

E-Tailer Modernizes & Thrives with Help from Acumatica Cloud Erp



“Our success is ultimately tied to Acumatica’s success, and they are building a strong and healthy product, They have a vibrant customer and development community and a product that’s growing, not stagnant. We can really craft Acumatica to do what we need it to do.”

– Ben Rothe, General Manager & CEO

OVERVIEW

When credit card companies notified Premier 1 Supplies that it had to upgrade its payment software to remain compliant, CEO Ben Rothe looked extensively for a B2C ERP that could replace the family business’ aging Sage Mas500 system. Unable to find B2C software with every function Premier 1 needed, Rothe implemented Acumatica’s B2B system, which offers an open platform allowing him to easily extract data, streamline workflows, and connect to outside applications and the company website.

SITUATION

Premier 1 Supplies has been providing electric fencing and electric netting, sheep and goat supplies, clippers and shearers, ear tags, poultry products and expert advice to livestock farmers throughout the United States for more than 40 years via traditional mail order catalog and their website. Founded in 1977– when Stan Potratz returned to Iowa and the family farm after a 10-year stretch away working in the UK as a farm manager — upon learning that much of the equipment he had been using wasn’t available in the U.S., Potratz began importing the equipment he needed for the family farm’s operations.

By 2008, Premier 1 had grown to several thousand items requiring a more robust system for the family business operations. On the advice of consultants, the company implemented Sage MAS500 and an add-on called Direct500, which provided some basic e-commerce functionality. “It was a big shift because they were running on MACs, creating the mail order catalogs. They had to make the move to Windows, but they went for it,” says Ben Rothe, Premier 1 now CEO who became an owner in the business when his aunt and uncle retired. That software transition was painful and still fresh in employees’ minds even 10 years later. “Everybody remembers the time when (MAS500) rolled out and was torture for three months,” Rothe says. “Sales fell, Sage VAR was unresponsive, and it was just awful.”

Legacy Software not PCI Compliant

When Rothe joined the company in 2015, the 55-employee company was still using the legacy ERP which he noted as “a stuck-in-time legacy system” that wasn’t being supported. Rothe began his search for a new ERP when Premier 1’s payment card processor informed them they needed newer software to remain PCI compliant. The company’s software was so old, “no one knew how to upgrade us,” Rothe says.

“We talked to some firms that could keep Sage alive but at the cost they estimated, it felt almost like starting over. We decided to look at what was out there.” Frustrated with the lack of support and limited features and recognizing that some software firms weren’t investing for the future, Rothe skipped legacy ERP providers. Instead, he researched cloud-based SaaS software firms, a category with which he was familiar from his background as a software developer running an e-commerce firm for two decades.

COMPANY

- **Location:** Washington, Iowa
- **Industry:** Retail & E-Commerce: Agriculture and Farming Supplier
- **Application Replaced:** Sage
- **Application Evaluated:** Oracle NetSuite

SOLUTION

- Acumatica Distribution Edition with:
 - Advanced Financial Management
 - Order Management
 - Inventory Control

KEY RESULTS

- Access to the open API framework of Acumatica
- Gained access to company data throughout the organization
- Displayed real-time customer information, increasing sales opportunities
- Cut time to receive reports by three days
- Developed B2C customizations and workflows in house, avoiding the expense of outside development & customization

Premier 1 Team Searched for Cloud ERP

To help secure a new ERP, Rothe assembled a software evaluation team of five, carefully choosing employees from different departments. He wanted an easy-to-upgrade, modern solution from a provider poised for growth. "I wanted a company that was going to last and was growing so we wouldn't be in the same boat five to 10 years down the road."

"We hunted far and wide for B2C solutions, but only found pieces of the whole of what we needed," Rothe says. "We're a high volume B2C company and were finding that a lot of companies like us resort to heavy customization since it can prove to be difficult to find everything needed. I did feel like we were in this mid-sized wasteland where there's not a B2C ERP out there." Rothe's research led him to e-commerce players Oracle NetSuite and Acumatica, and he briefly considered a custom-made solution.

SOLUTION

Rothe chose Acumatica because "when taken as a whole, Acumatica has many functions that make B2C easier," he says. "We were closer aligned with Acumatica and felt its open APIs would allow me to make customizations myself. I felt like we were starting with more of an out-of-the-box ERP than we would have with Oracle NetSuite."

"I am very comfortable with the concept of having my product in the cloud, and an open API layer and the cloud's features and benefits didn't need a lot of explaining. I knew what they could do and mean for our business."

– Ben Rothe, General Manager & CEO

Implementation: We Didn't Miss a Beat

Premier 1 worked with a past winner of Acumatica's Cloud Adoption Partner of the Year, Crestwood Associates, on the implementation. "There was a lot of trepidation by the staff when we launched," Rothe said. "Many wondered whether we were going to go through three months of hell again just to get a new solution in place. Within a few weeks of go live, there was a big sigh of relief. Roll out went very well. We didn't miss a beat; we cut over and processed just as many orders. It was a big success."

BENEFITS

Data-based Insights Improve Operations

Acumatica provided Premier 1 with data-based insights not available with the legacy ERP, dramatically improving operations. "Being able to access data and have the various departments working together in one system is a real benefit," Rothe says. "If the warehouse has low

inventory for an item, it is immediately exposed to purchasing to place the order for more. We now have real-time visibility to pertinent data." Rothe has cut technology expense costs by eliminating some of the servers and technology needed on-premises. Rothe now executes sophisticated marketing efforts he could only dream of before.

Increased Functionality

Rothe and his team are no longer frustrated by on premise, limited functionality, legacy software. Acumatica's open platform has allowed Premier 1 to save money by avoiding costly customizations. Today, they can code new reports and workflows internally.

E-commerce Features Improve Customer Experience

Although historically a mail-order catalog company, 65 percent of Premier's business is now conducted via their website with sales through Amazon and other third-party marketplaces accounting for another 10 percent with the remaining order volume coming over the phone. Premier 1's IT team connected the company's website with Acumatica which allows for the connection to inventory data so if an item runs out of stock, the website is notified immediately. This improves the online shoppers experience since customers have up-to-date information to inform their purchase. The inventory website connection also saves the company the extra cost of shipping out of stock items separately, increasing order margins.

Streamlined Customer Service

Rothe and his team streamlined information and workflows in Acumatica that make the customer service team more efficient, which also impacts customer satisfaction. "We still take 30 percent of orders on the phone, and we need to interact with customers quickly," Rothe says.

Third-Party Integrations Extend Functionality

Premier 1 Supplies is working with a few of Acumatica's third-party software partners and looking at others. The company has implemented Avalara AvaTax software to collect the appropriate state tax. Rothe has plans in the works to develop a way to offer gift certificates and create a customer loyalty program. "We would like to get customers to come back and shop with us regularly."

Strong Platform for Growth

Premier 1 Supplies is now positioned for rapid growth with a modern, connected solution that allows Rothe to easily implement the B2C functionality the business requires.