

Oberlin Filter Company

Encompix® ERP

Oberlin Filter Company Filters Out Waste with Encompix ERP



Encompix ERP Became the Catalyst for Change Enabling Oberlin Filter to Maintain its Position as an Industry Leader

ERP for ETO

Headquartered in Waukesha, Wis., Oberlin Filter Company builds pressure filtration systems, specializing in solid/liquid separation for the chemical, wastewater treatment, machine tool, and automotive industries. As described in its tag line, "We Remove Solids from Liquids," Oberlin Filter has been a pioneer in pressure filtration technology. The company has a global presence with sales, design, manufacturing, service and support in both England and Germany. In fact, Oberlin Filter's pressure filters can be found operating in over 25 countries worldwide.

As a growing company, Oberlin Filter was looking to expand its business, and the shortcomings of its old business system had become a limiting factor. "We had been using the same business system for the past 15 years," said Anne Molzberger, head of information systems at Oberlin Filter. "To overcome the limitations of our old system, we used a lot of spreadsheets and manual systems. It took a long time to go through the data to extract the information we needed to run the business."

According to Molzberger, Oberlin Filter's old business system was not designed to support an engineer-to-order (ETO) company. "It really didn't fit our style of business. A lot of the information was only available in one department."



ROI at a Glance:

Encompix ERP helped Oberlin Filter Company, a designer and manufacturer of pressure filtration systems, maintain its leadership position. Specifically, Oberlin Filter has achieved the following results:

- Visibility into potential project overruns, which allows management to take corrective action.
- Improved labor reporting with a shop floor data collection system.
- Streamlined purchasing and reduced headcount.
- Elimination of waste, freeing staff to work on value-add activities.
- Improved inter-departmental communication.

“We chose Encompix ERP because it was obviously designed for project-based, ETO companies.”

— *Jim Sharpless*, Quality Manager, Oberlin Filter Company

A critical aspect for any ETO manufacturer is controlling cost. Monitoring actual cost versus the original estimate and understanding cost-to-complete provides an early warning of project overruns. Having the information to take corrective action before it's too late can mean the difference between profit and loss.

“It took weeks to sift through all the data to find out exactly how we had performed on a job, and that was weeks after the product had shipped. We needed to get project status and cost information in real time, so we could make the necessary changes while we were still in the manufacturing stage,” said Molzberger.

Searching for the Right Solution

To maintain its leadership position, Oberlin Filter recognized that it needed a new business system and started its search in 2005.

Molzberger explained the process: “We wanted to see the options regarding ERP systems. We formed an evaluation team led by Jim Sharpless, our quality manager. The team was comprised of representatives from information technology, human resources, engineering, and administration.”

After reviewing six systems, Oberlin Filter selected Encompix. “We are an engineering-intensive business,” said Sharpless. “We chose Encompix ERP because it was obviously designed for project-based, ETO companies.” Also, Encompix ERP's standard ERP features addressed the company's needs without the addition of third-party products.

“The Encompix ERP system seemed very logical to us,” said Molzberger. “The system was easy to use, which enabled us to train our users very quickly. We didn't have to make any major changes to our manufacturing processes to fit the system. Some of the other systems we evaluated required considerable customization. With Encompix, we have only modified two programs.”

Molzberger added: “The people we met from Encompix were very professional, and took the time to understand our requirements. We liked their implementation methodology, and the way they communicated with their customers. I talked to three or four different Encompix customers and they were all extremely positive about the software and the company.”

A Catalyst for Change

Because an ERP system affects every part of the business, successful companies take the opportunity to examine and reengineer business processes as part of the implementation.

“Our president, Thomas Oberlin, was the driving force behind our reengineering efforts,” said Molzberger. “He wanted us to rethink our business processes to see if there was a better way of working. Encompix became the catalyst for change.”

“We are considered a market leader in our industry, but to maintain that leadership position and remain competitive, we have to continually improve our operations. Encompix ERP has allowed us to focus on areas of the business where in the past we just didn't have the time.”

— *Anne Molzberger*
MIS Manager
Oberlin Filter Company

Molzberger recalls the implementation: "We started in January 2006 and went live that June. The project team was dedicated to the implementation and totally focused on Encompix. All we did was think and breathe Encompix for six months. We set up a war room, and the project team attended every session with our Encompix implementation consultant. We then went back to our own departments and trained the staff."

"Our Encompix implementation consultant was outstanding," said Molzberger. "The support from Consona was always available when needed. There were a couple of Friday nights when we needed support, and the Encompix help desk was there for us. Overall, we have a very good relationship with the people at Consona."

"Before Encompix ERP, there was a lot of guesswork regarding the exact status of a project," said Molzberger. "Today, our engineers and top management use Encompix ERP to examine the status of all projects each week. This visibility enables us to identify problems and take corrective action before a situation becomes critical. In addition, senior management can now review project status online, without having to call an engineer or shop floor supervisor."

Filtering Out Waste

Giving people more time to do their jobs and eliminating non-value activities has improved productivity in many areas of the company. Molzberger explained: "We have streamlined our procurement process. Before Encompix ERP, we had a purchasing manager, a buyer, and a part-time person. Engineering produced a spreadsheet with the items they required. That information was manually entered into our previous ERP system, instead of automatically coming from the bills of material. Today, we have streamlined the process and eliminated the manual data entry, so we only have two people in purchasing, and one of those spends 50 percent of his time on other activities in manufacturing."

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A year after implementing the standard Encompix ERP modules, Oberlin Filter added the Shop Floor Data Collection component.

"We have greatly improved our data accuracy, especially in the area of labor reporting. Previously, shop floor workers recorded their labor on time cards. The data was then manually entered in the system. Workers on multiple jobs had the tendency to book their time against one job, just because it was easier. As a result, the large jobs had more hours recorded against them, and the smaller jobs fewer hours. Today, with the shop floor data collection system, this doesn't happen. We are getting the correct hours allocated to the right jobs because it is simple for workers to record their time. In addition, supervisors are more involved reviewing and authorizing hours; they have taken ownership of the system on the shop floor," concluded Molzberger.

About Consona ERP

Consona Corporation is a worldwide leader in providing customer relationship management (CRM) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) software and services for companies of all sizes. Consona serves more than 4,500 customers worldwide and across a variety of industries.

Consona Corporation
450 East 96th Street, Suite 300
Indianapolis, IN 46240

P: (888) 826-6766 or (317) 249-1700
F: (317) 249-1999

info@encompix.com
consona.com
encompix.consona.com

