



## Athletica Sport Systems

Epicor helps Athletica Sport Systems manage the seasonal demands for hockey to stay in the game

### Company Facts

- Location: Waterloo, Canada
- Industry: Specializes in engineering, manufacturing and installing dasher boards for ice hockey and indoor soccer sports arenas
- Web site: [www.athleticainc.com](http://www.athleticainc.com)

Within the first 16 months of implementing Epicor, Athletica calculated a \$225,000 return on investment (ROI).

Bonnie Love, Operations Manager | Athletica Sport Systems

Athletica Sport Systems (Sport Systems Unlimited Corp.) specializes in engineering, manufacturing, and installing dasher boards and associated products for ice hockey and indoor soccer. Athletica brings world-class sport solutions under the well-known Crystaplex, Border Patrol and GamePlex brands to customers worldwide including Universities, Municipalities and private owners, and is the preferred rink equipment supplier of the National Hockey League (NHL). In addition, Athletica has a vastly growing Arena Services division which accounts for a significant piece of the company's business, particularly in the winter months during the off-season. Athletica's core manufacturing facility is located in Waterloo, Ontario and has a sales and distribution facility in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Athletica grew (fast) from entrepreneurial roots and tried to augment with spreadsheets and homegrown databases. While this was seemingly manageable back when Athletica was a \$5 million company, today, however, Athletica has annual sales exceeding \$19 million and requires a sophisticated enterprise system to satisfy the needs of a larger organization. "We were using homegrown systems that weren't connected and multiple spreadsheets of data that weren't integrated," says Bonnie Love, operations manager, Athletica.

Athletica worked with Six S Partners, a Platinum member of the Epicor Inspired Partner Network and Epicor Value Added Reseller, to select, implement, and train on the next-generation Epicor enterprise resource planning (ERP) system. Well-versed in best practices for developing and executing an ERP implementation strategy, Six S Partners armed Athletica with tactical and strategic knowledge and tools to help drive the organization forward. Epicor ERP provides a robust financial management suite and engineer-to-order manufacturing solutions among other

### Success Highlights

#### Challenges

- Full-featured ERP system to replace the use of spreadsheets to consolidate data across disparate homegrown systems
- Real-time inventory, cost and pricing data available across multisite operations
- Better management of cash flow, production scheduling, and forecast planning during the seasonal peaks of ice hockey and indoor soccer sports

#### Solution

- Epicor ERP

#### Benefits

- \$225,000 ROI within the first 16 months
- Competitive pricing with business efficiency
- Detailed estimating, planning, scheduling, costing and supply chain logistics
- Improved order and quote entries

enterprise applications to help Athletica better manage their costs, control inventory and optimize business assets, while also improving efficiency across their multisite operations.

Athletica's business demands fluctuate significantly during hockey's on and off seasons. The summer is a rush to manufacture custom hockey dasher board systems and other arena products made to the unique specifications of its customers—all with short turnaround times and all delivered within the same week. In the winter, Athletica largely handles maintenance, product replacements and customer services request. Due to the project-based nature of their business and the seasonality of the sports industry, forecasting and production planning was difficult. "We needed a comprehensive system to give us better control, help us manage cash flow, provide insight into true project costs and inventory accuracy, and to better organize production scheduling," says Love.

A general distrust of data to make strategic decisions is what ultimately triggered senior management to search for an end-to-end business software system. Athletica was previously challenged with overpaying for materials, erroneous inventory and expedite fees, among other complications as a result of information inaccuracy.

Within the first 16 months of implementing Epicor, Athletica calculated a \$225,000 ROI. Inventory accuracy contributed significantly to this success, along with downsizing administrative positions. Athletica also received a \$164,000 new technology grant from the government for their proven efficiency and competitive pricing strategy which has enabled Athletica to earn more business and keep its manufacturing operations in Canada.

### Competitive pricing through business efficiency

Price is a competitive advantage in every industry. "Cost is our main driver. In order to compete, we have to understand where we can and can't cut costs, while also making sure we are selling our customers on the quality of our products. We didn't have this visibility before Epicor," explains Love. "Epicor is a very important tool that helps us properly price our products and services. We now

have a better understanding of if we are selling at the right value, or if we're over or under pricing our products. We made a lot of assumptions before and didn't have insight into cost savings or price increases for materials. If you don't fundamentally know the costs of your materials, then you don't have a competitive advantage."

