



3 form prices products more effectively with VISUAL ERP

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JON SHURTLIFF, IT DIRECTOR, 3FORM INC.

Facts at a glance

Products: VISUAL ERP

Industry: Manufacturing

Country: USA

About the company

3form, Inc. manufactures chemical resin materials for the architecture and design industry in the United States. The company focuses on furniture, strata, and hardware collections. Its various products are used in applications ranging from acoustic panels, backsplashes, cabinet doors, and ceiling panels to elevator cabs, lighting partitions, water walls, and signage. 3form also offers design, engineering, fabrication, and installation services.

Based in Salt Lake City, Utah, the company serves various organizations within industries that include advertising and marketing, airlines, automotive, defense, education, financial services, furniture, healthcare, hospitality, media, residential, retail, performing arts, and nonprofit.

To learn more visit www.3-form.com.

Setting the strategy

When 3form, Inc. was founded in the early 1990s, one of its missions from the beginning was to grow as quickly as possible. To achieve that goal, the company soon began

investigating technology that would help it streamline and automate all of its operations to ensure maximum efficiency. An additional reason for 3form to implement technology was to enable a more effective response to its customers, which began demanding faster delivery of high-quality products at reduced cost. 3form realized that an enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution with manufacturing and business-specific features was the best choice for helping it meet customer demands as well as keep pace and scale to fulfill additional, changing, and more stringent requirements.

Getting business specific

As 3form began to expand its customer base and hire new employees, it evaluated several ERP solutions against its needs. The company eliminated every vendor on its list except Synergy. Jon Shurtliff, IT director at 3form, explains, “3form chose VISUAL ERP because it not only met all lean manufacturing requirements, but we knew it would grow and evolve with us. One of our own customers already used the product and gave it a ringing endorsement.” 3form’s customer began as a small company and claimed that the application enabled it to grow to a size that 3form targeted for itself. “VISUAL provided tools for not only the sales process, but the accounting side of the business and was a complete package for our company,” Shurtliff adds.

Seeing results

After completing implementation of VISUAL ERP within a reasonable period, 3form began seeing benefits almost immediately. The company began operations with about 50 employees, and within five years after implementing the application, 3form multiplied to about 350 employees. Shurtliff adds, "Using VISUAL ERP, our revenues grew from \$3 million a year to almost \$70 million a year. It allowed us to be a small company, and now a medium-sized company with even larger revenue streams."

At the company's main facility in Salt Lake City, system users have swelled from 5 to 60. "They've all been able to do their jobs much more efficiently and effectively using the software tools," Shurtliff asserts.

VISUAL helps 3form throughout its sales cycle as well as its accounting cycle, according to Shurtliff. "We use it to estimate and quote, place orders, and engineer those orders, pushing it through the factory quickly to get our product manufactured and out the door. Then it helps us with accounts receivable and accounts payable, as well as general ledger and every other accounting process in our company. Productivity has increased tremendously."

Other benefits that 3form has gained from VISUAL stem from its use of optional modules. "We've used the Product Configurator to allow more people to perform engineering functions and to help our engineering process be more seamless. We've also used the Time and Attendance module to help us track our time, attendance, and labor through barcoding as our material goes through the factory. In this way, we can more accurately account for the cost to make each product, helping us plan and schedule and price our product more effectively." Shurtliff claims that various departments—accounting, purchasing, inventory management, order entry, and project management—use a module of VISUAL to help perform its functions more efficiently.

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In its mission to minimize the impact of its products and processes on the environment, 3form also looks to Synergy for assistance. The company uses VISUAL ERP Time and Attendance to avoid printing of paper trackers. Instead, an on-screen schedule informs laborers of work priorities.

Shurtliff adds, "We're at about 92% of our landfill goal to zero, we continue to improve our energy efficiency, and we plan to be carbon neutral by 2017."

Another key benefit that Shurtliff attributes to VISUAL is flexibility. "We can easily customize the application for our specific needs," says Shurtliff.

"3form has many different initiatives and goals running at the same time, and the application allows us to reach those goals faster than we could've imagined."

One example in which 3form used easy customization to support its unique goals was to track the industry segment from which product and sales originate. "We discovered that we needed

to target our hospitality market, and once we could track it, we could target it and increase our sales. We also continue to customize the application for reporting, and we've even customized the integration to help us use the software more efficiently. 3form continues to find new ways to benefit from VISUAL ERP."

Shurtliff also mentions how frequent enhancements to VISUAL help to further fine-tune 3form's business processes. "The Workflow module allows the software manager to control the users and therefore all company processes," says Shurtliff, "which enables us to enforce process efficiency."

"Synergy has also upgraded the user interface in VISUAL to allow us to efficiently extract data from our system. Instead of opening three or four different modules and copying and pasting order numbers into each module, now we can simply double-click to find all the data, and it opens additional modules if necessary."

As 3form continues to grow, an important consideration for the company is the knowledge that its applications will be continually supported with enhancements and upgrades as requirements change.

“We are confident that Synergy will continue to support the tools we need as our business evolves. VISUAL ERP provides us with a solid base to help us succeed.”

JON SHURLIFF, IT DIRECTOR, 3FORM INC.

In summary, VISUAL ERP has helped 3form, Inc., gain the following benefits:

- Increased revenues—from \$3 million to almost \$70 million within five years.
- Enhanced productivity through use of application in sales and all accounting processes.
- Development of more seamless engineering process, with more individuals performing engineering functions using Product Configurator module.
- More accurate accounting of each product cost, enhancing planning, scheduling, and pricing of products via Time and Attendance module.
- Increased sales in low-revenue market segments after customizing product to track sales.
- Ability to enforce process efficiency via Workflow module.

Doing business better.

3form plans to continue using Synergy applications in the future. “VISUAL ERP is an integral part of our business because it provides us with tremendous flexibility and scalability to grow,” Shurtliff insists. “We’ve seen enhancements and upgrades come as our company and industry change. And Synergy has made getting support and training on the software easy. We’ll continue to depend on Synergy to keep us on the leading edge of technology and remain competitive.”



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