

## ISCO Industries Keeps Pipeline Full With MITS Discover Business Intelligence



ISCO Industries is one of the largest suppliers of HDPE (high-density polyethylene) pipe and related services in the United States. Founded in 1962 in Louisville, Kentucky, the company distributed a progression of pipe categories over time. In 1975, ISCO began developing its expertise in HDPE pipe, along with the fusion equipment used to install it.

Over time ISCO narrowed its focus to become the recognized industry leader in HDPE pipe supply and custom manufacturing. With more than 350 employees, ISCO now operates 28 facilities in the United States, Canada and Australia. The company continues to grow as a result of their ongoing focus on the long-term needs of customers, employees and stockholders.

“We had half-hour sessions set up to train most of our end users on MITS Discover and the Sales Hypercube - we only needed ten minutes.”

In 2006, ISCO began managing its business with the Activant Prelude enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution. At the same time, the company’s geographically widespread sales force consisting of outside reps and a large, centralized order processing unit recognized the need for easy-to-access, up-to-date information on customers and orders.

### **DATA ACCESS REQUIREMENTS BOTH COMMONPLACE AND UNIQUE**

Kim Byram joined ISCO as Director of Information Systems shortly after their decision to purchase Activant Prelude and was charged with overseeing the Prelude implementation. “Our sales force, including about 80 inside and outside reps, needed to be able to get information fast: a customer’s order history, current order status, receivables balance and so on.” They also needed the ability to drill down into specific transactions to research customer inquiries or analyze pricing proposals. “We needed both broad and deep access to sales data,” elaborates Byram.

While the Prelude system enabled ISCO to dramatically improve processes and business results in order entry, inventory management and financials, asking sales reps to use the Prelude ERP application to get the information they needed proved impractical. “It’s time-consuming to log in and out of the ERP application when you only need a certain kind of information” says Byram. “We didn’t want to force the sales reps to use their time that way.” While a dashboard solution was available from Activant, it did not provide access to all of the types of underlying sales and customer data ISCO sales reps needed.

ISCO also had stringent security requirements that forced it to look for other solutions. “Our primary focus for the initial solution was our sales force. We needed to give each sales rep access to their sales, order, and customer information, without giving them access to info for all the other sales reps.” explains

Byram. Usability and a short learning curve were also critical. “With so many reps, each of them critical to our business, we were determined to find a query and reporting solution that was easy to learn and use. Acceptance by the sales force was going to be a key and we couldn’t afford to choose anything that would require a lengthy implementation and training phase.”

## **MIT S DISCOVER: THE RIGHT BLEND OF ACCESS, SECURITY AND SPEED**

In a sense, the search for a business intelligence solution to support the required queries and reports began before ISCO’s need was understood. Byram, in a previous position managing Oracle databases, had already invested significant effort evaluating business intelligence and Online Analytical Processing (OLAP) solutions so she fully understood (and embraced) the range of features and capabilities available from leading solutions.

At ISCO, Byram quickly became aware of the MITS Discover Business Intelligence solution. “Discover was already in use with a large number of Prelude implementations, in something like two thirds of the Prelude installed base, so we knew it was likely to be a good solution for us.”

More than 80 inside and outside sales reps use the solutions to keep tabs on their business. “The MITS security capabilities let each sales rep quickly see the information they need to see, while protecting sensitive data from unauthorized eyes,” says Byram. The company also purchased the MitsMaker design tool and attended MITS hosted training with the intention of designing some of its own hypercubes going forward. One of the most positive aspects of implementing MITS Discover has been speed. “It’s so easy to learn and use that we usually need less than half of that 30 minutes we set aside to train an end user.” reports Byram. Rapid training and user acceptance have also meant a faster overall rollout. Byram adds, “We started slowly, introducing just a single set of sales queries, but things went so well that we very quickly rolled out three additional sets: open orders, open quotes and accounts receivable.”

The results have been gratifying. “Now the sales force can very quickly get all the information they need to do their job, all four parts of the business they need to understand, without having to come into Prelude.” Support is also a positive: “We’ve had very few questions coming back to us from the sales force. They just don’t have any problems understanding how to get the information they need. It’s a real time save for IT.”

## **RESULTS: VISION FULFILLED**

ISCO’s MITS Discover implementation will continue to expand as they learn to create their own hypercubes using MitsMaker. The company also acquired a license for the MITS Report operational reporting solution, and has begun studying related data requirements.

When asked how ISCO had completed one of the largest, and fastest, MITS Discover implementations for Activant Prelude on record, Byram credited the solution itself coupled with MITS support. “Most importantly, we had a vision. We knew how we wanted things to work, we knew the capabilities we needed, and we knew we wanted to take things in steps. Once we saw Discover, we were convinced it would fit that vision nicely.”

### **About MITS**

MIT S 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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