Alumco

Alumco Gains a Competitive Edge with Cloud-based Odyssey ERP

For 40 years, Alumco has maintained a successful aluminum casting business by continuously delivering quality services and exceeding customer expectations. Based in Ontario, Canada, the family-owned business specializes in commercial, industrial and military aluminum castings using state-of-the-art equipment for molding, melting, casting and testing of prototypes parts.

To maintain high standards for quality and customer satisfaction, Alumco is using the Cloud-based Odyssey enterprise resource planning (ERP) system for most operations, from tooling and manufacturing, to quoting and costing, to shop floor management. The company moved to the B&L Information Systems software solution in 2015 to take advantage of the productivity, efficiency and accuracy benefits that come with an automated, modern ERP system.

Replacing "Feel" with Fact

Prior to choosing Odyssey, Alumco was managing operations through a combination of Excel spreadsheets, a Microsoft Access database, and experience. The company didn't have a fast, easy or accurate way to link quoting and costing back to inventory and production. Alumco's customer service and sales professionals didn't have the information they needed to provide either immediate or precise answers to customer questions. Often, they made decisions or provided answers based on "feel" and experience versus fact.

Industry
Foundry

Products
Odyssey ERP

Summary
Alumco relies on the Cloud-based Odyssey enterprise resource planning (ERP) system for most operations, from tooling and manufacturing, to quoting and costing, to shop floor management.

To support business growth and scalability, Alumco sought a modern approach that would provide automation and total visibility across its operations. "We wanted the ability to quantify all of our operational data so we could be much more confident in our quoting and costing," says Philip Osfolk, Vice President of Operations at Alumco. "We needed that high level of accuracy and access to real-time information to optimize productivity and maintain customer confidence. We wanted to know that we were making strategic business and production decisions based on real data."

In their search for a new solution, Osfolk says Odyssey stood out because the solution was built specifically for foundries and other metalcasters by people with industry expertise. "I initially assumed we would have to settle for a generic solution and then spend time customizing it for our business. Instead, we found Odyssey, which already had so much of the industry-specific functionality we needed right out of the box."

Today, Alumco is using Odyssey ERP to manage manufacturing, sales, inventory, quality, and finance operations. Osfolk says the implementation took less than one year, go-live was smooth, and employees were quick to adapt to the new technology and new processes.

Shop Floor Visibility Increases On-time Delivery

Alumco is using Odyssey's Shop Floor Manager to collect valuable production data including hours worked, quantity of castings, order number, and more, right from the shop floor. The Odyssey Shop Floor Manager presents Alumco employees with real-time work instructions, quality alerts, scheduling priorities and other critical production information. "The change was immediate when we started using Shop Floor Manager," says Phil Osfolk. "Suddenly, we found that the data was much more accurate."

Prior to Odyssey, operators received printouts from the Microsoft Access database of every job that needed to be done that day. The operators manually tracked their work on the sheet as they completed the orders and then brought the paper to the office manager to enter the information into Excel, and then transfer the data to the Access database. Mistakes were inevitable, leading to missed or delayed orders.

"That doesn't happen with Odyssey," says Phil Osfolk. "Our shop floor operators can see exactly which order they need to work on next, and they are guided step-by-step until the order is filled. As a result, we have significantly reduced the number of missed orders, which has increased our on-time delivery rate by 30%."

Shop Floor Manager Features

- Auto-capture downtime and indirect time
- Automatically display work instructions
- Interface with scheduling and job costing to ensure accurate on time delivery + profitable jobs
- Options to create requisitions, service requests, emails, etc. right from the Shop Floor Manager
- Touch screen and bar code capabilities

Today with Odyssey, shop floor operators clock into a terminal to see what job they need to work on. The operators Job On, do their job according to the work instructions automatically displayed on the Shop Floor Manager screen, and then Job Off when the job is complete. For every job, Odyssey tracks how many pieces the operator touched; how many of those were scrap and calculates their percentages.

The process repeats itself until it is time for the individual to clock out at the end of their shift. Operators can no longer cherry-pick specific jobs. Shop Floor Manager automatically directs them to fill the most urgent order or the oldest jobs to make sure they get done on time.

With Odyssey capturing all job information in real time, management can run various reports to measure performance and efficiency levels. "We need the ability to measure how operators are performing and gain insight into where and why we may be having bottlenecks," says Phil Osfolk. "If there's a productivity issue, it could mean an operator needs additional training or encouragement or that there is an issue with one of the machines. With daily insight into potential issues, we can now provide a quick resolution to maximize our efficiency."

Osfolk says Odyssey has made operators more accountable. And in the event that he does need to have a conversation about low productivity levels, Odyssey helps make the discussion less about emotion or personal judgment, and more about the indisputable data.

Improved Quoting and Purchasing

Quoting is a critical step to Alumco's ongoing success. With Odyssey, Anton Osfolk, Vice President of Sales and

Marketing at Alumco, can use past production data on similar jobs to build accurate quotes and competitive pricing models. Odyssey gives him the ability to monitor each job's profitability in real time as the job is running.

"For example, it's now far easier to do stepladder pricing. I can go back into Odyssey, view a previous quote, and use it as a template for either a revised or new quote. We have one customer where we have approximately 25 parts, and they all have the stepladder pricing. It's much easier to create and update those quotes using Odyssey. And the information is all available at Phil's fingertips if he needs it."

