



Steels' Simple Solution: "A System that Works"

As Western Canada's leading supplier of construction materials, Steels Industrial Products Ltd. simply sought "a system that works."

Distributing goods since the late 1800s in Great Britain, Steels, who relocated to Canada in 1955, is a dedicated company seeking to provide their customers more value. Initially, the Steels family stocked a diverse inventory built of everything from their now standard construction materials to the Queen's favorite staple—tea. However, after a management group purchased the family owned company in 1988, Steels discovered and capitalized on their natural niche— construction materials.

Under the same ownership since 1993, Steels has continued to focus on providing commercial and industrial contractors their necessary supplies, including industrial insulation, commercial roofing materials, general contractor supplies, and masonry products for commercial and industrial buildings.

In the 1990s, Steels, continually growing, completely abandoned their old ERP solution because it was geared more towards the manufacturing industry and thus no longer, if ever, responded to their distribution needs. Unfortunately, Steels failed to find a solution that met their business needs, so they resorted to designing their own solution. However, after too many headaches with their own remedy, Steels resumed the search in Spring 2001.

Steels Industrial Partners with Group Laurier

Disheartened by their design, Steels' request was reasonable. They just wanted a knowledgeable software partner to provide a user-friendly solution, appropriate to their business model, which could efficiently manage inventory, replenish stock, improve fill rates, and perform other distribution centric tasks. According to Steels' President Jim Sidwell and Vice President Wayne Wood,

Featured Client:

Steels Industrial

Steels also preferred that the solution offer near seamless integration and breed deep integrity.

In the past, Steels had worked with boutique-sized software providers, but now, as a growing company, they wanted to find a more balanced partner—not too large, not too small. A company that could be there to provide the support and technical knowledge when necessary, but also a company with whom they could communicate on a personal level.

Group Laurier, a founding partner and active participant in Distributor's EDGE, presented demos for Steels, proving their technical and professional support teams would meet Steels' needs. Additionally, the large community of SX.enterprise users promised many user conferences. After speaking to almost two dozen pleased SX.enterprise users, Steels was completely satisfied with the Infor, formerly NxTrend, product and excited about the avenues for the potential exchange of ideas. In the final buying stage, Steels evaluated only the software, and ultimately, SX.enterprise won because it met Steels' needs and was therefore the best investment.

Business As Usual

After Steels signed with Laurier in August 2001, Laurier guided Steels through a 6-month implementation process to help them understand the software. Once Steels selected a team of 10 employees to learn the product, they almost immediately confirmed that Laurier is a solid, medium sized technical and professional services provider supporting a strong ERP solution. Laurier's consultants worked to familiarize the initial ten users with the solution so they could in turn act as on-site experts once installation was complete. In the meantime, Steels held an internal contest to coin a unique name for the new software; to this day, SX.enterprise is known as "RADAR" at Steels. While Laurier consultants are available to Steels at all times, Steels users learned SX.enterprise in and out,



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starting with the basics like what something does when turned on and off. More importantly, Laurier taught Steels how the Best in Class utilize the solution, so Steels was prepared to not only remain at the top, but also climb higher. After the 6-month implementation process, Steels was prepared to Go Live with their new solution. Sidwell nonchalantly describes this day as “uneventful. It was business as usual.”

Tangible Success

Immediately after Going Live in mid February, Steels further realized the value in their recent investment. They were able to run their month end statements on March 1, whereas on the old system, the statements were not available until the third or fourth day of the month. Above all, this achievement was a morale booster; it was very much a psychological victory.

Quickly adjusting to the new system, Steels needed to implement a centralized stock replenishment system and push inventory from one centralized location to all branches. A Laurier consultant, who Sidwell and Wood recall as having exceptional industry and product knowledge, taught them how to capitalize on their investment to achieve this goal within 12 to 24 months. Wood praised Laurier, saying, “Without SX.enterprise, without Laurier’s support, we would never have been able to do that. That was an expectation we had going into the software system that we were able to quickly realize.”

Steels was hoping to centralize their business, but they did not necessarily set out to increase professionalism within the company, which SX.enterprise encouraged by default. Even after doubling business since introducing SX.enterprise, Steels has been able to maintain and improve upon procedures and customer service. SX.enterprise has introduced a common language that affords more efficient conversation among individual branch managers. Sidwell and Wood say they “would hate to see where they would be without Laurier and SX.enterprise.”

Steels and Group Laurier Survive the 2010 Winter Olympics

With the 2010 Winter Olympics set to take place in Vancouver, Steels’ business is booming. In addition, there is a lot of activity in Alberta’s oil industry. Steels feels fortunate to have a strong system like SX.enterprise in place to help with the growing demands—all of Vancouver is rebuilding in preparation for the games. At 120,000 sales orders per year, Steels has three hubs and ten

branch locations to manage. Recently, Steels has terminated leases on several of those branch properties in favor of buying significantly larger properties from which to distribute. Wood says, “If we didn’t have a software system that was robust enough, that had the capability to support that growth, we wouldn’t have been able to get here. Laurier and the foundation we have with SX.enterprise is really an essential part of being able to get to the kind of growth that we are really enjoying here.”

Steels Industrial and Group Laurier

After increasing inventory turns significantly and growing continually, Steels is beyond satisfied with their investment in Laurier. Steels describes SX.enterprise as a stable, reliable system, and they have upgraded three times in the last few years, pleased with each one. Again, Sidwell and Wood claim, “Without SX.enterprise, we wouldn’t have been able to achieve the growth that we have achieved.” Steels’ SX.enterprise users know the Laurier team on a first name basis, and they define their relationship with Laurier as very good because Laurier keeps them very informed. Asked whether they would recommend Laurier and SX.enterprise to a fellow distributor, Sidwell and Wood agree, “Based on our experience, you would be making the right choice to go with Laurier and SX.enterprise.”



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