



Profile: LaSalle Bristol Corp.

“We still have a very high customer service level, but we’re doing it with 30% less inventory because we can see things better. All because of EBA.”

—Michael Caldwell, Vice President of Information, LaSalle Bristol

For forty years, LaSalle Bristol Corp.’s dedication to service and quality powered it to the top as a full service supplier to the manufactured and modular home and recreational vehicle industries. This Elkhart, Indiana manufacturer and supplier of building, decorative and plumbing products operates 22 facilities across North America—from British Columbia to Minnesota to Mississippi.

However, tight credit, rising fuel costs and the slumping economy over the past two years seriously hurt the housing and RV markets. Today, LaSalle Bristol is facing numerous challenges to get ahead in a tough economic climate.

“We’ve had a double hit in our industries,” said Michael Caldwell, VP of Information. “The housing crunch had a negative effect. And the gas prices last year and earlier this year hit the RV markets. Plus with the general downturn in the economy, our business has been cut significantly in the past two years.”



In February of 2007, their new CFO came on board. The company’s previous investment in a Tier 1 business intelligence system was not working out. The CFO, a firm believer in business

intelligence, agreed with Caldwell that the company needed a new system. The solution was Exact Business Analytics® (EBA), which interfaced with their J.D. Edwards database and required no data warehouse.

Information goals were quickly formulated:

- Protect margins
- Improve cash flow
- Reduce inventory while maintaining good customer service

Business Issue

The economic downturn presented LaSalle Bristol with numerous business challenges. Sales reps cut prices and margins eroded. Excess inventory impeded cash flow. LaSalle Bristol needed information to ensure every decision they made contributed to their continued improvement.

Impact

Their Tier 1 business intelligence system was not providing the necessary information. Management needed to take a more scientific approach to pricing and margin protection.

Solution

Exact Business Analytics® (EBA) reporting, analytics, and cubes allowed management and regional branches to stay informed, see the truth, and improve their business picture. LaSalle Bristol, with its thousands of products, 22 warehouses/facilities and declining sales, gained control of margins, improved cash flow, and reduced its inventory in 2008.

Results

- Enlightened pricing based on margin protection
- Inventory reduced 25%-30%; on-time delivery steady at 98.6%
- Improved cash flow
- Sales uptick due to competitors’ lack of inventory
- User owned system; less dependence on IT

Profile: LaSalle Bristol Corp.

After two months of data verification and modifications of SQL views, LaSalle Bristol went live with EBA in May of 2008. "Once we had the data validated, the floodgates opened," said Mike Ringler, Senior Software Developer. "We had probably a dozen or so Power Users in the initial training: VPs, regional controllers, and sales directors. The goal was to get the sales groups involved in a scientific approach to sales management. Folks had been running things out of their hip pocket for too long."



LaSalle Bristol focused on margin protection first. Using EBA

reports, graphs, filters and cubes, they took the sales data and performed an across-the-board margin analysis. Analytics revealed exactly where they could set their prices. For the first time, sales managers could see what the margins actually were. Users could slice and dice the data by branches, by families of products, and by parent customers (clients with ancillary branches).

"Because of the EBA analysis, we're doing a much better job of controlling our cash," said Ringler. "We're also looking at inventory and general expense spending." Since May, when EBA began helping them access, consolidate, and convert their data into meaningful information, LaSalle Bristol has made significant reductions to their inventory making more cash available, but has managed to maintain an on-time delivery rate of 98.6%.

"But it wasn't just a matter of cutting inventory," said Caldwell. "We still have to have the products to sell. EBA made us smarter in how we provide that. We still have a very high customer service level, but we're doing it with less inventory because we can see things better. All because of EBA."

"The cubes are easy to use," said Ringler. "This is not a project driven by IT, it's a user driven project. We just want our managers and sale reps to be information savvy."

As the economy worsens, LaSalle Bristol is taking advantage of the capabilities that EBA offers to help them work lean.

"Our competitors are closing plants. Some have no inventory. Customers buying from our competitors are calling us saying that they're having backorder problems and inquiring if we can ship to them. EBA has increased our business," said Caldwell.

Both Caldwell and Ringler believe that with resourcefulness and luck, the company will not only survive, but grow. EBA Dashboards are next. Caldwell said dashboard analytics will provide high level views of trends, metrics, and uncover new opportunities. EBA has also taken pressure off IT. "It's a tool that the users own. They can employ it on their own, build their own cubes, and run them the way they like. It doesn't require IT," said Caldwell.

The company as a whole needed to manage information better. "EBA will ensure our advancement," said Ringler. "Then, when the upturn occurs, we will be in a better position to take advantage of the improved business climate."

For more information, please visit Exact Software at www.exactamerica.com.

"EBA will ensure our advancement."

—Mike Ringler, Senior Software Developer, LaSalle Bristol