UK Building Materials Manufacturer Grows, and Gains 24/7 Access with Robust Acumatica Manufacturing Edition

SAM®

OVERVIEW

SAM, the UK's leading manufacturer of interior and exterior Medium-density fiberboard (MDF), was using a legacy, on-premises ERP that limited its growth. SAM deployed Acumatica Cloud ERP gaining a flexible system that can be accessed from anywhere, helping the firm stay connected during the pandemic, and boosting its strong customer centric approach throughout the company.

KEY RESULTS

- Gained an integrated, Cloud-based system, improving productivity
- Added anytime, anywhere access for sales staff, elevating customer service
- Expanded company's customer centric approach, strengthening relationships
- Streamlined order processing, saving time
- Gained single platform for continued growth and acquisitions

CHALLENGES

SAM is the UK's leading manufacturer of interior and exterior MDF moldings. The family-run business produces skirting and architrave, door linings, window board, stair accessories, kitchen moldings, picture frame moldings, cladding, fascia and soffit, decorative bargeboard, and window components. These products come in a variety of finishes including primed and unprimed, fully finished, or wrapped in paper, PVC or real wood veneer.

Founded by Sam and Julienne McCrea in 1990, the company has strong core values of teamwork, integrity, respect, and loyalty – ethics that apply throughout the business. In 2004, the company was the first manufacturing company in the world to achieve Investors in People Champion status. The manufacturer operates out of two plants, a 10-acre, purpose–built facility in Antrim, and a recently acquired a 5-acre site in Donington, north of London, England.

SAM previously ran a client/server-based, on-premises system called EFACS, a traditional ERP package that never quite met expectations, says Tim Patton, ITC director. When the company added a molding division, it became apparent that the back-office system wasn't operating efficiently, and many processes were constrained by a lack of modern technologies.

The sales staff had to return to the office to update contacts, opportunities, and sales orders, or they had to do battle with some remote login software, for example. Even worse, when failing to log in via the VPN, sales had to ask someone in the office to enter information for them, wasting another person's time.

"EFACS was a bit constraining for us," says Patton. "It was per-seat license, and when we purchased High Spec Door, we needed a more robust, flexible system that could grow with us." Because the legacy system charged per person using the system, SAM purchased a limited amount of seat licenses and "as user 12 came on, the system kicked you out," Patton says.

Company
SAM
www.samonline.co.uk

Industry
Manufacturing: Wood Products

Number of Employees
Approx. 125 full time employees

Location
Northern Ireland and the UK

Products
Acumatica Manufacturing Edition (includes BOM, MRP, PM) with:

- Financial Management
- Inventory Management
- Order Management
- CRM with Outlook Integration
- B2B Gateway's EDI and API Connectivity for Acumatica

Customer Social Sharing Details

www.linkedin.com/company/sam-mouldings

www.facebook.com/SAMmouldings/

www.youtube.com/user/sammouldings

www.twitter.com/sammouldings

Partner Details

ARCUS

Arcus
www.arcus-universe.com

SOLUTION

Cloud-based ERP Lowers Tech Costs

Initially, the SAM team looked at on-premises solutions like SAP and Sage, but executives decided a Cloud-first platform would allow them to avoid spending thousands on new servers and hardware to support the ERP. "Because we had creaky infrastructure, we would have had to upgrade our servers," Patton says.

While researching Cloud ERPs, Patton found Acumatica Cloud ERP.

"Two things instantly attracted me to the Acumatica model," Patton says. "One was the reduced costs in maintenance, and the other was no per-user licensing. "Because Acumatica Cloud ERP pricing is based on transactions and not the number of users, SAM can grow knowing its licensing is a fixed cost and that the technology infrastructure budget won't balloon because the company wouldn't need to replace servers or hard drives.

"With Acumatica, there are no licensing surprises and no replacement costs," Patton says.

He also loved Acumatica's intuitiveness and ease of use. "If a system is easy to use, then it will get used, and that, ultimately, is what we want as a business," Patton says.

Pandemic Shut Down Allows ERP Implementation

In March 2020, SAM made the difficult decision to temporarily close both its manufacturing sites following government guidance to protect the health and wellbeing of employees. They have since reopened, introducing flexible working with some staff working from home to reduce the number of people on site. Because they implemented Acumatica Cloud ERP during the downtime, they had business continuity the minute the government said they could reopen.