Purchasing is another vital process to ensuring on-time delivery and customer satisfaction. Anton Osfolk can run material requirements planning (MRP) reports to see exactly how much material was needed to operate given equipment, and to plan manufacturing, delivery schedules, and purchasing activities to meet demand.

Optimizing Machinery Productivity

Alumco can measure and optimize tooling with Odyssey to ensure ongoing efficiency and on-time deliveries. The company operates some permanent molds and checks performance numbers daily to monitor how they are trending over time. If they see a particular die is going slower than another, they can focus in on that die to identify the cause – such as something to do with the operator, worn cylinders, or a pump issue. This insight allows Alumco to target its maintenance so they can focus energy and resources on maximizing productivity levels.

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>
> —Phil Osfolk, VP of Operations, Alumco

Enhanced Customer Experience

Providing clarity and transparency to customers is important for Alumco to maintain client trust and satisfaction. "Communication with our customers has improved considerably since using Odyssey," says Anton Osfolk. "We can now answer customer questions on-the-spot instead of saying, 'I'll get back to you' – any questions about delivery time, lead time, productivity per shift, our

Odyssey Features Specific to Foundries

Foundries have unique challenges that require unique ERP software, foundry ERP software. Scheduling and coordinating core production, melt deck capacity and molding demands to customer requirements is a tough balancing act. Pattern inspection prior to releasing to production. Tracking casting inventory send to outside suppliers for processing. These are all business processes that the Odyssey ERP system addresses, as well as a myriad of others unique to the foundry industry.

capacity, and so on. Odyssey allows me to put my finger on the pulse of what's happening down on the shop floor."

Using data from Odyssey, Phil and Anton Osfolk were able to communicate back to a new customer exactly how fast they were able to ramp up, what quantities they were running each day, and so forth. With access to this precise level information, Alumco quickly gained this customer's trust and tripled their business with the customer in just a few weeks.

Enabling Anytime/Anywhere Access

Having a cloud-based system has been a tremendous benefit. "Whether I am traveling or sick, I can always see what's happening on the shop floor," says Phil Osfolk. "Anton can still do quoting and can go to a web browser on any computer in the world get the information we need. That's definitely been an advantage for us."

"I've been at customer sites where they've wanted to know what's going on, and I've pulled out my laptop, logged on, and said, 'Okay, this is exactly where we are right now.' It definitely gives our customers confidence that we know what we're talking about, and when we say we're going to hit a particular deadline, we hit it."

Accuracy Creates Trusted Information

Phil Osfolk says the most important benefit of Odyssey is having information they can trust. "When it comes to

operational efficiency, I don't need to constantly walk around the shop floor to gauge productivity. Nor do I need to spend an hour manually checking reports. Instead, I can run real-time reports measuring operator efficiency, equipment efficiency, scrap levels, on-time delivery, employee absenteeism and more. What once took me an hour, now takes about five minutes."

Because Odyssey has significantly reduced how often data needs to be entered into the system and how many people need to be involved, accuracy has improved. Phil Osfolk explains: "With Odyssey, our data entry accuracy has gone from 80% to 99%. For example, Anton will put an order into the system, and I will then release the shop order. I don't have to reenter the information again. There are no transcription or duplication errors. Consequently, we don't make mistakes like running an entire shift of scrap or the wrong part."

Anton Osfolk says both he and Phil use Odyssey's graphical key performance indicators (KPIs), particularly to analyze payables and receivables. "We are checking this kind of information on a daily basis – revenue, what's overdue, what percentage of our business is by specific customers, how the data is fluctuating over time based on purchase orders, and such."

Supporting Business Growth and Scalability

"The decision to move to the Odyssey ERP system was a growth strategy," says Phil Osfolk. "Odyssey has been a key factor in our growth over the past few years, and it is proving to be a competitive advantage, enabling us to

compete with larger foundries and differentiate ourselves in the sales process."

"With Odyssey, we can pinpoint where there are inefficiencies in our processes," explains Phil Osfolk. "Are the grinders going at the rates they need to go? Is there a bottleneck on the saw? Does the saw need to be changed? Are we utilizing the furnaces as well as we possibly can so that we keep our overhead under control? Odyssey allows us to answer all of these questions so we can run at maximum efficiency, reduce costs and increase revenue."

Partnering for Long-Term Success

Alumco has already recommended Odyssey to other foundries. "I was recently approached by a company looking for an ERP solution. They asked what we thought of Odyssey and we sang its praises," says Phil Osfolk.

Anton Osfolk says Alumco's experience with B&L Information Systems has been extremely positive, from the initial implementation through their current experience with B&L's Help Desk. "Becoming part of the B&L family of customers has given us access to metalcasting industry expertise as well as the expected ERP expertise. In a competitive marketplace, this knowledge has given us a true competitive advantage."

About B&L Information Systems
B&L Information Systems is a global leader in providing integrated enterprise resource planning (ERP) for metalcasters. Since 1976, B&L has used their deep understanding of the specific challenges and problems of foundries and die casters to create an ERP solution which matches the way metalcasters operate, making it easier to learn and use. With Odyssey, metalcasters will maximize their resources, minimize costs, and make better decisions faster. www.blinfo.com

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