousand dollars to add more users, you tend not to get enough capacity for what you actually need, and then it's not as easy to roll out additional functionality," Starkweather says. "It's hard to justify the cost with the traditional model. With Acumatica, that's not the case."

Acumatica Over-Delivers

"With Sage, our technical support was generally very slow. You would put a ticket in and maybe you'd hear back from them two, three days later. With Acumatica, you get an almost immediate response," says Glenda Starkweather. Acumatica's "response to customer needs is fantastic," Scott Starkweather says, adding he likes submitting suggestions in the customer portal, seeing them voted on and implemented, and likes knowing Acumatica's roadmap as it refines the product and adds modules going forward.

"It's a fantastic product and we're excited to grow with Acumatica," Starkweather says. "It's weird to be excited about an ERP product. Eight years ago, I thought, 'Why would anyone want to sell ERP? It seemed to be all about managing expectations, getting a sale and then dealing with all the guff from customers when the companies couldn't deliver a solution with a manageable budget for small/medium businesses.'"

"The cost was \$250,000 no matter which company we looked at," he continues. "Our initial decision was based upon who could give us 70 percent of what we needed, which was frustrating. With Acumatica, it feels like they bring 110 percent of what we need because they bring integration, ideas, and automation. Acumatica is bringing functionality to the small/medium business sector that was out of reach budget-wise four years ago."