

Eagle Fence Solves Supply Chain Woes with Acumatica

OVERVIEW

Eagle Fence Distributing previously ran on five separate instances of Sage 50, each on individual servers hosting the data for each location. Eagle Fence executives had zero visibility into critical financial data and inventory level status, and remote access to the system was severely lacking. Eagle Fence Distributing deployed Acumatica Cloud ERP, gaining real-time data visibility across the entire organization, mobile access, and the information required to successfully navigate supply chain issues during the pandemic.

KEY RESULTS

- Acquired an integrated, cloud-based solution, gaining remote access for sales and the finance staff
- Optimized inventory management across locations, allowing executives to get ahead of supply chain issues
- Gained ability to measure credit worthiness of vendors and customers
- Increased collaboration between locations, boosting productivity
- Shortened implementation time and reduced costs hiring an implementation partner familiar with its business
- Obtained critical data on which to make strategic decisions, growing revenues throughout the pandemic
- Created new-location roll-out roadmap, allowing for rapid expansion

CHALLENGES

Eagle Fence Distributing, LLC is one of the fastest growing wholesale distributors of fencing and perimeter security products in the United States. The company was formed 13 years ago and is a subsidiary of Southwestern Wire, a manufacturer of chain link fencing. It shares Southwestern Wire's Norman, Oklahoma headquarters and has facilities in Birmingham, Little Rock, Houston, St. Louis, and Chicago.

Eagle Fence sells a complete line of high-quality wholesale fence products in traditional and unique styles. Its full line of products includes access controls, agricultural fencing, vinyl fence, wood, steel and aluminum ornamental fencing as well as chain-link fence and gates for farm and ranch, residential, commercial, industrial, and high security applications.

The company started in 2008 with the purchase of a small fencing wholesaler in Birmingham, AL, and rapidly grew from there, opening new locations, first in Chicago in 2010, then Houston, Little Rock, and St. Louis.

"We started on Sage 50 at the first location and as we grew, we would add another local server with another instance of Sage," says Keith Ford, a former Southwestern Wire executive who became President of Eagle Fence four years ago. "None of the five Sage instances were connected and each was housed on its own servers at the branches. There was no interconnectivity, no data views, and it was difficult to VPN into those servers to try to collect information. It was very cumbersome."

Each instance of Sage 50 had problems, says Ford. The systems would lock up and accessing data was difficult. "From a global standpoint, we had zero visibility into the business. Most of the time we had no VPN access, and we would have to have someone export data and send it to us."

To complicate matters, each location had different ways of naming customers, products and operating. "Another large issue was security because when we had to VPN, we were somewhat connected to headquarters and we wanted to be off of those older servers and into the cloud."

The consistent lack of data visibility, VPN problems, a ransomware attack, and operational inefficiencies led to the decision to replace Sage, Ford says.

The Eagle Fence team evaluated ERPs from Oracle NetSuite, Infor, and Sage Intacct. Then an acquaintance that formerly was in the fence industry, i-Tech Support's Mike Augello, introduced them to Acumatica Cloud ERP. "He gave us all of the reasons we should go with Acumatica," Ford says.

The Eagle Fence team narrowed its decision to Sage Intacct and Acumatica, which both gave presentations.



Company

Eagle Fence Distributing
www.efdistribution.com

Industry

Distribution: Fencing and Perimeter Security Products

Location

Headquarter in Norman, OK with distribution facilities in Birmingham, Little Rock, Houston, St. Louis, and Chicago

Number of Employees

Approx. 75 full time employees

Products

Acumatica Distribution Edition with:

- Advanced Financials
- Inventory and Ordering Management
- Intercompany Accounting
- CRM
- Fixed Assets
- Avalara Sales Tax Automation

Customer Social Sharing Details



www.linkedin.com/company/eagle-fence-distributing-llc/



www.facebook.com/efdistribution



<https://twitter.com/efdistribution>

SOLUTION

Because the software business is rapidly growing, and people change jobs so quickly, Ford worried that if he started a relationship with Sage and that person left, he would have to work with someone new who may not have gone through an implementation. In addition, Sage executives talked about “going to the cloud” – they weren’t there yet.

“I also liked that Acumatica continues to move forward in releasing new versions twice a year, and that they really listen to their customers,” Ford says. “They are moving in the direction that their customers want them to go, not where an executive behind a desk wants to go. Acumatica’s mindset is ‘here are the resources we need to add to make our customers successful.’”

The decision to move forward with Acumatica was easy, Ford says.

