



**At a Glance**

Pressed Steel Products Ltd.

**Industry**

Manufacturing

**Logistics**

Shildon, County Durham

**Solution**

Epicor Vantage

**Business Challenge**

To design, develop and implement business re-engineering alongside a new ERP system to help maintain growth and expand product and service portfolio

**Solution**

Epicor Vantage manufacturing-resource planning software in conjunction with extensive training and new business processes has helped to double turnover over the last four years

**Business Benefits**

- Decreased idle time by 25% directly benefits profitability
- Reduced paper-based transaction increasing accuracy and productivity
- Doubled turnover to around £3 million over the project duration
- Delivery on time rate increased 93%

**Pressed Steel Products Ltd (PSP) commenced trading in 1998 with just 10 staff at a small workshop in Shildon, County Durham.**

Although a small firm, PSP had invested in comprehensive fabrication facilities with CAD detailing transferred to CNC fabrication machinery, to ensure that even the most detailed designs were accurately translated into the finished product. Consequently, PSP carved out a niche as specialist fabricators of architectural facade products and the business started to grow organically.

Simple software applications such as SageLine 50, Excel spreadsheets and Access based databases coupled with paper-based processes helped the business grow consistently. However, in 2002 senior managers felt that to expand the business past its current level, PSP needed to modernise its business processes. To meet this challenge it involved the government-funded Knowledge Transfer Partnership scheme, which paired it with nearby Durham University.

This scheme offers companies' access to the resources of UK universities for strategic advantage, in the form of high-calibre graduates working on projects to develop their businesses. Tamer Qaqish, was placed on secondment from the University to PSP to lead the project, which would introduce improved manufacturing and business control systems. This would allow PSP to sustain the growth it had experienced over the last 4 years and build a framework to expand its business from simply manufacturing metal building products into the design and production of complete integrated facade systems.

The 5-phase project started in mid 2002, with the creation of an initial process map that analysed how PSP carried out tasks and identified ways to optimise these tasks without causing general disruption. "This was more a discovery phase to see how things worked and to make small changes that would allow us to better scope a business process reengineering and a corresponding ERP system" explains Qaqish, "From this phase we had a good idea of what type of ERP system we would need and it helped us draw up a list of 30 potential applications which could potentially be suitable."

Suitability to purpose and budget consideration were of course high on the selection criteria but Qaqish adds, "The viability and good standing of the software provider was essential – we required a solution and vendor that will be around in 5 years time."

In parallel with the evaluation and short list process, Qaqish started to develop and introduce a new paper based system that would emulate the proposed ERP implementation. The goal was to involve the workforce in the planning stage and ultimately allow a smoother transition for the production teams by involving them in the essential elements of the new processes on paper and to become comfortable with a new working methodology ahead of the introduction of a new ERP system.

Over the course of 2002 and the start of 2003, Qaqish and key senior managers visited potential suppliers, trade shows and invited software vendors for demonstrations to help create detailed reports on 22 vendors. Qaqish comments, "We came down to a shortlist of 3 products but Vantage was, in our opinion, the best fit in terms of product features geared to suit our requirements and importantly Epicor as a company, met the criteria of longevity and future direction which we valued."

By the end of September 2003, Epicor was finally selected as the new ERP system and PSP Ltd purchased a full suite of modules including CRM, Production Management and Material Management, Quality Management, which was initially licensed for 7 users.

PSP had scoped the design, implementation and migration project for Vantage at an aggressive 12-month schedule. As Qaqish explains, "A year is quite a short implementation cycle but we felt this was feasible as we had taken the decision not to try and migrate historical data. As the business was rapidly expanding and changing direction, much of this historical data was not really necessary and our training plan would help us to populate the system with most of the data we needed."

"During the course of the ERP selection, we had also developed new manual and semi electronic processes which were already providing some benefits to the business. The development and training phase were run in tandem, with training exercises such as the impute of orders and the generation of product details also used to populate the system with data."

With the help of Epicor's consultants, PSP tailored Vantage to match the business processes and created interface screens similar to their paper and spreadsheet equivalents to ease transition. The only significant hurdle was a modification to the job batching facility, which required custom coding from Epicor based on a specification created by PSP. This was achieved within a few weeks, which meant the project was still able to achieve its completion target.

The actual switch over to a live Vantage system took place in November 2004 and following a session of feedback from users, a number of minor tweaks were implemented, so by the start of 2005, the system was fully operational and deemed a resounding success by PSP.

"The transition for the end users was very smooth, as the system had the look and feel of the existing manual system, but with less potential for error. Consequently, the response was very positive as the new system was effectively making life easier for almost every manufacturing or administrative task."

"Through the deployment of Epicor Vantage coupled with industry leading working practices, PSP has doubled its turnover and increased its headcount by 30 people in the last 3 years. The impact of the new software and business processes have improved efficiency and allowed the capture of baseline data that is helping the business increase its range of products and services for the construction industry"

Pressed Steel Products Ltd.



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"The visibility we now have in our capacity, resources and job status is completely unprecedented, as we have moved to a real time system and are now much better able to process a increased flow of orders."

With the new system in place and reporting starting to generate accurate statistics about the business, one year later, PSP were able to quantify the benefits of the business process re-engineering along the deployment of Epicor Vantage.

"Our turnover has doubled to just over £3 million since we started the project in 2003 and our workforce has grown from 20 to 50 employees. On the production side, we fulfil 93% of orders on time and a very large percentage of the remaining 7% are due to additional customer changes or actions which are outside of our control."

"Idle time on machines has been reduced by around 25% and our capacity has increased significantly due to the efficiency of our processes. On a employee level, the workforce have embraced the new systems and processes because in essence it makes their job easier and less prone to mistakes."

Following the success of the project, in March 2006, the Department of Trade and Industry selected Pressed Steel Products Ltd (PSP) and University of Durham, School of Engineering Department for the Knowledge Transfer Partnerships Award (KTP), recognising its outstanding achievements.

"It is normally quite difficult for a small company with limited resources to manage the implementation of a new ERP system but PSP is proof that with good planning and teamwork the task is not as daunting as it first appears. In fact, the implementation process itself can help all involved get a better understanding of fundamental business processes as well as corresponding technology systems which are a major but often underestimated benefit." Qaqish concludes.

### About Epicor

Epicor is a global leader dedicated to providing integrated enterprise resource planning (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM), supply chain management (SCM) and professional services automation (PSA) software solutions to midmarket companies and divisions of the Global 1000. Founded in 1984, Epicor serves over 20,000 customers in more than 140 countries, providing solutions in more than 35 languages.



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