

GLOBAL SHOP SOLUTIONS CASE STUDY

Zephyr Products, Inc.

Founded in 1979, *Zephyr Products, Inc.* is a privately-held, full-service metal fabrication job shop that offers a complete line of laser cutting, precision forming, punching, automated milling, and certified welding and assembly services. Serving railroad, aerospace, construction and other industries that require durable metal-formed parts for the products they make and use, the company also provides engineering, product design, drawing, logistical and finishing services.



Zephyr's new 4000-watt laser with rotary can do any flat sheet up to 1", while the rotary can laser any structural steel or tube up to 8".



A Trumpf laser punch combo that cuts different shapes with the laser and drops them into separate material pans.

Headquartered in Leavenworth, Kansas, Zephyr turns out a diverse array of high-quality parts that go into cement and tile saws, chassis and body parts for deicers, liquid level indicators for wet storage tanks, rail cars, water tower safety cages, and more. Renowned for their world-class welding and welding inspection capabilities, the Zephyr team includes two American Welding Society (AWS) certified welding inspectors, and all Zephyr welders are AWS certified.

When senior management first began looking at ERP systems, Global Shop Solutions ERP software came highly recommended by another company. Despite the recommendation, Zephyr looked at three or four different ERP systems before making their decision.

"We chose Global Shop Solutions because it gave us everything we were looking for, all wrapped up in one integrated system," recalls Purchasing Manager Anne Felzke. "In particular, we liked its ability to **track job costs** from start to finish."

Taking the Stress Out of Scheduling

Zephyr prides itself on the ability to turn around jobs very quickly, usually within two weeks of receiving an order. This leads to a hectic pace on the shop floor and some serious scheduling challenges.

According to Production Manager Lee Cooper, the **Advanced Planning & Scheduling (APS)** module enables Zephyr to quickly and easily adjust to rush orders and customer changes while getting jobs out the door on time.

"Before Global Shop Solutions, trying to keep track of all the jobs moving around was a stressful and time-consuming process," he says. "Now, when we get a rush order, we enter the data, refresh the system, and Global Shop Solutions automatically reschedules every job to meet the new parameters. If we don't like what we see, APS lets us manually move jobs around to obtain a more favorable outcome. It's an awesome scheduling tool that gives us control over a very dynamic shop floor environment."

Eliminating Over-Purchasing

Under Zephyr's old system, purchasers often over-bought raw materials, largely because they couldn't tell how much **inventory** they had on hand or how much they needed for a particular job.



Zephyr's motto: "We can weld anything you throw at us!"

"With Global Shop Solutions, we know exactly how many of each part we have in the plant at any given time, and how many are on order," says Felzke. "As a result, we buy only what we need for each part we make."

Global Shop Solutions ERP software's ability to simplify the purchasing process also helps with inventory control. Several times a week, Felzke runs a report that breaks down purchasing requirements by customer, including what day Zephyr needs to have the parts on hand for that customer and whether the company needs to make or order them.

"We don't have a lot of room to store materials, so we're constantly looking at inventory to see what we have compared to what we're going to need," adds Felzke. "Global Shop Solutions automatically balances current inventory with demand and tells me exactly what we need to order."

Historical Data Supports Continuous Improvement

Where has Global Shop Solutions made the biggest difference for Zephyr?

"That's hard to say," says Cooper. "We just keep chipping away at all the different areas of the business and everything keeps getting better. With Global Shop Solutions you make a small improvement here and another one there, and pretty soon it all starts adding up."

Felzke cites the vast amount of historical data in Global Shop Solutions ERP software as a prime factor in Zephyr's continual improvement.

"We often make a part for a customer and then not make it again for months," she says. "When that occurs, I have to go back and figure out where we bought the parts and how much they cost. I don't have to hunt through piles of paper because anything I want to know about a part – where it's been, what parts we purchased to make it, how much it cost – is all right there in the system."

Competitive Advantage with Global Shop Solutions

Cooper and Felzke believe that Global Shop Solutions improves Zephyr's competitive standing: across-the-board cost reductions; improved on-time delivery rates; the ability to change job requirements and due dates on the fly.

"Global Shop Solutions enables us to quickly respond to changing customer needs" says Felzke. "Anything we want to know about a part, a job or a customer can be found quickly and easily, and usually from one screen. The ability to give customers fast, accurate answers is a real advantage in today's markets."

Global Shop Solutions ERP software has even helped Zephyr take business away from competitors.

"One of our customers was having trouble with a supplier that couldn't get all the details right on one of their most popular products, so they gave us a shot," Cooper recalls. "With Global Shop Solutions, we got every detail right, making us way more accurate than the previous vendor. We now make a number of parts for this customer."

"Global Shop Solutions is a powerful communication tool that makes us all more efficient and effective," he concludes. "Sitting at my desk, I can easily do the work of three or four people, and that gives us a real competitive advantage."