

GLOBAL SHOP SOLUTIONS CASE STUDY

Brunswick Steel

Located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, *Brunswick Steel* is a full-service steel production job shop providing custom products, one-offs, and scheduled production for manufacturing and construction customers throughout Western Canada. The firm works 24/7 to produce sheet, plate and long products for companies in agriculture, mining, transportation, and oil and gas. Their products can be found anywhere from potato farms to skyscrapers to a variety of shop floors and manufacturing facilities.



A look at Brunswick Steel's impressive inventory racks.



A steel rigging roller at work at the Brunswick Steel facility in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

For years, Brunswick Steel operated the business with one foot in the past and one in the future. The company employed the latest in modern steel cutting and processing equipment to produce its high-quality steel products. But many facets of the production processes relied on outdated manual procedures, forcing workarounds that slowed production times and reduced shop floor efficiency.

Their old system functioned more as a service center software than a ERP system. It worked reasonably well with their regular stock products, but lacked the ability to handle complex custom jobs, especially on the processing side of the business.

When Adam Plouffe, an experienced ERP user, joined Brunswick Steel as General Manager a few years ago, he recognized the need for a change. After convincing ownership of the benefits of a fully integrated ERP system, Brunswick Steel implemented [Global Shop Solutions ERP software](#), setting in motion a process that revolutionized how the company works.

One ERP System That Does It All

When researching ERP systems, Plouffe identified three primary selection criteria:

1. A robust system that would automate as many manual procedures as possible
2. A **fully integrated** system that made current and accurate production data easily accessible throughout the business
3. The flexibility to handle Brunswick Steel's **mixed-mode** manufacturing model

“The ERP systems we looked all had the automation and data integration,” says Plouffe. “But most of them had major weaknesses when it came to managing both production processing and stock sales. Those two business lines run very differently, and Global Shop Solutions was one of few that said, ‘Yes, we can do that.’”

“In addition, their **Advanced Planning & Scheduling** (APS) module really got my attention,” continues Plouffe. “When I saw how it can schedule jobs, precisely track capacity, automate purchasing supply and demand, and provide immediate financial data, I knew Global Shop Solutions was the right system for us.”

Visible Improvements on the Shop Floor and in the Back Offices

After going live with the software, Brunswick Steel began experiencing wins in many areas of the business.

The first big impact came in finance, where having a fully integrated ERP system eliminated the need to run financials through separate systems. After only a month of using the software the company’s CFO sent Plouffe an email saying, “Thank you for pushing this change. I can now **run all financials through our ERP** because the data is all tied together.”

Another big time saver came from **integrating** Global Shop Solutions with Brunswick Steel’s **nesting software**. Previously, laser cutting steel pieces was tracked manually. Now it’s all done within the system. As soon as the machine cuts a part, the data from the nested sheet is available to anyone who needs it.

Another major improvement came from what shop floor personnel are not doing when it comes to **recording jobs**.

“For the first two months, employees kept asking when we were going to train them on using the system,” says Plouffe. “I explained they were already using it as we intended by not having to perform all the manual administrative tasks they were used to doing. That produced a big win in terms of time and labor efficiency.”

Reliable Delivery Dates = Happy Customers

So far, Plouffe ranks the biggest win as having a master schedule that everyone works from. Having sales, purchasing, finance, and production all work off the same real-time data enables Brunswick Steel to provide a great customer experience, starting with accurate delivery dates.

In the past, scheduling personnel had to manually calculate the available capacity for any given day. Without an integrated system to provide timely capacity updates, sales reps sometimes sold more machine hours than was available. This required a scramble to rework the schedule, reset the due dates, and keep customers happy.

“Working from the same master schedule has eliminated that problem while improving on-time delivery for custom jobs,” says Plouffe. “It enabled us to change some of our stock goods from one or two days to same-day delivery. We’ve also reduced **inventory** to limit our exposure to volatile markets while increasing turns in purchasing.”

Great Product, Great Company

To date, Brunswick Steel has achieved what they initially hoped to accomplish with the software, but Plouffe considers it just a beginning. He continues to learn more about what the software can do, and applies it to simplifying more processes. Overall, he considers the software’s flexibility as the driving force behind Brunswick Steel’s continual improvement efforts.

“As I mentioned, we didn’t want an ERP system that would force us to do things a certain way,” he says. “Global Shop Solutions provides the flexibility to make changes as we need them and run our business the way we need to run it. We also like the fact that Global Shop Solutions is a **family-owned business**. Brunswick Steel is family-owned as well, and we prefer to partner with like-minded companies.”



One of the tall laser posters at Brunswick Steel.