



# A TALE OF 3 CITIES

## THREE DISTRIBUTORS SHARE HOW EPICOR HELPS THEM SUPERCHARGE THEIR BUSINESSES

**W**herever you are located, whatever markets your business serves, a robust Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system is key to maximizing your sales force, operations and growth potential. In this story, three diverse distributors share some of the benefits of their Epicor Prophet 21 systems.

### 1 NEW SOUTH CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY, GREENVILLE, S.C.

Founded in 1981, New South Construction Supply of Greenville, S.C., is a premier provider of concrete, masonry, and waterproofing products across the southern U.S. and several foreign countries. With 50 employees in nine locations across South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia, the company generates annual revenues of \$30 million. New South was profiled in the February/March 2014 edition of *Contractor Supply*.

“We were on a dated enterprise resource planning (ERP) system for the decade prior to 2005, when we decided New South needed to upgrade,” explains Jimmy Sobeck, vice president of finance and administration. “We wanted a system that would be flexible to the needs of our business and our customers, and something that

would have more modern features, including a Windows-like interface instead of the old text-based systems.”

New South went live on Epicor Prophet 21 in 2006, and has since added functionality with Proof of Delivery (POD), DynaChange Rules, and Strategic Pricing.

“Using Prophet 21, we are easily able to handle large transaction volumes with less staff — we are recording sales per employee of almost \$600,000. Today, we have the ability to handle at least a 25 percent increase in business without adding back-office staff,” Sobeck says.

Using Proof of Delivery (POD) means less paperwork to file and better verification to customers, including photos of material New South often drops off unattended on job sites. According to Sobeck, additional POD benefits include easy file retrieval, typed names and signatures that can be viewed by the customer later, automatic invoicing and facilitation of shipment notifications and tracking.

“POD gives us data that we can pass on to (Epicor partner) BillTrust for e-mail customer invoices, addressing potential questions ahead of time,” Sobeck says. “It also gives us the ability to track delivery metrics, one of



“The technology is always growing and evolving, and Epicor is committed to making Prophet 21 the best product for the distribution business.”

**Jimmy Sobeck**, Vice President of Finance and Administration, New South Construction Supply, Greenville, S.C.

our largest expenses, in ways not previously possible. It is helpful to see where delivery costs are outweighing profit margins for particular customers or orders — for example, where a delivery could be added on to an existing run rather than making a separate trip.”

New South is currently developing additional ways to utilize POD, including offering customer portals with real-time access to delivery notifications and status updates.

DynaChange Rules allows users to insert their own business logic into the Epicor Prophet 21 system code base without altering the application code itself.

“This has been game-changing for us,” Sobeck states. “Our operations have gone from reactive to proactive, providing in-application information and visual cues. DynaChange ensures New South processes and procedures are handled correctly. We can get very specific with how things should be done and give feedback to users in real time. Giving our people the tools to handle orders more quickly and accurately — often tailored to specific customer needs — improves the customer experience.”

For example, fuel surcharges for certain customers were leading to mistakes. DynaChange provided the ability to extend the programming logic and customize the system to lead users down the proper path. In addition, tax-related rules have cut down on errors that took the accounting staff an hour to fix every morning.

“In addition to avoiding mistakes, rules can also introduce functionality such as ‘grading’ customers for special

discounts or waived fees,” Sobeck adds. “The possibilities are limited only by our programmer’s time.”

Meanwhile, Strategic Pricing has given New South the power of a professional pricing department.

“Margins have increased almost three percent since going live. Strategic Pricing saves our sales team time in looking up changing costs and sales history, and provides better pricing consistency.”

## 2 ALL INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS, FRANKSVILLE, WIS.

All Integrated Solutions (AIS), a Wisconsin-based fastener distributor, is actually two companies with distinct business models. All Tool Sales is a traditional industrial distributor, supplying cutting tools, abrasives, machinery, components and supplies to industrial customers, mainly in the upper Midwest. AIS provides onsite VMI solutions for customers all over the Midwest.

