



Warehouse Logistics Company Compacts Processes With Microsoft Business Solution

Overview

Country or Region: Canada

Industry: Transportation and Logistics

Customer Profile

Metro Canada Logistics is a third-party provider of warehousing, transportation, and related logistics management services, with more than 6 million square feet of warehouse space in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver.

Business Situation

As the company experienced rapid growth, it realized it needed to streamline operations and that its legacy business solution was no longer meeting its needs.

Solution

Metro Canada Logistics selected Microsoft® Business Solutions–Great Plains® business software to help manage its warehouses across the country and help streamline time-consuming accounting processes.

Benefits

- Improved operational efficiencies
- Easy integration with existing technology
- Enhanced reporting
- Improved accounting productivity
- Scalability

"With [Microsoft] Great Plains, we can be assured that the data we supply to our management team is reliable, which helps them make better, more informed decisions. That is a big, big gain."

Diane Bourassa, Director of Finance, Metro Canada Logistics

Metro Canada Logistics (MCL) is a third-party provider of warehousing, transportation, and related logistics services. As MCL continued to experience rapid growth, the company realized its current applications software was no longer viable, and a more flexible, scalable, and easy-to-integrate system was required. MCL selected Microsoft® Business Solutions–Great Plains® (now part of Microsoft Dynamics™) business software to help it streamline accounting processes and improve overall business efficiencies. Since the deployment, MCL has achieved significant benefits, including increased productivity, tighter accounting processes and controls, and integration of its financial system with its warehouse and transportation management systems. As a result, MCL is able to generate a better snapshot of its overall business performance and ensure it retains its competitive edge.

Situation

Metro Canada Logistics (MCL) is a third-party provider of warehousing, transportation, and related logistics management services in Canada. It manages more than 6 million square feet of warehouse space in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver. The Laval, Quebec-based company was founded in 1974 and has approximately 700 employees across the country. It was also named one of Canada's 50 Best Privately Managed Companies by the *National Post*.

MCL prides itself on its ability to provide a comprehensive package of services, from warehouse management to transportation. These services include: public/contract warehousing solutions, packaging services, transportation management, systems and communications solutions, supply chain solutions, real estate solutions, financial solutions, and strategic alliances.

"It's a new way of thinking. Companies are used to having their own warehouse, their own transportation center, or distribution center. As a third-party logistics provider, we are here to provide those services as our core competency," says Diane Bourassa, Director of Finance, Metro Canada Logistics. "On top of that, we offer additional services like handling, transportation, packaging, and more. It is the commitment of our management team and employees to provide customized and flexible logistics services to our customers and to continuously improve those services as a result of performance measurement."

From financial processes to warehouse inventory tracking, technology plays an important role in helping Metro Canada Logistics manage its business. But as the company continued to experience rapid growth, it realized its current business applications technology was no longer meeting the company's needs. MCL began

searching for a system to replace ALCIE, an Oracle-based suite of enterprise resource planning (ERP) products it had been using for about eight years. MCL wanted a system that would help streamline operational efficiencies and controls while easily integrating with its existing technology investments, such as its warehouse management and transportation systems.

"Having grown from a 'Mom and Pop' company to becoming a business with over CDN\$100 million a year in revenue, we knew we needed to make some technology changes," says Bourassa. "The ALCIE system was very rigid. To do any type of data analysis was time-consuming, which meant that decision makers in our organization were often not able to get their information on time. That was a big part of the reason why we decided we needed to upgrade technologies. We need a more precise system and faster access to information."

According to Bourassa, the IT team also wanted to move to a more user-friendly and robust solution. "Our business has experienced tremendous growth over the years, and we want to ensure we maintain our competitive edge," says Bourassa. "We require a flexible and scalable technology solution that meets our needs today but can also scale as our company grows."

Solution

In an extensive request-for-proposal (RFP) process managed by the MCL management team in concordance with KPMG, a network of professional services firms providing Audit, Tax, and Advisory services, MCL established a clear set of technology requirements. With a budget of CDN\$400,000, the company wanted an affordable, scalable business solution that would help streamline financial processes while easily integrating with its existing technologies, such as its Delfour and Red Prairie warehouse management systems

and its transportation management system from Creative Systems. It also required a system with multicurrency capabilities and comprehensive data analysis and reporting. In addition to all these requirements, the company also needed a quick implementation in order to minimize downtime for the business.

After examining offerings from a variety of vendors including JD Edwards, MCL selected Microsoft® Business Solutions–Great Plains® business software. MCL selected Microsoft Great Plains because it met all its technology requirements and was also a solution the company could continue to use as it expands its business.

“Microsoft Great Plains is a great fit for Metro Canada Logistics,” says Jean-Francois Lortie, Account Manager of LVMB, the Quebec-based Microsoft technology partner working with MCL. “We didn’t have to make any modifications to the core modules. Using Microsoft Great Plains, we were able to add Web access to the Purchase Order and Receiving modules, and that meant we were able to get them up and running quickly. As a Microsoft product, it also allows MCL to easily integrate the system with its existing Microsoft applications, including [the] Microsoft Office [System].”

