

INDEPENDENT CAN COMPANY

Ultra Drives 12-Week ERP Implementation for Independent Can Company

A World Leader in Metal Packaging Manufacture and Lithography

The Independent Can Company (ICC), founded in 1929, is a privately held family-owned and operated company headquartered in Belcamp, Maryland, near the U.S. Army's Aberdeen Proving Grounds and about 30 miles from Baltimore. Since its inception, ICC has grown to become a world leader in the manufacture of specialty metal packaging and metal lithography.

ICC operates five manufacturing plants in Maryland, Iowa and Ohio; three lithography/printing locations with 100 percent in-house prepress operations in Maryland and Ohio; and a warehouse/distribution center in Arizona.

The company manufactures product in three modes:

- Custom products uniquely configured by customer
- Products made to stock for any customer
- Products made to order as requested by their customers



Image courtesy of Independent Can Company

Because the company manufactures specialty products rather than commodities, it was looking for an ERP system built around the efficient processing and costing of a specialty product. Samples of Independent Can's products include printed decorative cans for coffee, fruitcakes, candy and the iconic Zippo lighter fluid.

ICC's distribution side of the business purchases finished goods primarily from overseas and stocks or direct ships product to customers based on unique projects or customer requirements.

In Oct 2016, ICC acquired the Steeltin manufacturing plant in Baltimore from the Ball Corporation, best known for its Ball mason jars. The Steeltin



"At every level, the Ultra consultants we dealt with understood what we needed for our industry. They brought a great deal of experience. The effort and input from the Ultra team made me realize that if we had to go it alone, we wouldn't have been able to meet the 12-week implementation time frame requirement."

- Toby Sheehan, Business Analyst Director, Independent Can

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Image courtesy of Independent Can Company

plant makes specialty and custom-designed decorative tin-plate cans for a variety of industries. The ICC and Steeltin companies share a similar culture and have worked together for decades.

Replacing an Outdated Legacy System

ICC operated on an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system that was 15 to 20 years in age; at the time the company operated out of two locations. The system was primarily selected for its financial reporting functionality and had shortcomings in serving the needs of the manufacturing side of the business.

Over time, the company added bolt-on products, in-house work arounds and several Excel-based tools, which complicated the solution. The legacy system would not scale for the company's planned growth and it relied overly on spreadsheets and manual processes, with inefficient redundancies and re-keying of data. Executives were looking for a single source of the truth for the entire supply chain. ICC knew it needed a better solution and a better process to effectively drive business decision making in support of company growth.

The newly acquired Steeltin plant location was likewise working with a legacy ERP system. As part of the acquisition, Steeltin needed to divest from the legacy system rapidly or incur corresponding costs.

Still sold on the benefits of an integrated ERP solution to support growth, ICC decided to work with Ultra Consultants to help identify desired process improvements. Ultra worked with ICC for 8 months on the business process improvement (BPI) phase of the project. The BPI work, in turn, prepared ICC to efficiently evaluate potential software vendors and systems, and quickly make their selection on the ERP solution that afforded the best match. Toward the conclusion of the selection phase, ICC was

ICC's requirements for a new ERP system:

- Quoting and estimating, including configurator capabilities to streamline the quote process for BOM and routing rollup; pricing tools and data
- Demand forecasting, planning and scheduling; sales history by product, customer and region
- Budgeting
- Inventory planning using MRP functionality and accounting integration; inventory accuracy, visibility, forecasting, tracking
- Warehouse management system
- Lot traceability
- Mixed manufacturing model for make-to-order and make-to-stock products
- Project management for capital projects
- Customer relationship management
- P&L by channel, customer and product
- Advanced reporting, business intelligence and dashboards
- Scalability for projected growth

merging operations with Steeltin. Working with a tight 12-week deadline from ERP contract signing to production startup, the pressure was on.

Working with Ultra for Business Transformation

As Ultra began the process of assessing the business transformation objectives, ICC identified several overarching goals for a new ERP system:

Data Transparency and Real-Time Analytics

Robust and consistent data in real-time had been lacking throughout ICC operations. ICC hoped to gain data transparency and real-time analytics for decision-making instead of depending on “gut feel” and “tribal knowledge” of veteran employees. As these employees retire, they take their corporate history with them. The goal was to rely on real-time intelligence and accurate data for confident business forecasts and project decision-making across all business functions. For example, managers identified the need for real-time information about BOMs, routing, scrap, crew sizes, can production forecasting by month, pieces per hour production, packaging, freight data, changeover time, down time, machine hours to payroll hours, and more.

