

▶ “The cost saving on Exact’s unlimited training program is profound.”

Sales at Michigan Ladder Company in Ypsilanti, Michigan climbed steadily for decade upon decade. In 2007, sales volume increased 24%. Customers like the New York Fire Department and the U.S. Army made its aluminum, wood and fiberglass ladders one of the top brands in the U.S. Now despite the recession, training and more advanced use of Exact Software’s Macola Progression® are helping ensure its future.



Family-owned Michigan Ladder runs a lean 20-person organization. “In our case, our segment of the market—the commercial and industrial segment—uses our ladders like tools. Our customer is climbing that ladder every single day,” says Tom Harrison, President. Though business declined and budgets shrank in 2009, management is preparing for when the economy rebounds. “We’re focusing some of our energies on inventing the future. You have to be ready when it turns around,” says Harrison. Those preparations entail greater use of Exact Macola Progression, the company’s ERP system. Michigan Ladder implemented Macola ten years ago but has never used it to full capacity. “Macola is not critical to us getting through this down period. It is critical to the future success of this company,” says Harrison.

www.michiganladder.com

BUSINESS ISSUE

- ▶ Automation and operational efficiencies needed
- ▶ Exact Macola Progression never put to full use; few employees adequately trained
- ▶ Company-wide training from Exact seemed too costly

SOLUTION

- ▶ Exact’s Unlimited Training Plan to accommodate all 20 employees
- ▶ \$11,075 savings first year with Unlimited Plan
- ▶ Company averaged 4-6 Macola training sessions per employee per year
- ▶ 90% participation due to flexibility, convenience and high caliber instructors
- ▶ Rapid learning resulted from virtual lab, one-on-one attention

BENEFITS

- ▶ Online training was affordable, effective and unlimited
- ▶ An advanced use of Macola yields efficiencies in several areas including order entry, AP, and inventory management
- ▶ Greater automation of order entry and inventory management strengthens competitiveness
- ▶ Leads to accessible real-time data for collaboration, customer service and metrics

“The [Exact] instructors are the best I’ve had in my career in business”

Dave Law, Purchasing Manager
Michigan Ladder Company

COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING NEEDED

In early 2009, with plans underway to bring everyone up to speed on Macola, it became apparent that employees needed more system training. Michigan Ladder wanted greater ERP proficiency. The question was how to afford comprehensive training for their 20 person workforce. Hiring an on-site consultant or traveling to attend class cost too much. Past training from their reseller had proved ineffectual. Harrison and Dave Law, Purchasing Manager, needed a way to provide high level training at low cost.

EXACT’S UNLIMITED TRAINING PLAN

The unlimited training program offered by Exact was the solution. The first year, more than 90% of Michigan Ladder employees took 4–6 classes, each without incurring major expense. “The cost savings on Exact’s unlimited training is profound. It was really instrumental in allowing more people to use Macola to do their jobs more efficiently,” says Law. After one year, Michigan Ladder signed up for a second year. “It saved us more than \$11,000 the first year. This year it will save even more because more people are using it,” says Law.

INTERACTIVE LAB-BASED TRAINING

Interactive, lab-based training and working with their own information accelerated the learning process. So far, one employee or another has enrolled in every Macola training class, some for a second time. “Order entry, inventory management, purchasing, bill of materials, master scheduling, MRP, standard costs, production order processing, system manager—I’ve taken all those and so have many of our employees,” says Law. “Yet we’ve never had to travel or bring an instructor on site. Labs and working live bring results. The instructors are the best I’ve had in my career in business.”

READY FOR THE FUTURE

“We always knew Macola had tremendous capacity. Training has shown us how to use it to run our business from beginning to end,” says Harrison. Recently, Michigan Ladder initiated a business process review. From order entry to shipping, they are looking to automate every task possible. As for the downturn, Harrison has no doubt Michigan Ladder will survive. “We’ve been around 100 years. We’re survivors. But we’ll be stronger and more profitable when the turnaround occurs thanks to our ability to leverage Macola to its fullest.”