



SUCCESS STORY – Permastore



Permastore Reduces Time and Builds Platform for Growth with Epicor



Success Highlights

Challenges and Opportunities

- Epicor Vantage had revolutionised the business by building a quote-to-order-to-cash process
- Permastore now wanted to integrate its ERP system to its plant machinery
- Older technology was limiting

Epicor Solution and Services

- Epicor 9 ERP

Benefits

- Wanted to take advantage of the new features in Epicor 9
- Epicor's Data Management Tool reduced the upgrade time, from 2-3 months to 2-3 weeks
- Platform now supports the business well into the future and new efficiencies are already being realised

Company Facts

- Location: UK
- Industry: Manufacturing
- Number of Locations: 1
- Web site: www.permastore.com



“Upgrades take time, but with careful planning and tools such as the data migration tool, you can reach go live quicker than you would expect.”

Simon Stevens, Business Systems Development Manager

Permastore Limited is an internationally recognised UK company with a history going back to 1959. It has substantial experience in engineering and manufacturing bolted modular structures to international standards, designing customised products from standard parts. It is one of the world's leading tank and silo manufacturers, and has supplied more than 90,000 structures, in over 110 countries.

In its 50 year history the company has always invested in technology to give its customers the best products and run the business as efficiently as possible. The company first started using Epicor's Vantage product in 2004, which revolutionised all areas of the business with a quote-to-order-to-cash solution. Through its continued use of technology Permastore, using the same level of resources, is now processing three times the order value compared to five years ago. The company believes that its technology infrastructure has been a significant contributor to this success.

But in late 2008, Permastore decided that it was time to upgrade to Epicor's next-generation ERP solution, Epicor 9, as its use of Vantage had reached a point where they felt no more could be achieved from the system in its current form.

About Epicor

Epicor is a global leader delivering business software solutions to the manufacturing, distribution, retail, hospitality and services industries. Founded in 1984, Epicor serves 20,000 customers in more than 150 countries, providing solutions in over 30 languages.



“Vantage had served us well and made a huge difference to the business,” says Simon Stevens, business systems and development manager at Permastore. “But we had reached a point in 2008 where we knew that to get the features we wanted, take advantage of new technology, and integrate our ERP system with plant machinery; we would have to upgrade our systems.”

He explains: “We wanted to remove any technology limitations, and get a platform in place that would support the future of the business.”

Upgrade Challenges

The plan to upgrade was conceived at the end of 2008 and work began in 2009 on the upgrade to Epicor 9. Permastore’s aim was to maintain the investment already made in Epicor software and the extensive knowledge base within the company. Epicor 9 was perceived to provide a platform where the system would easily adapt and grow with the changing business processes, continue to provide a tool to improve efficiency and enable the use of newly established technologies, such as RFID (radio frequency identification).

The team decided at the planning stages that it wanted to create a clean deployment of Epicor 9 and migrate the data across rather than simply applying a software update to Vantage. This created its own set of challenges and would normally be expected to extend the life of a project substantially. The main reason for taking this approach was that the existing solution had collected a great amount of data that was either no longer used, or needed cleansing in some way. When a software update is applied to an existing solution, even with the best intentions, it is rare that data is cleansed at a later date, as other business demands take over.

Solution Overview

Assembling a team of seven from across all departments, Permastore began work on the project in 2009. Originally the project management team had estimated 2-3 months of the project would be taken up defining and completing the data migration stage, but this was reduced to a mere 2-3 weeks through the use of Epicor’s Data Management Tool (DMT).

The DMT captured errors, allowed stop/start importing and greater granularity over what was (and was not) transferred. The DMT also allowed the import and transfer of both static and dynamic data through additional tools. “We moved in excess of 160,000 items of data over 40 DMT imports,” says Stevens.

The team also used the upgrade process to revise all 13 of its existing configurators to take advantage of the new features and interface within Epicor 9. The development process within the new platform meant that the internal Permastore team was able to undertake this work without touching the base code of Epicor 9, and quickly achieve results that impacted the sales and engineering teams. This work was all done using internal resource due to the flexibility of the new system.

The Benefits

Permastore wanted to conduct the upgrade from Vantage to Epicor 9 through a clean installation; something the team believes would not have been possible without the Data Management Tool, which also cut the data migration phase from 2-3 months to 2-3 weeks.

“The DMT paid for itself many times over and made an incredible difference to the deployment process,” adds Stevens. “It allowed us to focus on other aspects of the upgrade, and cut the time to go live. If we had not had the DMT our only option would have been to upgrade and cleanse the data later, or to simply not upgrade at all.”

At its heart, Epicor 9 has a business process management (BPM) engine that allows Permastore to define their unique process rules and procedures. Unlike some solutions that require this to be achieved through complex modifications, often at code level, Permastore can quickly and easily ensure that their systems mirror its ‘real world’ processes without relying on external consultants.

Specifically, Permastore has already developed a BPM based solution for its process line, allowing production to view and manage work in progress on this key facility.



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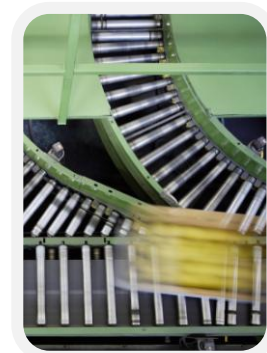
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These changes, along with the new configurators, are already having a significant impact on the performance of the business, cutting the total cost of ownership of the system as the internal team can implement new processes and features themselves. A reduction in the amount of time spent on database management tasks has also been seen, meaning that the team spends less time on administrative tasks and more on building on the new Epicor 9 platform that is in place.

“We are continually looking at how technology can bring greater efficiency to our business”, says Ruth Joy, Permastore’s planning control manager. “This deployment makes our business system more agile and able to adapt quickly with the business. Epicor is playing a key part in our continued performance and we can now process information very quickly. We are already looking at the next phase of our IT evolution, now we have Epicor 9 in place.” Permastore is planning projects for real time material issuing and integration into third party software delivering a step change in stock accuracy.

Stevens concludes: “Epicor 9 is a very flexible system. We can connect to factory machines, other software, and work in real-time with it using the DMT and Epicor Service Connect. Upgrades take time, but with careful planning and tools such as the data migration tool, you can reach go live quicker than you would expect.

Permastore will be running a number of mini projects over the next two years. It believes that each of these will bring additional benefits to the company as they take advantage of the new features in Epicor 9.



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