AIS has been using the Epicor Prophet 21 ERP system to support its customer-specific solutions for VMI since August 2006. The tool division went live in May 2012, which marks the first time since 1985 that the two divisions have been on the same software system.

“For nearly 30 years, we’ve been looking for a system that would fit both sides of our business,” says AIS president Jim Ruetz. “Flexibility is the number one

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“The integrated supply management capability of Prophet 21 is great for VMI and MRO — now we have one solution for billing, data mining, and reporting, all customized for our customers.”

**Jim Ruetz**, president & general manager, AIS, Franksville, Wis.

attribute of Prophet 21 for us; it's paramount to our service. Prophet 21 gives us much better ability to react to our customers' needs and lets us be more proactive."

Prophet 21 enhances AIS' VMI program by downloading customer contracts directly into stockers' handheld computers, which also allows for on-the-fly adjustments in inventory levels according to customer production demands. AIS bin floor stockers can transmit data into the system via VPN over the wireless phones in their scanners, which saves valuable time. As a result, overtime required to process orders has plunged dramatically.

"We have significantly reduced the number of Saturday work days to meet Monday delivery dates," Ruetz notes.

Warehouse operations are also more efficient, thanks to the Prophet 21 integrated wireless warehouse management solution (WMS) and database. AIS employees were already familiar with WMS basics, so the company experienced something unusual after converting to Prophet 21: immediate productivity gains.

"Prophet 21 is great for VMI and MRO — it is very accurate and a key component for improving flexibility and shipping speed," Ruetz says. "Now we have one solution for billing, data mining and reporting, all customized for our customers."

### **BLEVINS INC., NASHVILLE, TENN.**

Founded in 1971, Blevins Inc. of Nashville, Tenn., is one of the nation's largest distributors of general hardware, plumbing, electrical and repair supplies. With 11 locations throughout the eastern United States, Blevins sells and delivers more than 10,000 products, from insulation, doors, windows and coatings to appliances, tools, air conditioners, heaters, towing equipment and light fixtures.

In 2005, Blevins began researching upgrades to its existing software, which was not able to generate comprehensive customer histories and tracking reports in real time. These reports often took nearly a full night to produce, which greatly slowed delivery cycles and the speedy fulfillment of urgent requests. Right off the bat, Blevins ran into an unexpected wall.

"Many of the software solutions firms we contacted only dealt with large companies," explains Tim Kentner, CFO. "Epicor understood our business and opened our eyes to easier and more advanced ways to manage our inventory and financials with fewer people and printouts."

Blevins went live with Prophet 21 in 2006. During the transition, Epicor worked with Blevins both on-site and off



**Blevins**

"Prophet 21 is basically the foundation of everything we do. As a result of implementing the system, we are now equipped to respond faster and more accurately to customer requests throughout all 11 branches."

Tim Kentner, Chief Financial Officer,  
Blevins Inc., Nashville, Tenn.

to train personnel. The transition also entailed reorganizing each company warehouse. Using Prophet 21 as a guide, thousands of products were grouped into categories, enabling Blevins' pickers to fulfill orders in approximately 20 percent less time and with far more accuracy.

"Prophet 21 enhanced our ability to refine customer pricing, thus improving our margins. Purchasing benefited from advanced demand forecasting, which lowered inventory and reduced stock-outs," adds Kentner.

"I use Prophet 21 all day, every day," states Joan Sparks, Blevins' credit manager since 1985. "This includes the extensive oversight of nearly 12,000 accounts, as well as collections and cash reporting."

Sparks credits the system's user-friendly, Graphical User Interface (GUI) with allowing her to easily follow the trail of transactions at each location. Centralized access to historical and comparative data helps her do her job efficiently. "As credit manager, I need the most up-to-date information available, and Prophet 21 provides all of the 'who, what, where and when' specifics in a nutshell."

"Prophet 21 is basically the foundation of everything we do," concludes Kentner. "Prior to its use, too many people were involved with the daily handling of payments, as well as the receiving and ordering of inventory. As a result of implementing the system, we are now equipped to respond faster and more accurately to customer requests throughout all 11 branches."

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