



ICx & VISUAL Success

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JILL BURNS, OPERATION CONTROLLER,
ICX TECHNOLOGIES

Facts at a glance

Solution: ERP

Products: VISUAL

Industry: Aerospace and Defense

Country: USA

About the company

ICx™ Technologies develops and integrates advanced sensor technologies for homeland security, force protection, and commercial applications. A leader in the industry, ICx provides sensors that detect and identify chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive threats, delivering awareness and actionable intelligence for wide-area surveillance, intrusion detection, and facility security.

Headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, the company leverages its technical expertise and government funding to address other emerging challenges ranging from a cleaner environment and alternative energy to life science. Part of ICx's mission is to drive technology solutions that set the standard for effective security. To learn more about ICx Technologies, visit www.icxt.com.

Challenges

When ICx Technologies purchased more than 16 companies spanning the globe within a short period, it quickly realized that its corporate headquarters needed a way to gain visibility into the financial records of all of its new divisions. After the acquisitions, the company was forced to manually consolidate financial statements because the acquired

companies used a variety of software packages. To achieve its primary corporate goal of obtaining account transparency, ICx began the quest for an enterprise resource planning (ERP) package that would also accommodate the needs of the individual subsidiaries, all of which were different.

ICx began a search for an ERP that met its three major requirements. Because several of the acquired units were manufacturing-intensive, the company needed an application that provided accounting capabilities for a manufacturing environment. ICx also focused on an ERP with a project accounting focus because of its high number of government contracts that require a separate set of books. In addition, the company looked for a system that could assist with Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) compliance because ICx intended to go public within one year following the search.

Getting business specific.

With such specific and unique requirements in mind, ICx at first believed such a product did not exist in the market without extensive customization. Shortly after beginning its search, the company narrowed the list of suppliers down to only a few with products that met all three specifications, but only one product provided an additional advantage.

Jill Burns, operation controller at ICx, declares, *"An important objective for us was to secure a software package that was out of the box and could still meet our needs in manufacturing and project accounting as well as SOX compliance. We knew that large packages such as Oracle or SAP required us to start from scratch and completely redesign the system."*

VISUAL was by far our best choice: no customization needed, which meant the lowest cost, fastest implementation time, and quickest return on our investment. The application offered a vast array of options, but it also provided flexibility for the design team to choose best practices that suited us for our corporate and manufacturing needs and easily combine them.”

Other important factors in ICx’s application choice were that the package needed to have a strong financial backing by the vendor with a commitment to evolve the product, and that the vendor was a global player. ICx spent much time investigating to make sure VISUAL would be supported while ICx was growing for at least the next five years. Burns adds, *“Synergy provided references of customers that were similar to our company. We learned that Synergy serviced over 400 manufacturing companies with the application, and some were big global players. When we contacted the references, we were happy with what we heard. That reaffirmed our decision.”*

Seeing results.

When ICx assembled its team to begin implementation of VISUAL, it needed to build processes from the ground up because the company had none in place. Burns explains, *“We were developing and fine-tuning an ICx-wide solution with best practices that we wanted to incorporate through our system implementation team, which we did successfully. And we were still able to go live within a reasonable time.”*

With more than 16 sites targeted for system deployment, ICx began the process by completing two sites first, followed by two more the next month, and two more each month thereafter. *“By deploying the application two sites at a time, we could begin to see almost instant value,”* Burns adds.

The most significant impact that ICx has realized since implementing the Synergy application is the type of information that it can extract. Burns says, *“This is the first time that we’ve been able to dig into the data and see our gross profit by product line. And the visibility into all of our subsidiaries is incredible from a corporate view. We’re very excited.”*

Continues Burns, *“Our biggest cost savings has resulted from our ability to consolidate back-office operations after dealing with 16 separate finance and overhead departments for the corporate office. In addition to tremendous cost savings, we’ve been able to see various benefits that wouldn’t have been possible before VISUAL—increased productivity and comprehensive information for management reports that enable better decision-making.”*

Two ICx units in Canada were part of the initial implementation of VISUAL, and Burns points out another advantage. *“One of our criteria in selecting the software was to be able to do multi-currency transactions, and we’ve been very impressed with our ability to report in US or Canadian dollars and have the conversion done automatically,”* says Burns. *“It’s been great for us at corporate.”*

According to Burns, the users have also embraced VISUAL, despite the radical change it brought for them. *“Users on the operational side probably found the change harder because they’ve never been exposed to an ERP package, but it’s been a fairly simple product for them to learn how to use. They’re now very comfortable with it.”*

ICx understood the tremendous challenge it faced with implementation of an ERP in 16 sites that involved specific and wide-ranging goals. *“One objective we wanted to accomplish in the first year was to bring on as many units as we could in a very short time, especially those that were using software that we could not translate into SOX compliance. Our implementation team worked really hard, and our executives have been happy with our performance. We’re ready to advance to the next level: extract more data and dig in to analyze our processes.”*

In summary, VISUAL has helped ICx Technologies in the following ways:

- Allowed fast software implementation, despite simultaneous development of operational processes
- Enabled extraction of gross profit by product line through corporate visibility into subsidiaries
- Provided tremendous cost savings from corporate ability to consolidate back-office financial statements
- Increased productivity and provided critical data for better decision-making
- Allowed automatic multi-currency conversions

Doing business better.

After experiencing huge success with the implementation and resulting benefits, ICx believes that it is ready to add modules. *“We’re investigating the quality module for manufacturing to automate those processes,”* Burns notes. *“They’ve been asking for it for over a year, and we’ve put them off because we had huge goals to accomplish in our first year. The CRM package for sales is another one that would add great value.”*