Midwest Wheel increases operational efficiency with Infor CloudSuite Distribution

Midwest Wheel was founded in 1911 and is a fifth-generation family owned business headquartered in Des Moines with six locations in Iowa and Missouri. Midwest Wheel is one of the largest truck parts distributors in the Midwest carrying a full line of replacement heavy-duty fleet products, light truck accessories, light trailer products, commercial fleet parts, and school bus replacement parts.

Outdated technology prevents growth

Midwest Wheel is committed to building long-lasting relationships with its customers, so as its business continued to grow and the complexities of operations became challenging to manage, leadership understood that innovation was necessary. "If you're not innovating new ways of increasing service levels, you're going to get beat out. And that's how we approach everything," Steve McEnany, VP of Marketing and Technology at Midwest Wheel, said. At the time, Midwest Wheel was delivering to 95% of its customers every single day, yet the enterprise was determined to provide that same availability for the other 5% of customers as well.

In order to quickly scale and meet customer demand, Midwest Wheel needed a fully integrated system that could seamlessly manage inventory across its six warehouses, enable complex workflows and alerts, and enable it to do more online business.

Headquarters
Des Moines, Iowa

Industry
Automotive parts distribution

Infor product
Infor CloudSuite™ Distribution,
Infor Total Warehouse Logistics,
Infor Birst®, Infor OS,
Infor CloudSuite Field Service,
Infor Mongoose, Infor F9

Website
midwestwheel.com

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>
> **STEVE MCENANY**
> Vice President of Marketing and Technology, Midwest Wheel

A new digital platform

Midwest Wheel selected Infor CloudSuite Distribution to overcome the challenges it faced. In addition to the core industry-specific capabilities that come out-of-the-box with CloudSuite Distribution, Midwest Wheel implemented modules such as Infor Total Warehouse Logistics (TWL) to meet its unique needs. "Infor Consulting Services helped us implement CloudSuite Distribution and TWL at our headquarters, and we later used the same model to roll it out to two other locations. It was a seamless transition," McEnany said.

Refining processes and reducing errors

The result: Midwest Wheel has significantly reduced errors in all facets of its business. The system supports putting inventory in the right spot the first time, making picking parts and delivering to customers more efficient. "The fact that we're not running around putting out fires anymore has made a huge impact on our productivity," McEnany said.

Another key benefit Midwest Wheel has seen since implementing CloudSuite Distribution is the ability to quickly identify issues. Infor OS workflow and alert capabilities provide real-time insights about situations and instructions on next steps. For example, the software has a workflow set up that helps identify all new customers, their orders, and determines if the prices match Midwest Wheel's standards. Management is automatically notified, giving them visibility into operations with little effort required.

Workflows have also helped reduce employee errors that cause inventory issues. Management is notified if certain actions are taken, which might indicate that corrective training is needed. This keeps Midwest Wheel's staff accountable and gives management the visibility to quickly take corrective action if needed.

Business challenges

- Managing complex operations became increasingly difficult as Midwest Wheel continued to grow

- Unable to deliver to all of its customers at its target rate of service

- Manual processes and system modifications reduced productivity

- Lack of data visibility and reporting created silos within the business and increased errors

The extensibility, configuration, and personalization of Infor technology has eliminated Midwest Wheel's need for modifications. Employees can easily move fields around and make impactful changes. The company added a hotkey to accelerate the process of finishing an order in order entry. "It's simple, but when it saves time on a few hundred orders a day, it adds up," McEnany says.

Real-time information improves sales forecasting

Midwest Wheel had relied on the same projected sales report for the last 40 years, which required manual data entry into a spreadsheet. Birst networked business intelligence automates this information and provides real-time visibility in the form of a dashboard, allowing company leaders to drill down into specific product segments, territories, or even part numbers. "Birst allows us to take a report that used to be fixed and filter it a hundred different ways, and we're just going to continue to grow with it," McEnany says.

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Enhanced customer experience

With inventory issues comes customer service issues, however, Midwest Wheel can now refine its processes more easily with Infor software—which ultimately improves customer service.

To avert problems with customer service, employees receive alerts about warehouse transfer issues and incoming ecommerce orders. Customers can leave a note that pops up before the order is shipped via collaboration tools so Midwest Wheel can ensure exceptional customer service as it accommodates the request.

The productivity enhancing capabilities that CloudSuite Distribution provides combined with Midwest Wheel's vast experience, knowledge, and creative approach to problems have only strengthened relationships with its customers.

Learning from the Infor community

To get the most from its Infor technology, Midwest Wheel has attended Inforum and the TUG community (user group) meetings. "You pick up new things every time. I walked out of the last meeting and immediately wrote three different ION® workflows just because of the conversations I had at the event. It's a great opportunity to improve the way our business utilizes technology," McEnany said.

Business results

- Significantly reduced errors when putting away inventory, making picking and delivering to customers more efficient

- Workflows and alerts quickly identify issues, instruct on next steps, and remove the need for modifications

- Information is delivered automatically via a dashboard, allowing employees and managers to act quickly on issues and remove silos within the business

- Improved customer service due to refined processes and data visibility

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