ConveyMor

Founded in 1981 by Roy Adams, ConveyMor is a mixed-mode manufacturer that makes hot lime conveying equipment used in the bleaching process required to produce paper. ConveyMor's individual products – both custom and made to stock – include bucket elevators, drag and apron conveyors, lump breakers, lime proportioners, and kiln feed screws. But the company is renowned worldwide for its complete conveyor systems that handle everything in a paper bleach plant between the discharge of the lime mud filter to the slaker.

A 1800 Lump Breaker at ConveyMor's production site in Alabama.

A ConveyMor screw conveyor.

Headquartered in Pelham, Alabama, ConveyMor performs all its production work 30 miles away in the city of Leeds. The firm also has two sister companies in the area -- Jones Bearing and American Pulley – that manufacture component pieces for similar types of businesses. Needless to say, keeping tabs on three separate companies makes life interesting for Andy Adams, the second-generation President of ConveyMor. Fortunately, he has a robust ERP software like Global Shop Solutions to make the task more manageable.

"We run all three companies within Global Shop Solutions using different company codes," says Adams. "Global Shop Solutions not only makes it easy to manage the businesses separately, it also has a lot of nifty features that facilitate smooth transactions between the separate entities."

"For example, Jones Bearing and American Pulley frequently buy and sell parts or products from each other," says Adams. "When we get a customer order in one company that requires using a product that the other one makes, Global Shop Solutions allows us to automatically purchase it from the first company and enter a sales order in the second. Global Shop Solutions builds in a lot of those kinds of features, and they add up to big time savings."

Supporting A Mixed-Mode Environment
Prior to purchasing Global Shop Solutions ERP software, ConveyMor had a different manufacturing software program in place. The lack of integration between that system's various modules required redundant data entry processes and did not facilitate a smooth flow of information throughout the company. Wanting to get the right ERP package for his business, Adams checked out five or six different products before settling on Global Shop Solutions.

"I narrowed my search down to two finalists," recalls Adams. "But Global Shop Solutions looked like a better fit for our business. Plus, it seemed more flexible and adaptable to the way we like to do things."

"We wanted a product that worked right out of the box but could also be easily customized to our distinct needs. I could see that if we wanted to adapt the other product to our business environment it would require hiring their consultants to come into our facility to make the changes. With Global Shop Solutions, we could do most of it on our own. In that respect, Global Shop Solutions was the easy choice."

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Why is customization so important to Adams?

Because ConveyMor engages in three different manufacturing modes: mixed, discrete products, and made to order. Most of their parts are custom-made. But they also make many parts to stock, and they frequently combine stock parts with custom parts for made-to-order products. This presents some real challenges when scheduling work flow, managing inventory, and tracking shop floor data.

According to Adams, Global Shop Solutions ERP software's customizable reporting capabilities, along with its ability to seamlessly integrate with Windows-based products such as Access and Excel, enable ConveyMor to easily handle the different manufacturing modes with only one system. And unlike ConveyMor's previous software system, Global Shop Solutions ERP software fully integrates all the data throughout the system for easy access to any level of information by anyone in the company.

"Suppose a customer calls in and wants to order 50 of a particular part," says Adams, "and the sales rep goes into the system and discovers that we only have 10 of that part in inventory. From one screen, the sales rep can quickly drill down to the bill of materials and see whether we have the materials on hand to make that part. This, in turn, allows him to tell the customer how quickly we can make the parts and when we expect to ship."

"Having one integrated system eliminates the time and effort required to retrieve information located in different areas of the company. And when you can give customers the answers they need in one phone call, it puts you way ahead of companies that have to spend hours tracking down the data and then call the customer back."

Data Importing a Real Time Saver

A self-described computer geek, Adams spends a lot of time configuring Global Shop Solutions ERP software to meet the needs of ConveyMor personnel. As the overall system administrator, he particularly appreciates its easy and intuitive navigation.