Elimination of Spreadsheets

A second major goal was to move away from siloed data managed on Excel spreadsheets toward a cohesive system that communicates with all departments in the company. For example, the scheduling components in the legacy system proved to be cumbersome, so employees developed manual work-arounds on paper-based spreadsheets, which can be error-prone and difficult to maintain. Two areas of the business ended up running their own scheduling systems, which didn’t communicate with each other, thus opening the system to manual errors, duplication of effort and miscommunication.

Similarly, ICC wanted to streamline the quoting process to result in faster response on customer inquiries, and to add a document management system to monitor the quote process.

Results: Just 12 Weeks to Achieve an ERP Implementation

Following an extensive process evaluation and analysis, ICC was ready for the implementation. The company selected the newly acquired Steeltin plant for the first phase of the implementation. The plant was also using a legacy ERP solution, but as part of the acquisition, Steeltin needed to

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- Toby Sheehan, Business Analyst
Director, Independent Can Company

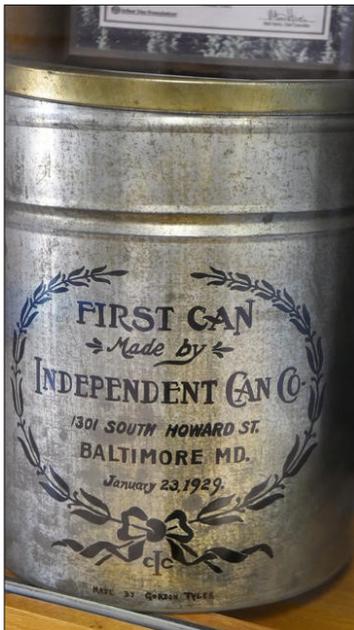


Image courtesy of
Independent Can Company



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divest from the legacy system by year's end. The plant is a relatively small location, with approximately 50 employees. The new cloud-based ERP solution was like the old solution and employees found parts of it intuitive to start using.

According to Toby Sheehan, the project leader for ICC, the process of implementing the ERP system at the Steeltin plant in Baltimore in just 12 weeks will enable ICC to make business decisions and forecast based on real-time data rather than a combination of partial data and gut feelings. The company has found significant value in having one source of information. Additionally, ICC went live with the system without any disruption to their business. All basic business functions continued to work as planned throughout the first, post-live week, including order taking, product manufacturing, shipping from two locations, and revenue collection.

Following the ERP implementation, ICC and Ultra continue to work together on implementing the system at additional ICC sites.

ICC on Ultra: A Reliable, Trustworthy Partner

Toby Sheehan, Business Analyst Director for ICC and the ERP implementation project leader, provided his view on the partnership between ICC and Ultra:

"Ultra Consultants became a part of our company, and our values closely meshed. I see many similarities between our two companies. We felt comfortable with the culture and values of Ultra Consultants. If you're going to be working with another company for 12 to 18 months, you want to make sure it's a good fit. Ultra could relate to what we're doing because of their IT background and experience in manufacturing. We didn't have to teach them our industry and that was important. They were reliable, trustworthy partners."

"We worked closely with our consultant during the negotiation phase. He had a lot of experience, was good at negotiating price with the vendor, and understood what we needed and what was acceptable for our industry. The implementation manager was onsite, on the ground, steering the project. His experience was a major factor in the success of the project. Project management was a key to the rapid implementation."

About Ultra Consultants

Ultra Consultants is the leading independent consulting firm for the manufacturing and distribution industries. We are a valued partner to our customers because of our focus on each customer's industry objectives, our deep industry experience, in-depth enterprise technology insight, and our independent thinking.

Since 1994 we have helped manufacturers and distributors — in North America and those with global operations — reduce their effort, resources and cost in their enterprise software projects. Our services help our customers realize increases in productivity, better information timeliness and accuracy, improved customer satisfaction and business performance. Ultra's guidance brings our customers faster and greater ROI on their projects, and long-term business value.

With Ultra in your corner, your journey is one of continuous improvement. Our mission is to successfully lead you through business process improvement strategies and tactics that drive your business performance improvement. You will work smarter with Ultra, through our effective and efficient processes.

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