TRIANGLE SUSPENSION SYSTEMS, INC.

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Practical Software Solutions Case Study

Triangle Suspension Systems, Inc., a Marmon Highway Technologies®/Berkshire Hathaway Company, manufactures and distributes undercarriage products for light, medium, and heavy-duty vehicles. Since 1919, the Triangle name has been synonymous with steel-leaf springs multi-leaf springs, and various other springs for tractor, trailer, and passenger-car applications for truck, tractor, and trailer applications. Through the years, Triangle has made a series of strategic acquisitions putting it firmly on the road to becoming a leader in undercarriage products in the North American market.

Jann Guthridge, senior business analyst and IT administrator for Triangle Suspension Systems, is responsible for running the company's business systems and business analytics. In the past, she also worked with their legacy data system. Frustrated by trying to extract meaningful data from their legacy system to perform any analytics, she knew it was time to move onto an integrated ERP system. While Guthridge's team searched for an updated system, she knew finding the right partner to implement the solution was equally important.

PRACTICAL SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS FILLS THE BILL

Prior to this project, Triangle had been running a custom-built system written in COBOL. The four programmers required to run and maintain the system were able to deliver some of what the company needed, but it was no longer sufficient to deliver the data necessary to make timely and informed business decisions. Guthridge knew that they had to move forward with an integrated ERP system along with the right implementation partner. The Value Added Reseller (VAR) needed to "... understand where we were coming from and where we were going," she explained. Practical had expertise in all of the modules that Triangle wanted. In her opinion, they were an excellent choice.

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PRACTICAL CAME HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

When deciding to invest in ERP software, it's vital to obtain information about a VAR's reputation from people inside companies who have deployed the software. Expert evaluations are good, but they're just not enough.

Triangle had some experience with Sage partners from a sister company that had another version of Sage but with a different implementer. As is true with many VARs, Triangle found an implementer they had worked with in the past focused on the financial module. They wanted a VAR that was more well-rounded and was proficient with manufacturing, distribution, sales, inventory, replenishment, and shipping as well as financials.

They had heard about Practical Software Solutions from another Marmon company, and, as they came highly recommended, they reached out to them.

Initially, Sage preferred Triangle select an implementation partner in close geographical proximity, but Triangle remained unwavering in their decision to work with Practical. "They were good, and that's who we wanted," Triangle's team members insisted. So Sage agreed and supported their decision.

PRACTICAL'S SERVICE AND PERSONAL TOUCH WERE IMPRESSIVE

During the implementation, Guthridge found that the Practical team delivered at the highest level. The team members demonstrated an exceptional commitment to the project and brought a very high level of expertise, far outweighing competitors and other client-service relationships that Guthridge had experienced in the past.

David Sugg, director of ERP services with Practical, was one of the best Guthridge had ever met in this role. A member of the Practical install team, he was her go-to person. She knew if she had a question, Sugg would be able to answer it and get her from point A to point B.

After the implementation, Practical still provided excellent service to Triangle. Amanda Lamela, Practical's marketing director, added a deeper dimension to the team: In her role, she was top notch. "She keeps on top of things, she keeps us informed, and she's fun to work with—and, if you can work with a partner like that, for whom it's not just an installation or who says 'I'm your support team'—to me, we had become friends. And that was huge," marveled Guthridge.

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'WE TURNED THE SWITCH IN A 24-HOUR PERIOD'

Practical understood where Triangle was coming from and where they were going: moving out of their legacy system to a fully integrated ERP system. They used an implementation methodology that required the team to map their work processes as-is (prior to the project), then define the processes as they would exist at project completion.

Practical worked closely with Guthridge and her team, which she affirms was critical to the successful install. Triangle and Practical worked together to extract and convert all their existing data from the legacy systems and stressed scrubbing the data before installation. "That's really key to a successful implementation. You have to understand your data and have your data be as clean as it can possibly be. 'Garbage in, garbage out' is particularly true in terms of implementing an ERP system," says Guthridge.

"There was lots of pre-install testing, but we went live with all modules in 24 hours. And Practical was here for us!"

DELIVERING MORE WITH LESS

With the new Sage ERP system, Triangle has been able to do more with less. With a much leaner team, they still deliver a high level of service to the system users. The modules all work well and unlike before, users can access the data they need to do their own financial and sales analytics. "It's a huge change when going from a legacy system to an integrated ERP system: You can put the data at users' fingertips," says Guthridge.

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WHAT'S NEXT IN THE JOURNEY

Triangle's next logical step will be to upgrade to a Sage Enterprise Management solution (formerly known as Sage X3). Guthridge plans to continue to work with Practical. She comments, "It will require another project mapping, and I see that Practical is doing more implementations of it, so I feel comfortable that they are also gaining experience in this system, that when we make that decision to move, I know that they'll be the best partner there is."

USER GROUPS ARE EXTREMELY HELPFUL

"Since we went live with our Sage system, we've become involved with Practical's User Group," says Guthridge. "It's enabled all of Practical's customers to know each other. It's given us some face-to-face time, and I think when you know that you've got peers out there that are doing the same thing—it opens that line of communication, which is extremely helpful. And it is supported by Practical 100 percent."

PRACTICAL
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ABOUT PRACTICAL SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS

Established in 1993 in Concord, N.C., Practical Software Solutions offers industry expertise in accounting, manufacturing, distribution, service management, and professional services. The company's primary product offering is from Sage, the leader in business management solutions.