"Truthfully, we might not be here if we didn't have Acumatica," Patton says. "We quickly made sure sales, production and finance had laptops, and Acumatica was the one system that just worked. Our legacy systems caused problems."

BENEFITS

Anywhere Access Improves Customer Service

With Acumatica Cloud ERP, SAM's 125 employees have instant access to critical information and the mobile sales team works from anywhere, on any device. The sales staff enters information within minutes and the data is instantly in the new system and visible. That's a vast improvement over information only appearing many days later.

"Our salespeople work remotely, and because of Acumatica, they can dive straight into sales orders and shipments and have information at their fingertips," Patton says.

The production team now has insight into what sales is booking on a daily basis, and can plan based on actual orders. "We were running blind before," Patton says. "Now, we can see volume, location, type of product, and managers can prepare and put new orders into the production schedule."

SAM streamlined its order processing system and can add notes and attachments to orders, and automatically send email confirmations. Thanks to Acumatica Cloud ERP's integration with other systems, SAM's sales order demand passes seamlessly to its dispatch and production systems.

Using Acumatica in the cloud allows the two factories to work seamlessly on the same customer orders, information that sales can access to learn of any delays and inform customers in real-time. Customers get automatically notified of shipment information as soon as that information is posted in Acumatica Cloud ERP, which removes the need for sales to phone the customer.

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>
> —Tim Patton, ICT Director

Improved Customer Experience

While the automatic notification may appear like a small feature, it improves SAM's customer experience and enhances its focus on offering superior customer support. "If a mistake is made by us, no matter what it is, there's often a cost involved," Patton says, explaining they formerly used a disconnected system to try to track those issues. "Using cases in Acumatica, we can identify them and pick them up as soon as possible. We are very customer centric; without customers we don't exist, and we try to give the best service possible."

Another Acumatica Cloud ERP feature that helps improve customer satisfaction is the software's flexibility, he says. When asked if SAM could incorporate specific customer codes for all transactions, it wasn't a problem because it was easy to do in Acumatica. SAM was also able to enable electronic ordering or EDI for those customers wanting it, further increasing customer satisfaction. "It's just the simple things that Acumatica does so well," Patton says.

SAM plans to create a customer portal that allows its largest customers to log directly into the Acumatica Cloud ERP platform to access secure customer information applicable to that customer. Patton doesn't have to worry about seat-licenses or added costs for this portal access since Acumatica doesn't charge per person.

Real-Time Data Improves Decision Making, Forecasting

Executives – no matter where they are – can log into Acumatica Cloud ERP's built-in dashboards to view orders, the company's financial status and what's in production and see up-to-the-minute information to make decisions.

"I am still amazed to think that I can be sitting in a Starbucks drinking a coffee while looking at our ERP solution, but that is the flexibility and usability that all companies should expect nowadays," Patton says.

"The quote to cash cycle is the lifeblood of our business, and Acumatica has given us the tools to manage it effectively and efficiently every step of the way," he adds. "We have valuable tools to see what's coming, to do all our forecasting through dashboards, and focus on key customers."

Because of Acumatica Cloud ERP's open API, SAM linked its trucking information to Acumatica "to make life easier for the logistical folks who need to make sure product delivery is routed correctly on the company's 25 trucks.

SAM has incorporated several third-party applications, connecting them to Acumatica seamlessly. The company uses B2B Gateway for EDI. "Acumatica's open API structure also allows us to integrate with our legacy systems until we are ready to replace them. We can see the SQL database and talk to it," Patton says.

Cloud-based Security Brings Peace of Mind

Having modern software hosted in the cloud, Patton gained a reliable backup system, greater security, and the peace of mind that comes when your data is backed up automatically and securely. "If you rely on your ERP to be the sole repository for your data and business logic, then it must be up-to-date at all times," he says.

"Acumatica keeps our data safe," Patton adds, "It was one of the big successes of last year because we had Acumatica in place."

Pent-Up Demand Spurs Fast Growth

As 2021 unfolds, UK molding manufacturers have been surprised at a great surge in demand, with each month bringing a new sales record, according to one industry magazine. SAM is riding that wave and looking forward to future growth.

"We're looking at creating a building company for residential homes," Patton says. "We know with Acumatica we can spin up a new division easily to facilitate that, and, if we acquire more businesses, Acumatica can continue to grow with us."

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