"Unlike a lot of systems I've seen, it's very easy to get from one place to another in Global Shop Solutions," he explains. "For example, you can go from inquiry to an order, or from an order to sales history, and determine not only who you have sold the part to and at what price, but how many you sold in the last month or year. You can then use that information to manage inventory, forecast purchasing volumes, and make other important management decisions."

A hot lime bucket elevator.

Adams also makes frequent use of the robust data import features, which can eliminate the time and drudgery required to manually input information. When ConveyMor first implemented Global Shop Solutions ERP software, they had mountains of information pertaining to part numbers and descriptions that needed to be populated throughout the system. Thanks to Global Shop Solutions' simple integration with other softwares, Adams was able to build a cell in Excel that generated part numbers and descriptions by the hundreds. Global Shop Solutions ERP softwrae then imported the data directly into the system, eliminating the need to type in each part and description by hand.

"I can't tell you how many hours of manual data entry that saved," says Adams. "Plus, it eliminated the need to go back and correct the errors that invariably occur when you input information by hand."

In addition to configuring the system, Adams also invests a significant amount of time creating custom reports for various individuals, teams, and departments. These reports do everything from allowing purchasing personnel to make better buying decisions to setting the agenda for sales meetings and simplifying the process for updating parts pricing information. Here again, the software's ability to integrate with outside software like Crystal Reports enhances Adams' ability to customize the system to meet the specific needs of his company.

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For example, ConveyMor's discreet product lines can contain up to 20 different permutations, each of which has a distinct bill of materials (BOMs). To assist in buying the raw materials needed to manufacture a specific product line, Adams created a custom report that groups parts from each BOM so that purchasing personnel can determine what to buy from a particular vendor. Another report allows them to forecast future purchasing needs based on the sales history of specific product lines.

In addition, Adams frequently uses Access to make small changes in Global Shop Solutions ERP software that generate big time savings and improved operational efficiencies.

"Suppose I have to change a price on 100 different parts," he says. "I might write a simple routine in Access that gives us all the part numbers and prices on one screen. We can then go through the screen and change the prices without having to open up each individual inventory item."

"When we first started using the software, it often took me a couple of hours to create a custom report," continues Adams. "Now, I can usually generate something new in about 10 minutes. With Global Shop Solutions, you get a high level of customizability that doesn't require the time and expense of an outside programmer."

A Powerful Management Tool

Competing in global manufacturing markets requires more than just making quality products that get the job done. Today's customers demand fast turnaround times combined with superior customer service. According to Adams, the ability to deliver on these customer mandates requires a reliable ERP software backed by fast, dependable service from the vendor.

"Without question, Global Shop Solutions has improved our ability to respond to customers," he says. "We get a lot of business by being able to quickly provide customers with a price and then sticking to it. We can do that because it makes all our costs visible."

A ConveyMor feed screw.

"And once we quote a price, Global Shop Solutions helps us get the order out the door faster," says Adams. "With many of our products, we simply take a group of parts, assemble them in a kit form, and ship it to the customer – a process that used to take several days. Now we can now do it in a day because we know exactly what we have on hand to make the parts."

No product is perfect, however, and Adams has found that when issues with Global Shop Solutions ERP software arise, the support staff resolves the problem in a timely manner via the phone or Internet.

"I like the fact that when we call for assistance, Global Shop Solutions doesn't have to send someone out to do a major repair," he says. "They typically send us a quick fix or a file to load and the problem gets taken care of. I also like the way they continually come out with new features to improve the software. They offer an endless array of things you can develop to make your system work better."

Adams gives Global Shop Solutions high marks for its ease of implementation, great technical support, and cost-effective operation. But in addition to a well-designed software package, he also sees it as an indispensable management tool.

"Whether you make tiny little bolts or large conveyor systems, management is all about making the right decisions," he concludes. "We get the information we need to make the decisions that enable us to successfully grow the business. Over the last few years, we've had the good fortune to experience a lot of growth. We've been able to keep up with that growth in large part because of Global Shop Solutions."

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