He liked that Acumatica offered an unlimited user pricing model rather than charged per seat license. “That meant we didn’t have to keep track of the number of users and licenses, which I had no interest in doing, especially since I don’t have an IT team,” he says.

“I liked Acumatica; it could do everything we needed it to from the distribution industry edition. Then there was i-Tech’s extensive fencing industry background, and the fact that they had led Acumatica implementations at other businesses in our industry.”

The Eagle Fence team also liked Acumatica’s mobile app, the robust CRM’s ability to include account notes, and the ability to evaluate the credit worthiness and put credit holds on orders as needed.

In the end, “We knew we really had a great fit between the correct solution provider along with the correct partner in i-Tech,” Ford says.

Focused Implementation

Because the implementation happened just before his predecessor’s retirement, Ford was able to spend six months focused solely on the Acumatica deployment.

Standardizing processes and nomenclature was one of the larger tasks Eagle Fence faced. Each of the five locations had different naming conventions; different SKU names, and numbers for like items. They even had different names for common customers. “All six instances of Sage had different data,” Ford says. “None of it matched. So, we had to bring five managers together and make decisions on a master data structure as we moved forward.”

Eagle Fence’s Go Live happened some six to ten months before the pandemic hit, giving the team plenty of time to become familiar with Acumatica and new company processes before employees transitioned to remote work.

BENEFITS

Full Remote Visibility during Pandemic

“As Covid hit, for the management and outside sales team to work remotely with 100 percent visibility was invaluable,” Ford says. The new business solution also helped Eagle Fence Distributing navigate the supply chain challenges every manufacturer and distributor now grapples with, a challenge that continues today.

“When global supply chain problems caused prices on every widget that we sell to flux, we had to be nimble and quickly get replacement costs into the system overnight. Acumatica was able to handle that.”

“There would have been no way to have the control and flexibility we have today with customer pricing and an accurate view of our costs without Acumatica,” Ford added.

Supply chain issues made it difficult to plan and adjust inventory levels as well as keep abreast of replacement costs that changed daily. With Acumatica providing real-time data transparency, “we have been able to stay in front of price increases that are still occurring, and leverage the numbers to achieve the gross profit that we do today,” he says.

“In Sage, there was no way to control or even implement any kind of standardized pricing, track margins or replacement costs.”

Acumatica’s robust inventory planning allowed Eagle Fence Distributing to see what was ordered and coming but “the supply chain is so out of whack, sometimes the data we have is not applicable for planning. Even though we have adjusted lead times, many of our vendors are missing the mark.”

“That’s how extreme the supply chain disruption is.”



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—Keith Ford, President,
Eagle Fence Distributing

Increased Communication among Branches

With Acumatica Cloud ERP providing a single source of truth connecting all its operations, Eagle Fence Distributing branch managers no longer operate as separate silos. “We’re seeing a lot more interaction amongst executives, and everyone can now view inventory, sales dollars, and sales performance at each location,” Ford says. “That visibility allows them to call each other for help and locate inventory, which didn’t happen before.”

Ford looks forward to connecting to Microsoft Teams in the latest version of Acumatica, which will make it even easier to run all locations from his office in Norman, OK. “To have 100 percent visibility to everything no matter where we are in the world is invaluable,” he says.

Evaluating Credit Worthiness

Eagle Fence Distributing’s legacy Sage version did not have functionality that allowed the accounting team to judge the credit worthiness of vendors or customers. “We had no way of putting someone on hold or not, and there weren’t ways to track customers and data points to see the credit worthiness of any particular order going out the door,” Ford explains.

That control, however, is available in Acumatica, he says.

Growth Platform

Acumatica’s flexible and powerful system allowed Eagle Fence Distributing to flourish during the pandemic. “We’ve been able to increase our margins because we have more control and visibility and can stay ahead of pricing changes and replacement costs,” Ford says.

Putting a powerful tool that automates the sales process – from faster data retrieval to cutting POs to sending out quotes – has helped the company’s knowledgeable sales staff and customer service team respond to customers faster giving Eagle Fence Distributing a competitive edge, Ford says. That means they can grow the business with existing resources.

At the same time, Acumatica Cloud ERP’s easy-to-use interface, unlimited user pricing model, and flexibility will allow the company to rapidly add new locations, he says. “We feel we can add a warehouse or branch in a 30-day window or shorter, because we have the financial backbone all set up and ready to go. While it might take longer to get the property, trucks, and employees, the software is not a worry point for us; it’s the least of our challenges, which is invaluable,” Ford says.

“Ten years ago, the software would be at the top of the list of worries. Acumatica gives us the opportunity to accelerate our business.”

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