ULTRA
CONSULTANTS

Case Study

R&L SPRING CO. LEVERAGES BUSINESS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT FOR GREATER EFFICIENCY

Successful, goal-achieving ERP projects require structure. At Ultra, this framework is provided by our methodology, which organizes the transformation process into four phases – **business process improvement** (BPI), **enterprise technology selection, solution implementation management** and **business value realization**. And within each of those phases are five milestones.

Experience shows us that achieving business performance improvement with an ERP project depends on this proven, step-by-step process – doing first things first – because each phase guides and informs the one that comes after.

To offer a look at the phases of our unique methodology in action – and reveal why it's critical to success – we are following a single ongoing ERP project for a client, **R&L Spring Company**. Along the way, we'll share the project's real-life challenges (and solutions), show our methodology in action, and provide an insider's view of a business transformation.

R&L SPRING COMPANY

Headquarters: Lake Geneva, WI

Founded: 1972

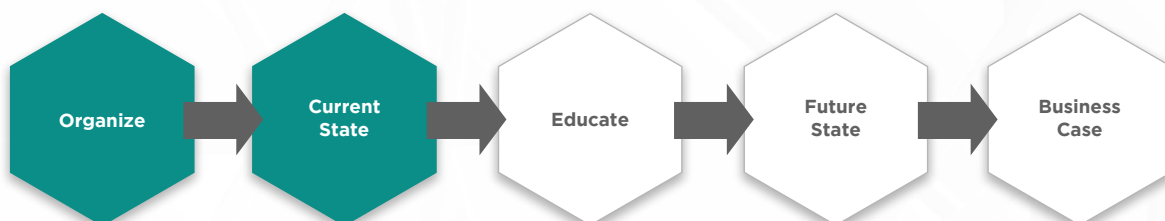**Industries:** Spring and Wire Product Manufacturing, Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing

Products: Precision springs, rings, wireforms and fourslide components

Revenue: Privately Held

Locations: 1

Employees: 125

Close-Up: Business Process Improvement Phase

Organize → Current State → Educate → Future State → Business Case

To learn more about our business process improvement methodology, **CLICK HERE**.

For R&L Spring Company, an OEM manufacturer of precision springs, rings, wire forms and other wire products, greater process efficiency was the primary driver for its new ERP solution. And the first task was to build an internal project team that could determine and deliver opportunities for improvement.

Selecting the Team for Project Success

"Choosing the project team was the first challenge," said Ultra Business Consultant Shannon Harrop. "We reviewed the goals of the project with R&L's project manager, and we discussed what we want from the project team."

The project team, Harrop said, must consist of the people who understand the current system and the company's unique business processes and workstreams. What's more, the team members need to have a vision for the future state of the business.

"For R&L, which is a small organization, it was both easy and difficult to select the team," Harrop said. "It was easy because we only needed seven people. Difficult because each person handles multiple functions. So, we had a lot of overlap. It was difficult, also, because the small team had to be able to handle the extra workload required by the project.

"We used a process inventory to determine the seven core team members," Harrop continued. "And we made sure we had people on the team who could speak to all the processes targeted for improvement."

The seven core team members are the key decision-makers on the project, and were supplemented as needed by additional experts identified by the team in advance. These SMEs were called in for limited-time, level-two discussions.

"For a successful project," Harrop said, "it's important to start by knowing the processes in each workstream, determining which will be addressed when, and to have the right people in the room making the decisions."

Assessing Processes, Finding Efficiencies

With the team built, the next milestone was determining and documenting the Current State.

"We went through the workstreams one by one, and through the process inventory list, to understand how they do what they do," Harrop said. "And, when we needed insight into complex, unique processes, we talked to the SMEs.

"Then we had follow-up discussions with each process owner to get their insight, capture greater detail and know all the variables – in short, we needed to learn the complexities of how their process works in reality," Harrop said.

Throughout this process, Ultra consultants on the project captured opportunities for change – opportunities for new efficiencies, system issues to fix, missing functionalities, process issues and critical gaps. This information, along with the detailed knowledge shared by process owners, was used to assess the maturity of R&L Spring's processes.

"It's important for us and our clients to know where their processes are on the maturity scale, and how they compare to industry benchmarks," Harrop said. "Typically, we ask them to self-rate, and then we compare those ratings to where the information we've gathered shows them to be. It often is extremely enlightening for our clients."

The maturity scale is critical to the project: It informs the project plan, sets project priorities, identifies key for focus, enables improvement metrics and sets a baseline for KPIs. Most important, it provides a foundation for determining the Future State.

"This is the part of the project that can get overwhelming," Harrop said. "It's easy for the project team to get frustrated and ask, 'Can we really be this bad?' So, we make sure they understand that we're not there to change everything all at once. We tell them that it's a journey, and we're only at the beginning.

"We told R&L Spring not to get concerned about their Current State. We knew we would find opportunities for change – some simple, some difficult – and that we will work together to improve efficiency, and to build new and better processes."