

Second-Generation Automotive Distributor Succeeds with Epicor Technology

Company Facts

- ▶ Location: Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- ▶ Industry: Automotive Aftermarket
- ▶ Number of Locations: 6
- ▶ Website: www.absdelivers.com

Success Highlights

Challenges

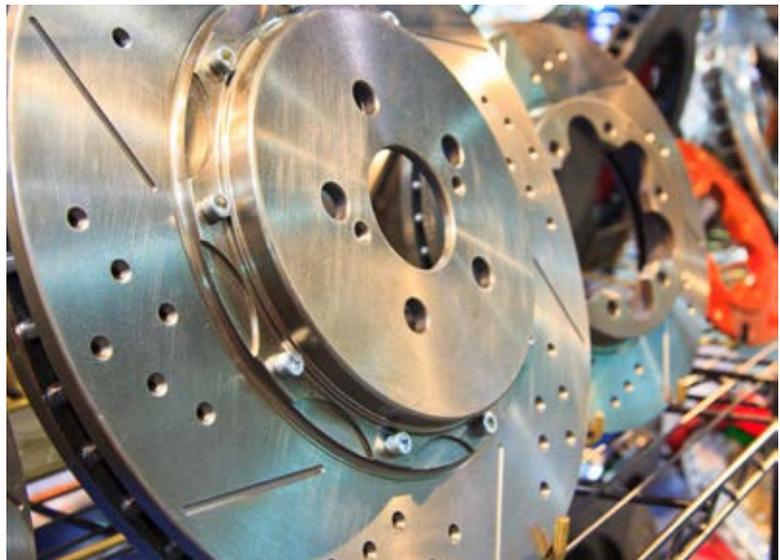
- ▶ Continue to grow the business through the use of new technology

Solution

- ▶ Epicor® Eagle® for the Aftermarket

Benefits

- ▶ More scalable than the Prism software
- ▶ Automated special ordering
- ▶ Enables customers with electronic ordering, inventory search, and access to account statements and invoices



Auto Body Specialties (ABS) is a second-generation paint, body, and equipment distributor based in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. To ABS, process improvement is more than a business objective—it's been in the company's DNA since founders Harley and Sallie Roddel first opened their doors in 1950. Today, four of the couple's five children own and operate the business, which now serves automotive collision repair and customization as well as industrial businesses in five markets spanning portions of South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, and Nebraska.

"Our parents had the vision and financial means to help the next generation take over and build on their success," says Jim Roddel, president of the company and co-owner with his sisters, Connie, Becky, and Margie. "The PBE market has changed quite a bit and it's harder to maintain margins and stay ahead of expenses, so we can never stop looking for ways to become more operationally efficient."

Although originally an automotive replacement parts and PBE distributor, ABS now focuses on automotive finishes, replacement glass, sheet metal components, bumpers, tools and equipment, as well as industrial coatings. ABS has been affiliated with the PPG paint and glass lines for much of its history and in 2011 purchased another large PPG distributor, based in Mankato, Minnesota. The company employs approximately 70 and operates a fleet of nearly 40 delivery and sales trucks.

Outpacing a changing industry

A growing number of independent collision shops have seen the need to affiliate with major insurers through direct repair programs (DRP), which impose strict limits on materials and labor costs. Ultimately, these pressures are borne by all partners in the industry supply chain, including distributors like ABS. "We've learned to embrace the DRPs because they control the dollars behind most repairs," Roddel explains. "So it's our job to help customers maintain their relationships with the insurance companies, and a big part of that comes through being more efficient in everything you do."

Operational efficiency doesn't come easy in a business with thousands of SKUs ranging from paint to large vehicle body parts. Because of the unpredictable demand for specific sheet metal and glass items, a large percentage of the Roddels' daily transactions involve special orders. And in spite of the long, reliable service of the company's Epicor Prism™ business management software, this growing complexity was becoming an operational headache. "I called our Epicor representative and said, "There's got to be a better way," Roddel says.

Investing in the future

To identify that "better way," Epicor visited ABS to perform a detailed time analysis covering the special-order process. Through this study, it was determined that the equivalent of two full-time employees were required to execute the approximately 150 daily special orders being generated at ABS locations.

The Epicor product support team helped to identify a solution that would help ABS automate not only special orders but also a

full range of other labor-intensive processes and recommended Epicor Eagle for the Aftermarket software.

"Their team did a presentation and showed us how we could use Eagle to track everything electronically, and we were just blown away," Roddel says. "That in itself convinced us it was time to upgrade. We saw that there would definitely be a financial payback."

Tracking system ROI

The decision to move to a new business management solution wasn't taken lightly. "Prism had been successful everywhere in our business, so the decision made for a few sleepless nights," Roddel says. "But within three months we realized that it was one of the best decisions we had ever made."

The Eagle solution is now running virtually every area of the business, from point of sale, to purchasing, to pricing, and to managing special orders. The system is infinitely more scalable than the Prism software, which Roddel saw firsthand following the acquisition of the company's fifth location, in Mankato. "We've handled a greatly increased number of special orders without having to add an equivalent number of employees," he says.

ABS will implement the Eagle solution's barcode receiving capability and automated management of delivery operations. ABS has also leveraged the Eagle solution to build a thriving eStore, which enables customers to place electronic orders, search inventories, and access account statements and invoices. "That's been a big success for us," Roddel says. "Not only are more and more of our customers using it, but our field sales reps have found it's a great platform for entering orders when they're out on the road."

About Epicor

Epicor Software Corporation drives business growth. We provide flexible, industry-specific software that is designed around the needs of our manufacturing, distribution, retail, and service industry customers. More than 40 years of experience with our customers' unique business processes and operational requirements is built into every solution—in the cloud, or on premises. With a deep understanding of your industry, Epicor solutions spur growth while managing complexity. The result is powerful solutions that free your resources so you can grow your business. For more information, [connect with Epicor](#) or visit www.epicor.com.

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