Among the features that Athletica implemented is Epicor Project Management. Embedded within the robust capabilities of Epicor, Project Management utilizes the detailed estimation, planning, scheduling, costing, and supply chain logistics of Epicor for complete control and analysis of any project.

Athletica also uses Epicor Product Configurator which has greatly improved order and quote entries. Moving away from islands of spreadsheet models, Product Configurator standardizes processes which can be utilized by multiple people across the organization so everyone is working smarter and hassle-free. "If a customer needs to build a rink for \$200,000, for example, Epicor Product Configurator automatically pulls in the right costs and material prices, allowing us to estimate correctly and quickly," says Love.

A single, integrated system with information shared in real time across the enterprise has also improved customer responsiveness. "We can look up inventory to determine: Do we have it? Can we offer it to the customer? If not, what's the available-to-promise? We never had this visibility before. We had to call the customer back and do a whole exercise to get the proper information. Our services division is much more efficient," says Love.

### Selecting and implementing Epicor

After a thorough investigation of software solutions, Athletica narrowed the search down to two platforms: Visual and Epicor. The depth of the product, extensive engineer-to-order capabilities, user friendliness, and a strong implementation process carried out by Six S Partners were the key differentiators that led Athletica to select Epicor.

Athletica consults with Six S Partners frequently to help with their ERP support and training needs. "A lot of our success is because of Six S Partners. They are very good partners to work with.

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Bonnie Love, Operations Manager

They are very attentive and address our issues immediately. Their professionalism and the way they handled our project helped us through the entire implementation process. They continue to be a fantastic support for us," says Love.

John Preiditsch, president and founder of Six S Partners, comments on how a strong commitment from Athletica's senior management team had a significant impact on the success of the project:

"Commitment meant that our organizations [Athletica and Six S Partners] had the proper support we needed to make decisions and move forward in a way that best suited Athletica. This is a strategic customer for us as Athletica continues to use more features of the Epicor system to leverage best practices and grow their business."

"We've adopted some really good best practices, mostly getting our policies and procedures more refined and benchmarking against other companies in our industry," says Love. When asked to give an example of a best practice essential to their success, Love replies: "All of them!" For Athletica, one of the biggest achievements is having a single system to "close the loop" on their accounting transactions and records such as purchase order and invoices.

Athletica appreciates the value of Epicor Signature Methodology to ensure implementation success. "The Signature Methodology puts a clear project structure in place—you move through milestones without even realizing it. Our project managers did a good job of reminding us about deadlines and next steps to keep us focused and to keep the project on track," says Love.

## About Epicor

Epicor Software Corporation is a global leader delivering business software solutions to the manufacturing, distribution, retail, and service industries. With more than 40 years of experience, Epicor has more than 20,000 customers in over 150 countries. Epicor solutions enable companies to drive increased efficiency and improve profitability. With a history of innovation, industry expertise, and passion for excellence, Epicor inspires customers to build lasting competitive advantage. Epicor provides the single point of accountability that local, regional, and global businesses demand. For more information, visit [www.epicor.com](http://www.epicor.com).



Contact us for more information on Epicor Products and Services

+1.800.999.6995 [info@epicor.com](mailto:info@epicor.com) [www.epicor.com](http://www.epicor.com)

Corporate Office  
804 Las Cimas Parkway  
Austin, TX 78746  
USA  
Toll Free: +1.888.448.2636  
Direct: +1.512.328.2300  
Fax: +1.512.278.5590

Latin America and Caribbean  
Blvd. Antonio L. Rodriguez #1882 Int. 104  
Plaza Central, Col. Santa Maria  
Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, CP 64650  
Mexico  
Phone: +52.81.1551.7100  
Fax: +52.81.1551.7117

Europe, Middle East and Africa  
No. 1 The Arena  
Downshire Way  
Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1PU  
United Kingdom  
Phone: +44.1344.468468  
Fax: +44.1344.468010

Asia  
238A Thomson Road #23-06  
Novena Square Tower A  
Singapore 307684  
Singapore  
Phone: +65.6333.8121  
Fax: +65.6333.8131

Australia and New Zealand  
Suite 2 Level 8,  
100 Pacific Highway  
North Sydney, NSW 2060  
Australia  
Phone: +61.2.9927.6200  
Fax: +61.2.9927.6298

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