Benefits

Whether the new software is managing the decentralized purchasing process, integrating revenues from operating systems, or developing business reports for management, Microsoft Great Plains helps to provide MCL with the functionality it needs to boost business controls and efficiencies. Since implementing the Microsoft Great Plains application, MCL has realized a number of benefits, including: improved operational controls and efficiencies in the purchasing process with its warehouse and transportation services, streamlined

accounting processes, time savings, and increased productivity.

Improved Operational Efficiencies

Metro Canada Logistics has 35 warehouses across Canada, each with its own director of operations managing the purchase order (PO) and receiving process. With the old system, none of the information could easily be accessed by the accounting or management team at MCL headquarters. As a result, it was difficult to obtain an overall view of the business’s health using the legacy technology.

Looking to centralize and improve access to this information for the management and accounting team at headquarters, the company turned to LVMB to develop a cost-effective solution with multicurrency capabilities. To meet its needs LVMB decided to invest in the development of a customized Web-based Purchase Order and Receiving application, which uses the power of Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000 and integrates with Microsoft Great Plains for posting purposes.

“Web access for the PO system was really something that was needed by our company,” says Bourassa. “We are now able to link in with our warehouses and access the purchase order and receiving information for accounting purposes on the Web. This helps to save us time and helps us boost our efficiencies as a company. This was one of the reasons why we chose to go with Microsoft Great Plains and LVMB. It has the flexibility we needed to provide us with this functionality.”

Easy Integration with Existing Technology

A key benefit of Microsoft Great Plains is its ability to easily integrate with MCL’s existing third-party warehouse and transportation management systems. The ease of

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integration helped ensure the systems were up and running quickly and keeps downtime to a minimum. Also, it ensures the company is able to utilize its existing technology investments, which is important to the bottom line.

"Integrating [Microsoft] Great Plains with these systems was crucial to our business," says Bourassa. "This enables us to get a more accurate and complete picture of how our business is doing from all ends—from transportation services to the warehouse to head office."

Enhanced Reporting

Microsoft Great Plains also provides MCL's finance team with the ability to extract financial information faster and easier, helping to improve the management team's decision-making process. The team can take advantage of the Microsoft Great Plains reporting features to easily create customized reports, which allows them to update and maintain reports virtually seamlessly, and to automate report processing and distribution.

"With our legacy system, we were unable to generate reports quickly, and because it was difficult to extract data, there was an increased chance of errors," says Bourassa. "With [Microsoft] Great Plains, we can be assured that the data we supply to our management team is reliable, which helps them make better, more informed decisions. That is a big, big gain."

Improved Accounting Productivity

With Microsoft Great Plains, the finance team is able to conduct financial processes, such as month-end budgeting, more efficiently. Under the legacy financial system, the month-end accounting process often lasted three weeks. With Microsoft Great Plains, the amount of time to do the reports has been significantly reduced. "Financial results weren't going out until after the third week

after the end of the month," says Bourassa. "With [Microsoft] Great Plains, we've saved a lot of time, which has helped us improve our productivity. We're now at eight working days, compared to 15 working days."

Automating what were once manual processes also has helped save time for the team and has boosted worker productivity. "Prior to [Microsoft] Great Plains, we had a lot of manual processes," explains Bourassa. "For example, we were making two different entries for accruals and reversals, building the month from beginning to end. Now that [Microsoft] Great Plains is in place, we have recurring entries, and that brings us a lot of time savings."

Scalability

As Metro Canada Logistics continues to expand its reach across Canada, technology will continue to play a critical role in its success. Microsoft Business Solutions–Great Plains is a technology investment it expects to continue to utilize in the future.

"We're pleased with what Microsoft Business Solutions–Great Plains has been able to do for our business processes so far," Bourassa says. "We've improved operational efficiencies from an accounting perspective, and this ultimately helps our bottom line. We're confident that, with [Microsoft] Great Plains, we now have software that will scale to meet our business needs today and in the future."

For More Information

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For more information about Metro Canada Logistics products and services, call (514) 333-5500 or visit the Web site at: www.metrocanlogistics.com

Microsoft Dynamics

Microsoft Dynamics is a line of integrated, adaptable business management solutions that enables you and your people to make business decisions with greater confidence. Microsoft Dynamics works like familiar Microsoft software such as Microsoft Office, which means less of a learning curve for your people, so they can get up and running quickly and focus on what's most important. And because it is from Microsoft, it easily works with the systems your company already has implemented. By automating and streamlining financial, customer relationship and supply chain processes, Microsoft Dynamics brings together people, processes and technologies, increasing the productivity and effectiveness of your business, and helping you drive business success.

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