Construction and Masonry Supplier Builds a Rock-Solid Platform for Growth on Acumatica Cloud ERP

OVERVIEW

Virginia-based Frederick Block, Brick & Stone has grown into a leading distributor of masonry and hardscape products for homeowners and contractors. Its financial system, however, couldn't handle that growth. FBBS deployed Acumatica Cloud ERP, gaining real-time insight into financials and inventory across three locations, and a modern platform for growth that employees can access from anywhere.

KEY RESULTS

- Connected disparate business applications into one integrated system, streamlining order entry operations
- Acquired deeper access to financial data, enhancing decision-making strategy
- Gained remote access to secure cloud-based system allowing employees to work from anywhere
- Substantially improved inventory visibility with the use of the intercompany module, increasing accuracy and the ability to locate products instantly across three locations
- Acquired a modern business platform for future growth while also avoiding expensive technology infrastructure costs

CHALLENGES

Frederick Block, Brick & Stone (FBBS) began selling cinder blocks and mortar in 1967 and has grown into a leading distributor of masonry and hardscape products for homeowners and contractors in Virginia across its three locations.

The company operated for many years on a standalone ERP. The legacy program was difficult to use and couldn't be accessed remotely. As the company grew, the legacy financial system couldn't handle financial transactions from multiple locations. Its standalone nature caused employees to manually import and export data to get an accurate financial picture.

"In our old system, we had to download the information into a CSV file and import it into Excel," explains Steve Slaughter, President/CEO. "Or we had to run a number of different reports to then take information from each one. It took a lot of time and manual effort to clean things up."

Reporting options for multiple locations was challenging, and integration with programs such as Microsoft Office wasn't available. "As we grew to multiple locations, we needed something to handle inventory in multiple locations. In addition, we wanted the ability to access our data remotely so people could work from home," Slaughter says.

SOLUTION

FBBS' internal team identified 40 potential ERP systems from an extensive online search. From there, they trimmed the list to five, eliminating many because they were cumbersome and appeared to be built for much larger firms. Many were too expensive and didn't allow for flexibility to suit their business processes. After demos of the five remaining solutions, two final ERPs remained in consideration: Epicor and Acumatica Cloud ERP.

Slaughter and his team chose Acumatica Distribution Edition because of its unique pricing model, flexibility, and cloud-first native function. "We wanted a solution that could grow with us and Acumatica, by far, seemed a better choice in that regard," he says. "It was a better long-term play."

Acumatica's consumption-based pricing was a big factor in the decision, Slaughter says. "We have a great number of employees who don't need to be in the system very much, but we still wanted them to gain the access they required as it made sense. With Acumatica, there's no extra licensing fee to add a person; it's just one price."

Epicor and other ERP's charge by the number of licensed users, which gets expensive, he added.

Because none of the software evaluated was tailored to the construction supplier industry, FBBS needed a flexible solution that could be configured to the way the distribution company does business. Many of the solutions the company evaluated weren't as configurable as Acumatica, and would have required expensive customization, escalating the cost of those solutions.

CAL Business Solutions Inc. helped FBBS implement Acumatica Advanced Distribution with Financials, Customer Management, Inventory and Order Management, and the Acumatica Intercompany Accounting Module.

BENEFITS

Remote Access

FBBS now has a connected, cloud-based business solution that can be accessed no matter where an employee is located – at one of the company's three locations, on the road, or at home. "Acumatica allows anyone access, wherever they are. If someone needs to work from home and be productive, they can do that," Slaughter says.

The ability to access data remotely when the pandemic hit was critical. "The cloud access from anywhere was a big deal for us," he says. "We just couldn't do that with our old system, and we would have been in a world of hurt during this critical time."

Obtain Critical Information Quickly

Slaughter and the FBBS team now readily access the information they need. They don't hunt around, export data from various software, and then import data into yet another software package. "On a daily basis I can see information quickly," Slaughter says. "I can create a Generic Inquiry and manipulate the view to get to the data that I want to see. With Acumatica, the sky's the limit. Whatever we want to see, however we want to see it, we're able to create a simple inquiry to make that happen."

The ability to access the information he wants quickly allows Slaughter to make better, more-informed decisions, he says. "I like to make decisions based on data, and with Acumatica, peeling the layers back and diving deeper is easy to do. We are no longer making guesses but decisions with the data to back it up."

A Flexible Solution that Connects Easily

Acumatica is intuitive and easy to use. "Acumatica is much more user friendly than what we had before," Slaughter says. "The integration with Microsoft Office, especially Outlook and Excel, has been great."

Slaughter likes that Acumatica is a flexible platform right out of the box that doesn't require outside customization. With Acumatica's modern Open API structure, the solution can be quickly personalized to suit an employee's unique needs. "I love that Acumatica is so flexible that you can tailor it to work best for what your business processes are," he says.

Improved Insight into Inventory

Specialty orders that need some fabrication are routine at FBBS. The company sells a lot of products from various manufacturers that combine a large number of SKUs. Fabrication requests and special orders made tracking those orders and inventory in its legacy software nearly impossible.

"With Acumatica, we can see what we have. Gaining visibility like that has been a huge improvement," Slaughter says. "With our specialty orders and fabrication, we couldn't just set up a SKU before." CAL Business Solutions helped FBBS configure Acumatica to identify and categorize different lot sizes, specialty work, and nontraditional work to be easily accessible and identifiable.

"Acumatica can be configured to do all the things we needed for our industry, but it also has the flexibility to go above and beyond," Slaughter says.

With Acumatica, FBBS knows what's in stock, and more importantly, where it is.

"Acumatica handles inventory so much better than our old system," he says. "This is a big-time saving for us to see live inventory availability across our three different locations and not have to resort to various spreadsheets or wander through our yards of products like we did before."

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Modern Business Platform for Growth

Slaughter and Frederick Block, Brick & Stone now have a modern, ever-evolving business foundation for growth. Gaining reliable, remote access via the Cloud prepares them for the future. FBBS operates much more efficiently, employees are more productive, and can work from anywhere they have access to an Internet connection.

"Acumatica certainly makes us a better business," Slaughter says. "It's been very beneficial to understand and see what's going on in our business, in real-time."

"There are a lot of features and modules available in Acumatica that we haven't utilized yet. But thinking ahead to where our business may be five years from now, we feel like we have a solution for our business that we can easily add to and grow with over time," he adds.

Slaughter likes that Acumatica is building a strong user community, which the company taps to improve the software on a continual and scheduled basis. He also likes that Acumatica holds an annual user Summit where he can learn about new third-party add-on applications and understand new functionality.

"There is a lot to like about Acumatica and I love that they are quickly growing," Slaughter says. "I like that they are putting money back into the solution to make it better for everyone. We now have a business solution that we know is going to continue to improve over time."

FREDERICK BLOCK
Brick & Stone

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