

Infor SX.e Distributor sees sales gains with MITS



Central Turf & Irrigation Supply (CTIS) was founded in 1990 and consists of over 200 employees in 36 stores across 14 states, with additional locations in Canada. The primary market for CTIS is irrigation supply, but in recent years the company has diversified into year-round product inventory such as landscape supply, lighting, ice melt, etc.

CTIS had spent some time shopping around for an upgrade to their current reporting and analytics platform. Holly Horner, IT Manager and Lead Software Evaluator for CTIS explains: “Our Sales force needed a more in-depth look at their customers and suppliers, especially important with our move into new markets. Plus I needed a quicker and easier path from report request to generation. So when we began looking at the industry offerings, we had a pretty good idea of what we did and didn’t want in a solution.”

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After receiving a request from the General Manager to evaluate MITS, Holly’s first stop was to the company’s website to learn more. “I remember thinking as I was reading through the documentation that if this software can back up its claims, it just may be the answer to our prayers,” she said. The decision to go with MITS was made after Holly and senior management participated in an online demonstration of MITS’ analytics and reporting capabilities using a real company’s data set as an example. “The MITS demonstration confirmed for us that they could deliver superior reporting and analytics,” says Holly. “Specifically, to be able to pick and choose anything out of our database and run a report against it was a feature that really sold us on their solution. “

The MITS installation began around the end of November. The basic modules installed within a week and a half. Next, was a day of training and creating reports to make sure the system balanced. After that, the MITS solution went directly into service.

In addition to the basic install integrated into their SX.e platform, CTIS had a few custom requests. One involved adding product item numbers to every display, an important piece of data for them. Another was the ability to view the data through different cost formulas, such as general ledger versus standard pricing. Both of these customizations were something the MITS developers were able to complete almost immediately.

Finally, CTIS requested a custom Hypercube to produce quarterly financial income statements for each store. Historically this involved accessing each store’s account, totaling the numbers and coming up with a finished product that went into the financial statement. Unfortunately this process was time-consuming and prone to error. So after some back and forth involving tweaking the data mapping, the company had a finished financial report that could provide P&L by store and/or date range. “Now anyone from the individual store up to the controller could generate this report in minutes,” says Holly. “And an added benefit from the training I received on this Hypercube was that I could now create custom dashboards for any piece of data in the system, not just financial statements. “

Holly debuted MITS in mid-January to a small group of regional managers, including several new hires from a competitor who it was claimed had ‘great reporting capability’. As she proceeded to demonstrate the new software, the room fell silent. This silence, she learned later, was attributed to disbelief that managers could now access this level of information, all day every day. “They were in awe at what they were going to be able to do, and I think their minds were running 100 miles an hour at all of the sales dollars they were now going to pull in,” says Holly.

Next MITS was shown to sales staff and store managers at the annual sales meeting in February. Here MITS enjoyed similar positive reviews, including multiple requests for immediate log in credentials – a good sign from a group sometimes hesitant to embrace yet another ‘new technology.’

For CTIS, the introduction of MITS fundamentally changed the way they do business. Now management can identify underperforming inventory or sales efforts and react far in advance of it becoming a problem. In addition, they see a complete picture of what they were selling but aren’t any more – something that was a real challenge in the past to identify. Armed with this intelligence, CTIS went back to the manufacturers and secured better pricing terms for fast-selling items while avoiding negotiations over dead stock, ensuring a larger profit margin for the company.

Now nearly everyone at CTIS uses MITS, including the owner, the general manager, store managers, regional managers, salespeople, etc. The ability of users to interact differently with the system based on their job duties is a powerful feature. For example, sales staff can go to a sales meeting loaded with ideas on how to increase a customer’s bottom line based on underlying sales numbers, trending data, etc. They can even see outstanding accounts receivable, which depending on the amount, can shift what was a sales call into a discussion over collections. “It makes our salespeople look like they are more knowledgeable about the customer and more interested in the customer’s business and this is remarkable only because we’ve never had a tool to give them to do something like this before,” says Holly. “The end result is that the customer gets this great feeling that CTIS is really looking out for them and our salespeople are getting more orders, including for things that no one noticed had dropped off the radar. It’s a real win-win situation.”

Another attractive feature is the flexibility of MITS to support customizations like column selection and sorting options – things in the past that were a direct request to IT. Now someone that wants a report a certain way can feel comfortable in modifying an existing report and then saving it as a template, eliminating rework the next time this report needs generated. “We have a million other reports that we need to see on a daily basis that relate to operations and purchasing,” says Holly. “And MITS was an excellent tool to provide that data – in multiple views for multiple individuals.”

Lastly the built-in security settings involved with report generation mean less work overall for Holly. “Prior to this, I was either running one report, modifying it myself, and sending it out manually, or I was writing scores of reports based on the needs of the individual requesting it,” says Holly. “Being able to create one report and set it up on a distribution schedule has reduced my workload from around 50 reports a month to none. I’ve had items on my to-do list for over 2 years that I can now address because I don’t have to run reports all day.”

“Whenever I go to shows I don’t hesitate to recommend the MITS solution to other distribution businesses running SX.e,” says Holly. “The ease of use and the ease of implementation is a significant plus in my world, and based on the money MITS saved our company, the software paid for itself within 3 months.”

About MITS

MITS helps hundreds of distributors and manufacturers leverage the data in their ERP and other business systems to make better decisions, every day and at every level of their organization. Established in 1996, MITS’ interactive reporting and business intelligence software combines industry best practices with the flexibility to meet the unique needs of every customer. From standard to custom reports, dashboards and scorecards, MITS drives sales growth, profitability, and operational efficiency for competitive advantage.

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