

J. C. Steele and Sons, Inc.



An enterprising company.

Founded in 1889 as a brick manufacturer in Statesville, NC, J.C Steele and Sons, Inc. is the largest producer of heavy clay processing equipment in the United States. The family-owned company has \$32 million in annual sales, a large portion of which is derived from exports to other countries. Over the years, plant facilities have been enlarged and updated and now include a modern, fully-equipped foundry with multiple electric induction furnaces used in the carefully controlled production of alloy castings. The machine shop features a number of precision tools, many of which are computer numerically controlled (CNC). The engineering department utilizes the latest computer-aided technology for design, drafting, and analysis. The company has approximately 150 employees.

“ With Infor ERP VISUAL, we are getting better use out of our resources—machines and people—and this has made us more profitable. ”

DON KOEPNICK, CFO, J.C. STEELE AND SONS, INC.

Customer Profile

Setting the strategy.

J.C. Steele needed a comprehensive enterprise resource planning solution designed to cost effectively meet the needs of a mid-market, mixed-mode manufacturer with thousands of parts and a complex operation.

According to Don Koepnick, CFO, J.C. Steele and Sons, Inc., it became apparent that the company needed to improve the way in which it fulfilled orders for the 25,000 parts it offers to customers worldwide. "We have 14,000 pretty active parts and many of the orders we get are for machines that have been in service since the 1920s or 1930s," he explains. "Because of the complexity of our operation, we didn't have a good handle on our inventory or on what it was costing us to fulfill orders."

"As a result, we were a little slow in getting parts out to customers," he says. "Quite often, we didn't have the right parts on the shelf or we would encounter scheduling issues that led to too much time from order to delivery."

In addition to improving scheduling, insight into inventory, and costing, the new solution would have to help J.C. Steele better integrate the operations of its foundry and machine shop. Koepnick says the company was committed to finding a solution provider that was financially viable with an ERP solution that was well-established.

Getting business specific.

With its requirements well understood, J.C. Steele began evaluating several potential solutions. The company quickly ruled out companies without a commitment to meet the unique functional and pricing requirements of mid-market companies. According to Koepnick, J.C. Steele seriously evaluated four solutions. "Infor ERP VISUAL was the only software solution that fully addressed all of our requirements," he says, "Of the four we looked at closely, one just worked well in the machine shop environment; one had good foundry capability, but couldn't meet our machine shop needs; and the third stood out only for its payroll capabilities."

Infor ERP VISUAL provided J.C. Steele with the full range of capabilities it needed in one integrated solution. The solution features advanced functionality that delivers an

facts at a glance:

- > company J.C. Steele and Sons, Inc.
- > solution Infor ERP
- > product VISUAL
- > industry Industrial Machinery and Equipment
- > revenue US \$32 Million
- > employees 155
- > country USA

integrated approach to all core manufacturing and back-office requirements, including MRP (material requirements planning), advanced planning and scheduling, manufacturing execution, configuration, time and attendance, payroll, customer relationship management, quality management, and warehouse management.

For J.C. Steele, scheduling was the most critical capability, followed by the need for functionality to improve costing. The company also wanted a solution that would enable it to manage its entire operation from the same inventory.

Seeing results.

To implement Infor ERP VISUAL, J.C. Steele relied heavily on the Infor product team as well as Visual South, the Infor channel partner. "It was a surprisingly smooth implementation," Koepnick explains. "The trick was we took our time and we had good support from Infor and Visual South."

Since the implementation, the company has increased sales and profits while reducing staffing levels. "Our sales have increased 20 percent and we've been able to decrease the number of employees by five percent," Koepnick says. "Clearly part of this success can be attributed directly to the Infor solution. We've been able to handle increased volumes because we have better control over inventory and manufacturing. We are getting better use out of our resources—machines and people—and this has made us more profitable."

Infor ERP VISUAL is being used by upwards of 30 J.C. Steele employees, 10 of whom extensively work with the solution. “Because the solution works so seamlessly with SQL Server and our other Microsoft products, we get access to data a lot more quickly and with less difficulty,” he says. “And because data access is much easier for people, more can be done by individual business process owners without bringing in a programmer to write a piece of software to perform a task or get a report.”

Koepnick reports that user acceptance of Infor ERP VISUAL has been excellent. “The solution is pretty darn user-friendly,” he says. “Users like the look and feel and the way it works. If we tried to replace Infor ERP VISUAL with something else, we’d have a revolt on our hands.”

Being open to an enterprising future.

J.C. Steele is looking to expand the role that Infor ERP VISUAL plays in its business. The company is working to replace its use of a separate database to support web-initiated customer orders. In the near future, customer orders captured on the website will be automatically loaded into the Infor ERP VISUAL database, eliminating the need to manage the separate database for the customer website. According to Koepnick, J.C. Steele also is planning to take advantage of the solution’s Easy Lean module to enhance its scheduling capabilities.

In Koepnick’s eyes, the long-term prospects for his company’s relationship with Infor are good. “Infor has the strength to stay in the game for a long time and they are continually updating the Infor ERP VISUAL product,” he says. “This is good for our business long-term.”

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About Infor.

Infor delivers business-specific software to enterprising organizations. With experience built in, Infor’s solutions enable businesses of all sizes to be more enterprising and adapt to the rapid changes of a global marketplace. With more than 70,000 customers, Infor is changing what businesses expect from an enterprise software provider. For additional information, visit www.infor.com.

Visual South sells and implements Infor ERP VISUAL and provides IT services, custom programming, report writing, and web development. For more information, please visit www.visualsouth.com or call 704-721-6020.

Customer Profile

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