Manufacturer/Distributor uses MITS for insight, time savings, and fast ROI

TAPCO® INC.

Tapco was founded in 1974 to fill a void in the elevator bucket industry, which was then dominated by metal materials. Over the course of 39 years, Tapco has grown to stock the largest inventory of plastic elevator buckets and metal bolts in the world, some 900,000 buckets and 15 million bolts, out of a 95,000 square foot, on-site manufacturing facility in Missouri.

Prior to MITS, Tapco had struggled for years trying to get the right information to the individuals that needed it, as many of the company's existing reporting tools would provide an answer but lacked drill-down capability as well as access to ancillary data. The IT department, managed by Brennan Radmer, found themselves frequently generating additional reports or manually exporting and manipulating the data in Excel,

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a time-consuming task that took his group away from other equally important responsibilities.   "Our ownership will sometimes ask open-ended questions, and when using a typical data mining tool, you have to go through a great deal of effort to get at what you think the ownership wants to know about, " Brennan explains. "It leads to a lot of repetitive work. We needed a tool where anyone could easily drill down through the numbers and see the trends right away, without having to do a massive amount of data mining or report generation. This was a must for us."

So with the need for a new B.I. solution clearly established, Tapco researched several solutions. One reason MITS stood out to Brennan was the breadth of information available through their easy to use UI, as well as the available out-of-the-box content other B.I. tools didn't offer. "The issue for us was that Tapco is a lean company, and we don't have someone that can sit around for a couple of months writing queries and developing content," Brennan noted, "We needed a tool that had pre-made content like reports that we could put to use right away. I was also surprised that MITS worked across so many ERP platforms. Other products we looked at were wedded to a specific ERP, complicating things if we ever decided to make a change."

Another feature that stood out to Brennan was MITS' access to data. Brennan explains: "One of the issues we were having with our ERP was that it was reporting on territories, not sales reps. And so when an account would change territories, the historical data would stay locked in the old territory, making it extremely difficult to gauge how a territory was doing. MITS was able to provide the data in real time, going back upwards of 36 months. And if we made any changes, the MITS system reflected the changes without much assistance from IT. This was a big thing for us, to get a complete snapshot of an account, as opposed to the partial view we were used to seeing."

Finally, all Tapco employees use iPads and Android phones to conduct business, and it was important for Brennan to find a tool that would not only run seamlessly across platforms, but also without install assistance from IT - or the cost of separate licenses for each device. Since MITS runs on a secure web-based platform, anyone with access to an internet browser could use the MITS system, anytime from anywhere.   After consulting with the International Sales manager and ownership, Brennan was able to secure the decision to purchase MITS in only one hour.

Tapco was MITS' first A+ installation that featured multiple inventory units, recording items as price per hundred, but stocked and sold as each. MITS support staff worked with Tapco to customize their inventory situation, ensuring that their numbers would balance properly. "Because of the visibility of the data in the MITS system, we're actually going back through and redesigning the way we implement our ERP so that we can then expand the MITS reporting capabilities even further, " Brennan says. "Now that we can see how different item classes and sub classes are doing, we're going back and reevaluating the value of having this data correct. The MITS software is not only providing us more data, but it's actually increasing the value and usage of our ERP system, which we spent a lot of money on and have been using for over 19 years."

Brennan describes his daily interaction with MITS: "By 7 o'clock when I get to work, the first thing I do is check our sales, inventory trends, and A/R. Our collections department is one of our concerns right now in the sense that we don't have a large A/R balance, but our bigger accounts can sometimes lag in their payments and need to be reminded. MITS is great for alerting us to those lagging payments."

MITS has also provided Tapco sales staff with up to date information that they can sort and analyze themselves, without having to know the data table structure of A+, the proper joins required to link relative data, how to run macros in Excel, or other skills that are considered above the knowledge base and/or skill set of a typical computer literate employee. Another major advantage is that individual users can customize the order and look of their reports the way they want to see them, quickly and easily through the tool's report wizard. "I have been getting more feedback from my sales force now that they have gone through the MITS Online Training, and many of the things they are asking for have already been suggested by the MITS team, " Brennan recalls. "There are software companies out there that introduce a product and let it sit for 5 or 6 years until an update comes out. MITS on the other hand seems to be focused on continual improvement of their product, and for me, that's a real plus."

Tapco's sales staff uses MITS daily to see who they are up with, as well as who they are down with, which is a critical point of focus for their company. "Being the market leader means competitors are continually trying to erode your market share, " Brennan says. "And much like any other business, we have gained and lost portions of market share over time. What is valuable with MITS is that they can show you exactly where the gains, or more importantly the losses, are happening in real time. Before MITS, we had ideas on where losses were occurring, but now we can pinpoint the downward trend with the account and take steps to mitigate or reverse it."

MITS also uncovered a $4,300 year to date credit discrepancy in Tapco's ERP that up to that point had gone unnoticed. Because Tapco pays sales incentives based on factors including profitability and growth, the discrepancy meant that certain sales people would have been paid for profitability that the system erroneously thought they generated.

"I would certainly recommend the MITS solution to other companies as the amount of time involved for us from when the install began to implementation to roll-out to wide adoption has incredibly taken less than 90 days for us." Brennan says. "Best of all, we should have a full return on investment within the next 60 days as we have already identified some areas where we had lost a portion of our customer's business but their overall spend was up so the change in the product mix they were buying wasn't identified prior to MITS. Several of our salespeople have admitted that they wouldn't have noticed this right away without the information provided to them by MITS."